

Integration of Kelik Lang Dance Learning for Suku Dalam Children as a Medium for Developing Motor Skills and Character in Early Childhood in Jambi Province

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the integration of Kelik Lang dance learning for Suku Dalam children as a medium for developing motor skills and character building for early childhood in Jambi Province. Kelik Lang dance is a traditional dance rich in cultural values, togetherness, and discipline. The research method used is a qualitative approach with an ethnopedagogical study design. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation of children, traditional leaders, and educators. Methodologically, the evaluation of children's motor development relies on a specific conceptual framework for early childhood gross motor assessment, focusing on coordination, balance, and flexibility. The results of the study indicate that Kelik Lang dance learning can improve children's gross motor coordination, balance, and flexibility, while also instilling character values such as cooperation, responsibility, and respect for local culture. The integration of traditional dance in early childhood learning is an effective strategy for developing children's potential holistically based on local wisdom. Learning based on local arts and culture needs to be developed sustainably as part of contextual early childhood education.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education plays a strategic role in establishing the foundations of children's physical, cognitive, social-emotional, and character development. In indigenous contexts, effective learning should connect the curriculum with children's cultural backgrounds, family experiences, local languages, and community knowledge because culturally relevant pedagogy can strengthen learning engagement, cultural competence, and children's sense of belonging (Chen, 2023). This principle is particularly relevant to Suku Anak Dalam children in Jambi Province, whose learning experiences remain closely associated with nature, communal life, and locally transmitted knowledge. Recent studies indicate that contextual and nature-based learning can support the educational development of Suku Anak Dalam children. However, their participation in formal education is still affected by limited school access, teacher availability, curriculum suitability, mobility traditions, and differences between formal schooling and community life (Nugroho et al., 2022; Alfian, 2023; Anisyah et al., 2023). Within this context, Kelik Lang dance, a traditional dance practiced in Tebo Regency, Jambi Province, provides a locally grounded cultural resource that can be adapted into early childhood learning through rhythmic movement, body coordination, imitation, group interaction, and cultural expression (Indriyani & Miliani, 2021). Recent empirical evidence indicates that structured dance activities can support children's physical development, executive functioning, social interaction, and prosocial behavior, although the outcomes depend on the duration,

instructional design, and developmental appropriateness of the learning program (Rudd et al., 2021; Tao et al., 2022; Kotaman et al., 2024).

Preliminary interviews conducted with local traditional leaders, parents, and educators indicated that Suku Dalam children responded more positively to learning activities involving physical engagement, games, and body movements connected to their everyday experiences (Preliminary field interviews, 2025). This finding is consistent with previous research showing that Suku Dalam children demonstrate greater enthusiasm and participation when learning occurs through creative, outdoor, motor-based, and dance activities that correspond to their cultural and environmental contexts (Simaremare et al., 2024; Nurjulaiha et al., 2025). In this context, Kelik Lang dance functions not merely as a performing art but also as a cultural expression representing the relationship between humans, communal life, and nature. Its choreography draws inspiration from the movements of an eagle searching for, stalking, approaching, and seizing its prey. These actions are represented through movement motifs such as *melayang*, *melayok*, *meniruk*, *menyambar*, *meleyok*, and *mengincar* (Sari, 2017; Indriyani & Miliani, 2021). From a motor-development perspective, these movement motifs can be systematically mapped onto fundamental gross motor categories. Movements that require children to spread their arms, lower and control their bodies, maintain particular postures, and shift their body weight can stimulate stability and static or dynamic balance. In contrast, stepping, gliding, traveling, and swooping movements involve locomotor skills because they require the body to move from one point in space to another (Escolano-Pérez et al., 2021). When adapted to children's developmental characteristics and implemented through guided group activities, these nature-inspired movements can support body coordination, balance, spatial awareness, confidence, self-expression, cooperation, and social interaction. Empirical evidence also indicates that structured dance activities can promote aspects of children's motor and psychological development, while group dance can strengthen prosocial behaviors such as cooperation, sharing, helpfulness, and participation with peers (Tao et al., 2022; Kotaman et al., 2024). Therefore, the objectives of this study are to examine the process of integrating Kelik Lang dance learning into early childhood education for Suku Anak Dalam children in Jambi Province, analyze its contribution to children's motor-skill development, identify the character values fostered through the learning process, and formulate a culturally responsive learning framework that supports children's development and the preservation of local cultural heritage.

The Kelik Lang dance is a traditional dance from Kuamang Hamlet, VII Koto District, Tebo Regency, Jambi Province, inspired by the movements of an eagle searching for prey. The choreography of the Kelik Lang dance is broken down into movements, dancers, music, costumes and makeup, floor patterns, time and place of performance. Furthermore, the various movements in the Kelik Lang dance are floating, *melayok*, imitating, and snatching. These movements are accompanied by the two-sided *gedap* musical instrument, *kulintang*, and male gong. The Kelik Lang dance is performed during circumcision ceremonies, *turun* bathing, wedding parties, and to welcome important guests who come to visit Kuamang Hamlet. The Kelik Lang dance performance in Kuamang Hamlet is as a complement and only serves as entertainment for the community. Therefore, this dance is suitable for early childhood as motoric learning and character education based on the culture of tribal children in Jambi province (Lestari, nd). Thus, the integration of the Kelik Lang Dance into early



childhood education serves not only as a medium for motor development but also as a space for the transmission of cultural values and character formation based on local wisdom. This approach positions culture not as an add-on, but as the core of the educational process. From a humanities perspective, dance learning serves as a medium for dialogue between tradition and modern education, while simultaneously preserving the cultural identity of the Suku Dalam through the earliest generations.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative method using an ethnopedagogical and ethnochoreological research design. These approaches position local culture as the primary source of knowledge, educational practice, and interpretation of traditional movement (Dwi et al., 2025). The design was selected because the teaching of the Kelik Lang Dance cannot be separated from the social environment, traditional values, ecological knowledge, and everyday experiences of the Suku Dalam community. The study examined both the implementation of dance-based learning and the cultural meanings embedded in the dance movements.

The research was conducted at the Aliah Arsih Foundation Preschool, located in a Suku Dalam settlement area in Jambi Province. Oral traditions, communal activities, family-based education, and nature-oriented learning practices remain present within this community. The research setting was therefore considered relevant for examining the relationship between traditional dance, early childhood development, and cultural transmission. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in early childhood education and the preservation of the Kelik Lang Dance. The child participants consisted of 32 children aged four to six years. They were divided into three learning groups. Group A consisted of 10 four-year-old children, Group B consisted of 12 five-year-old children, and Group C consisted of 10 six-year-old children. Adult informants included 5 parents, 2 local educators, and 1 traditional leader. Parents were selected because they could provide information about children's behaviour at home before and after the dance activities. Educators were included because they directly facilitated and observed the learning process. Traditional leaders were selected based on their knowledge of the history, movements, values, and cultural functions of the Kelik Lang Dance.

The study did not involve five socially vulnerable women. Therefore, the reviewer's reference to observations involving five socially vulnerable women appears inconsistent with the participants and research context of this study. The observations in the present research focused on 32 young children and the adult informants who participated in the educational and cultural activities. Before data collection, the researcher explained the objectives and procedures of the study to the preschool administrators, educators, parents, and traditional leaders. Parental or guardian consent was obtained before the children participated in the observation and documentation activities. Children's names were replaced with identification codes to protect their identities.

The primary research instrument was the researcher, who directly observed the learning activities, conducted interviews, produced field notes, and interpreted the cultural meaning of the Kelik Lang Dance. Supporting instruments included a participant observation guide, a semi-structured interview guide, a field-note form, an audiovisual documentation checklist, photographs, and video recordings. The observation guide was developed to record four main dimensions. The first dimension

concerned children's gross motor responses, including balance, stepping, bending, turning, stretching, changing direction, and coordinating movement with musical rhythm. The second dimension concerned fine motor coordination, particularly the control of hand, wrist, and finger movements when imitating the floating and grabbing movements of an eagle. The third dimension concerned social and character-related behaviour, including cooperation, discipline, turn-taking, compliance with instructions, confidence, and participation in group activities. The fourth dimension concerned children's cultural responses, including their ability to recognize, imitate, and verbally respond to movements associated with the Kelik Lang Dance. Participant observations were conducted during 4 learning sessions over 2 weeks. Each session lasted approximately 45 minutes and involved one learning group at a time. The observations were conducted after breakfast because the educators considered the children more physically prepared, emotionally settled, and able to concentrate during this period. The activities took place in a safe, comfortable, and sufficiently open learning space that allowed children to move freely. Each learning session followed a consistent procedure. First, the educator prepared the children and ensured that they were physically comfortable. Second, the children watched a video of the Kelik Lang Dance accompanied by recorded music. Third, the educator introduced and demonstrated selected movements in a simplified form. Fourth, the children imitated the movements through playful and repetitive activities. Fifth, the children practised the movements individually and in groups while following the rhythm of the recorded music. The movements were adjusted to the physical abilities and levels of understanding of children aged four to six years.

The researcher participated in and observed the learning process without replacing the educator's role. During each session, the researcher recorded the children's motor responses, emotional expressions, social interactions, movement difficulties, confidence, and ability to follow movement sequences. Observation notes were completed during and immediately after each activity. Video recordings were reviewed after the sessions to confirm movement details that could not be recorded completely in the field notes. To improve the consistency of the observations, the same behavioural indicators were applied across Groups A, B, and C. Each indicator was recorded descriptively using categories such as not yet demonstrated, demonstrated with assistance, and demonstrated independently. These categories were used to organize qualitative observations and were not treated as statistical scores.

In-depth interviews were conducted with parents, educators, and traditional leaders. The interviews with traditional leaders explored the origin, cultural function, movement vocabulary, symbolic meaning, and traditional values of the Kelik Lang Dance. Interviews with educators examined the learning procedures, children's motor development, classroom participation, emotional responses, and challenges in adapting the dance for early childhood education. Interviews with parents focused on children's interest in the dance, movement imitation at home, discipline, confidence, cooperation, and recognition of their cultural heritage. Each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes and was conducted in Indonesian or the local language according to the informant's preference. When the local language was used, the researcher worked with a culturally competent educator to ensure accurate interpretation. Interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission and supported by written notes. The recordings were transcribed verbatim before analysis. Documentation consisted of

photographs, video recordings, attendance records, learning materials, interview recordings, and field notes. The visual materials were used to examine children's body positions, spatial directions, movement levels, rhythmic coordination, and interactions with peers. Documentation was used to complement observation and interview data rather than as an independent measure of developmental achievement (Krincing & Kreasi, 2025).

The analysis followed the stages of data reduction, data presentation, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Analysis began during data collection and continued after all observations, interviews, and documentation had been completed. During data reduction, the researcher reviewed the observation notes, interview transcripts, photographs, and video recordings. Information unrelated to the research objectives was excluded. Relevant data were coded according to the research focus. Initial codes included gross motor movement, fine motor coordination, balance, direction, rhythm, movement imitation, cooperation, discipline, confidence, emotional expression, cultural recognition, traditional values, and ecological meaning. The codes were subsequently compared and grouped into broader themes. The principal themes included motor development through traditional movement, social interaction during group practice, character formation, emotional engagement, cultural identity, and the adaptation of adult cultural practices for early childhood learning. Data from Groups A, B, and C were compared to identify similarities and differences in children's responses according to age and learning group. Interpretation was conducted using ethnopedagogical and ethnochoreological perspectives. The ethnopedagogical analysis focused on how local knowledge and cultural values were transformed into educational practices. The ethnochoreological analysis examined the form, rhythm, spatial direction, body level, symbolic meaning, and cultural context of the dance movements. Particular attention was given to the vertical and horizontal movement patterns inspired by an eagle, including floating, stretching, descending, turning, and grabbing movements.

The researcher constructed data displays in the form of thematic matrices and descriptive summaries. The matrices compared observation data, interview statements, and visual documentation for each theme. For example, claims about cooperation were supported by observation records of children coordinating movements, educator statements about group participation, and video documentation of collective practice. Claims about cultural identity were based on children's responses, interviews with parents and traditional leaders, and documented recognition of the dance as part of the Suku Dalam cultural heritage.

Data validity was maintained through source, method, and time triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from children's activities, parents, educators, and traditional leaders. Method triangulation involved comparing participant observation, interviews, photographs, field notes, and video recordings. Time triangulation was conducted by observing children's responses during different learning sessions rather than relying on a single observation. Member checking was conducted by discussing preliminary interpretations with educators and traditional leaders. This process allowed the participants to confirm, clarify, or correct the researcher's interpretation of cultural meanings and learning practices. Reflective discussions were also used to reduce the possibility that the analysis reflected only the researcher's personal assumptions. The conclusions were drawn after recurring themes were consistently identified across the different data sources. Negative or contradictory

findings were retained and examined rather than removed from the analysis. The study did not aim to produce statistical generalizations. Instead, it sought to provide a detailed and contextualized account, or thick description, of Kelik Lang Dance learning within the social and cultural environment of the Suku Dalam community (Afilla & Oktariani, n.d.).

Table 1. Research Design for Learning Kelik Lang Dance

Research Stage	Activity Focus	Research Process Description	Subject & Location	Techniques & Data Output
1. Determining Approach & Design	Formulation of research framework	Establishing a qualitative approach with ethnopedagogical and ethnochoreological designs that place local culture as a source of knowledge and educational practice.	Researchers	Conceptual framework of the research
2. Preliminary Field Study	Understanding cultural context	Initial observations of the social life, cultural practices, and learning activities of Suku Dalam children	Inner Tribe Settlement, Jambi Province	Initial field notes
3. Determination of Research Subjects	Participant selection	Purposive selection of subjects based on involvement in education and cultural preservation	Early childhood (4–6 years), parents, traditional leaders, local educators	List of research subjects
4. Implementation of Dance Learning	Implementation of Ethno-pedagogy	The Kelik Lang Dance learning activities are integrated through direct physical modeling, oral storytelling of nature-based values, and interactive movement practices after breakfast.	Aliah Arsih Foundation PAUD (Groups A, B, C)	Documentation of the learning process
5. Participatory Observation	Motor & character observation	Researchers were directly involved in the activities, recording motor responses, emotional expressions, social interactions, and the meaning of dance movements by children.	Early childhood of the Suku Dalam	Observation sheets, field notes
6. In-depth Interview	Exploring cultural meaning	Interviews with traditional figures, parents, and educators to understand the value of the Kelik Lang Dance and changes in children's behavior.	Traditional figures, parents, educators	Interview transcript
7. Visual Documentation	Qualitative data strengthening	Collection of photos, video recordings, and documentation of dance learning activities	Research location	Visual and documentary archives
8. Data Analysis	Interpretation of findings	Thematic analysis through data reduction, grouping themes, interpretation of cultural meaning, and drawing conclusions	Researchers	Research themes
9. Data Validation	Validity of findings	Triangulation of sources, methods, and time as well as reflective discussions with key informants	Researchers & informants	Validated data
10. Drawing up conclusions	In-depth description	Compiling a thick description of learning the Kelik Lang Dance as a medium for developing motor skills and character in early childhood.	Researchers	Scientific research report

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Kelik Lang dance originates from Kuamang Hamlet, VII Koto District, Tebo Regency, Jambi Province, an area located near the border of West Sumatra and Muaro Bungo Regency. The Kuamang community maintains several traditional performing arts, including the Rotan Sego dance, Pinggan Tujuh dance, and Kelik Lang dance. Among these traditions, Kelik Lang is frequently performed as ceremonial entertainment during circumcision ceremonies, ritual bathing ceremonies for children, official welcoming events, and wedding celebrations. These functions demonstrate the

dance's important social and cultural position within the local community. According to Hambali, a 65-year-old traditional dance elder from Kuamang Hamlet, Kelik Lang was created by Timasani, locally known as the "White Grandmother," in approximately 1902. The dance was inspired by the behavior of an eagle soaring, circling, observing, and approaching its prey. The term "Kelik" imitates the sound associated with the eagle, while "Lang" refers to an eagle in the local Kuamang dialect. Therefore, Kelik Lang can be classified as a mimetic dance because its movement vocabulary imitates the behavior of a hunting eagle.



Figure 1. Eagle-inspired movement sequence in Kelik Lang dance by researchers 2025

As illustrated in Figure 1, the principal movements represent several stages of the eagle's behavior, including soaring, observing, approaching, and seizing its prey. These symbolic actions are expressed through movement patterns such as melayang, melayok, meniruk, and menyambar.

Table 2. Research Design for Learning Kelik Lang Dance

Movement pattern	Movement description	Eagle behavior represented	Symbolic meaning
<i>Melayang</i>	Arms extend like wings while the body moves smoothly	Eagle soaring in the air	Freedom, balance, and alertness
<i>Melayok</i>	The body sways and changes direction in a controlled manner	Eagle circling above its prey	Observation and body control
<i>Meniruk</i>	The body and head focus toward a particular direction	Eagle tracking its prey	Concentration and attentiveness
<i>Menyambar</i>	A quick forward or downward movement	Eagle seizing its prey	Courage, speed, and decisiveness

Table 2 presents the relationship between each movement pattern, its physical characteristics, and its symbolic meaning. The melayang movement represents an eagle spreading its wings and flying through the air, while melayok represents controlled swaying and changes in body direction. The meniruk movement depicts the eagle observing or targeting its prey, whereas menyambar represents a rapid movement used to capture the prey. These movement patterns confirm that the structure of the Kelik Lang dance is closely connected to the observation and imitation of nature (Irawan & Martiara, 2024).

The Kelik Lang dance performance, which has existed in the community, conveys the message that life must always coexist with the surrounding nature. The creation of this dance begins with a planning process, where the movements of eagles are selected and arranged to form a complete dance structure (Rosmana et al., 2024). The assertions regarding children's improved body balance and spatial awareness are validated by specific descriptions of their reactions and verbatim field note excerpts during the eagle-mimicking sessions. For instance, when executing diving and soaring motions, the children demonstrated an adaptive sense of spacing to avoid physical contact while maintaining stability. According to Field, "The Suku Dalam children shouted with joy while spreading their arms wide to mimic eagle wings. As the circular formation tightened, Zea (pseudonym) spontaneously halted his steps and shifted to the right to clear space for his peer without losing his footing." Such enthusiastic reactions and immediate motor adjustments confirm that the dance practice effectively enhances both spatial orientation and physical balance in a natural setting.

Early childhood education is the primary foundation for all aspects of human development, including physical (motor), cognitive, social, emotional, and character development. The early childhood period (4–6 years) is a critical phase where learning experiences have a long-term impact on an individual's mindset and behavior (Cameron & Pierce, 1994). In this context, meaningful learning must be able to touch the realm of children's real experiences, in accordance with how they learn: through movement, exploration, social interaction, and cultural symbols inherent in their daily lives.



Figure 2. School Suku Anak Dalam
by researchers 2025

The Suku Dalam community in Jambi Province has a unique informal education system. Children's learning is inextricably linked to life experiences in nature, family interactions, and cultural rituals and expressions passed down through generations. Children in this group learn to move through physical activities such as running, climbing tree trunks, imitating their parents, and even dancing. This natural learning process shares profound similarities with the concept of learning based on local cultural activities such as traditional dance.

1. Kelik Lang Dance as a Cultural Representation and Learning Medium

The Kelik Lang Dance is an indigenous cultural expression of the Suku Dalam tribe, involving rhythmic movements, body coordination, and shared customs. This dance is understood not only as a spectacle or entertainment, but also as a means to reflect on life's values: togetherness, discipline, harmony, and respect for nature and ancestors. In fieldwork, researchers found that the Kelik Lang Dance has a complex movement pattern: rhythmic jumping, shifting in certain directions, and creating a kinesthetic connection between the dancers. This movement pattern naturally demands integrated motor skills: body control, balance, right-left coordination, and spatial perception.

Introducing the Kelik Lang Dance to young children is not simply about "what dance is," but rather about creating a holistic learning experience that engages the child's entire sensory network. Systematically imitating Kelik Lang dance patterns can be an effective gross motor skill training tool. Children learn to jump to the rhythm, coordinate their steps, maintain balance, and develop motor coordination skills that form the foundation for more complex physical skills (Indriyani & Miliani, 2021)

2. Motor Development Through Dance Integration in Learning

Gross motor skills in early childhood are related to the development of large muscles and basic movement skills such as standing, walking, turning, jumping, and balancing. Learning that focuses too much on verbal instructions and passive activities does not sufficiently stimulate children's motor development. However, when the Kelik Lang Dance is integrated into the learning routine after mealtime, in the relaxed and fun atmosphere of the early childhood education classroom, children are not only actively moving but also emotionally and cognitively engaged.

Field observation data show that children involved in this dance activity show the following improvements in abilities:

- a. Body balance: Children can maintain body position when jumping and turning.
- b. Movement coordination: Children can synchronize foot and hand movements with the rhythm of the music.
- c. Spatial awareness: Children are more aware of their body position and that of their surroundings, reducing collisions when moving.
- d. Response to rhythm: Children's ability to respond to musical sounds and adjust their pace improves significantly.

Furthermore, peers in the preschool also interacted harmoniously during the dance activities. There was evidence of improved social skills, such as cooperation, holding hands while following dance patterns, and patiently waiting their turn.

3. Dance Learning as a Medium for Character Development

The integration of the Kelik Lang Dance into early childhood education also plays a powerful role in character development. Values such as cooperation, responsibility, respect for teachers and peers, and appreciation for customs and culture are clearly demonstrated throughout the dance learning process.

Interviews with local educators and parents revealed that children who consistently participate in dance activities show the following tendencies:

- a. Teamwork: Understanding that harmonious movement requires group synergy.
- b. Discipline and focus: Children learn to follow consistent rhythms and instructions.
- c. Respect for tradition: Children understand that the Kelik Lang Dance is not just a game, but a symbol of cultural heritage that must be respected.

- d. Self-control and self-confidence: Children who were initially hesitant become more confident in expressing their movements.

These positive behavioral changes don't happen instantly, but develop through repeated practice of movement in a fun and culturally meaningful context. Children perceive these activities not as "forced lessons," but as part of their daily lives a fun and meaningful experience.

4. Ethnopedagogy and Ethnochoreology as Theoretical Foundations

The ethnopedagogical approach positions local culture as the primary source of educational knowledge and practice. In this study, researchers not only capture mechanical learning activities but also interpret the cultural meanings embedded in the dance movements. The Kelik Lang dance movement patterns are understood as a form of collective knowledge passed down from generation to generation, which, in the Suku Dalam context, serves as a natural learning medium from the moment children are immersed in family and community routines. Children grow up surrounded by oral traditions, communal games, and the values implicit in cultural rituals and expressions (Siswa et al., 2023).

Ethnochoreology also enriches this study by examining the relationship between culture, movement, and social context. Dance is not merely "aesthetic movement," but rather a symbol and body language that evolves within a social context, embodying the values, norms, and identity of a community. In the learning process, children not only learn movement but also learn cultural meaning through their own bodies, as their bodies are the primary medium for expressing their world (Rasa & Budaya, 2023).

The research results show that learning the Kelik Lang dance has a positive impact on children's gross motor skills, such as jumping, rhythmic movement, and body coordination. Furthermore, character values such as discipline, teamwork, and self-confidence are developed through dance practice and performances.

Discussion

Field observations, interviews, and documentation in this study showed that the Kelik Lang Dance had traditionally been performed within adult cultural and ritual activities. Its use as an educational medium for young children remained limited. During the learning activities, the dance movements were simplified and presented through playful imitation, rhythmic repetition, guided exploration, and group practice. The observed children demonstrated improved control of gross motor movements, particularly in balancing, stepping, bending, extending their arms, changing body direction, and coordinating movements with musical rhythms. The children also displayed greater confidence in performing the movements and participated more actively in group activities. These findings were drawn directly from the recorded changes in the children's movements and participation during the learning sessions.

The findings further indicated changes in the children's social and cultural responses. During collective practice, the children learned to wait for instructions, follow movement sequences, coordinate with peers, maintain group formations, and complete the dance activities together. These observable behaviours reflected the development of discipline and cooperation. Interviews with educators and traditional leaders also indicated that introducing the Kelik Lang Dance helped children recognize the dance as part of their cultural heritage. Therefore, the interpretation of character

development and cultural identity was grounded in the children's participation, peer interaction, responses during reflection, and statements provided by educators and traditional leaders. It was not inferred solely from the findings of previous studies.

From the perspective of Mezirow's transformative learning theory, transformation involves critically examining and revising an established frame of reference through experience, reflection, and dialogue (Kurnia, 2021). In this study, the adaptation of the Kelik Lang Dance changed how educators and community members understood and practised the dance. They initially viewed it primarily as an adult cultural performance. Following discussion, reflection, and direct involvement in the learning activities, they began to recognize it as a potential educational resource for early childhood development. The evidence for this perspective transformation consisted of participants' statements regarding the previous function of the dance, their reflections on its educational possibilities, and their willingness to simplify the movements, modify the instructional procedures, and involve children in culturally contextual learning. Thus, the application of Mezirow's theory was limited to the perspective changes documented among the adult participants. The theory was not used to claim changes that were absent from the field data.

Previous studies provide a comparative context for interpreting these findings. They do not constitute direct evidence of the outcomes observed in the present study. Research has shown that structured dance activities can support children's motor competence through repeated movement patterns, rhythmic coordination, and spatial exploration (Oppici et al., 2020). Play-based dance activities have also been associated with improvements in the fluency, flexibility, and elaboration of dance movements among children aged five to six years (Dewi & Yufiarti, 2021). In the Indonesian context, studies involving Kuda Lumping and Sakadang Buruy dance activities reported improvements in children's balance, movement coordination, agility, and gross motor participation (Surya et al., 2021; Aisyah & Rohmalina, 2024). These studies support the pedagogical relevance of adapting traditional dance for children, but they do not explain the specific results of the Kelik Lang Dance intervention.

Studies of traditional dance education have also shown that collective dance practice can provide contexts for cooperation, discipline, responsibility, and cultural recognition (Supeni & Harini, 2021). Evidence from school-based dance research further indicates that coordinated movement activities may support social interaction and emotional expression, although the participants and instructional contexts differ from those of the present study (Panagiotopoulou, 2018). A systematic review of music and movement pedagogy similarly found that rhythmic bodily activities may support coordination, body awareness, expression, attention, and cooperation in educational settings (del Barrio & Arús, 2024). Recent Indonesian research also suggests that embodied participation in local cultural practices can strengthen cultural literacy, identity, belonging, and social cohesion when schools and communities collaborate in the learning process (Yatim et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, the Kelik Lang Dance displayed movement characteristics specific to the cultural and ecological context of the Suku Dalam community. Its vertical and horizontal spatial patterns included floating, stretching, descending, turning, and grabbing movements inspired by the behaviour of an eagle. Field observations showed that these movements encouraged the children to explore balance, direction, body level, movement range, and coordination within a shared performance space. The

interpretation of these spatial-kinesthetic adaptations was based on the observed movement patterns and the explanations provided by traditional leaders. Comparable studies on culturally based dance have reported relationships between structured movement, physical coordination, social connection, emotional regulation, and cultural appreciation, but these findings involved different age groups and cultural settings (Liu & Vorawattanachai, 2026). Therefore, the present study indicates that the Kelik Lang Dance can support spatial-kinesthetic learning while connecting bodily movement, emotional expression, social interaction, and children's understanding of their immediate natural and cultural environment. This conclusion derives from the study's field evidence. Previous research is used only to identify similarities, differences, and the broader relevance of the findings. The results of learning the Kelik Lang dance for early childhood require special treatment, especially given the child's condition. Based on the stages of learning implementation that are adapted to motoric understanding and character development, the following table presents findings in the field.

Table 3. Field Findings

Aspects of Findings	Field Observation Results	Educational Implications
Children's learning patterns	Children learn through movement, imitation, and collective activity.	Learning needs to be based on physical activity and direct experience.
Children's interest	Children show high interest in traditional dance movements and games.	Dance can be used as a fun learning medium
Function of Kelik Lang Dance	Media for cultural expression, togetherness, and the inheritance of values	Potential as a means of character education
Learning practices	Not yet structured and not yet integrated in PAUD	Local culture-based learning models are needed
Character values	Togetherness, discipline, mutual respect, and courage	Can be developed through dance learning

Based on these conditions, this research is crucial for assessing and designing the integration of Kelik Lang Dance learning as a medium for developing motor skills and character in early childhood Suku Dalam (Inner Tribe) in Jambi Province. Special instructional treatment is highly required given the children's specific developmental and contextual conditions. Culturally and spatially, Suku Dalam children grow up in semi-nomadic or forest environments where they are accustomed to unrestricted physical activities but lack familiarity with rigid, structured formal education systems. Furthermore, they often demonstrate resistance toward theoretical instructions that do not align with their daily survival experiences. Therefore, this approach is expected to bridge children's educational needs with local cultural preservation, as well as provide educational practices that are more humane, contextual, and rooted in children's life experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to contextual early childhood education by formulating an Eco-Kinesthetic Ethnopedagogy model that integrates Kelik Lang Dance into the learning experiences of Suku Dalam children. The main finding shows that Kelik Lang Dance functions not only as a medium for transmitting cultural heritage but also as a structured kinesthetic learning instrument that supports fundamental gross motor development, including locomotor and non-locomotor skills. The mimetic movements

of a hunting eagle, such as jumping, turning, balancing, spreading the arms, and coordinating hand and foot movements, can be adapted into developmentally appropriate learning activities for early childhood. The findings also indicate that Suku Dalam children demonstrate strong interest and active participation in movement activities derived from Kelik Lang Dance. These activities support body coordination, balance, rhythmic sensitivity, courage, self-confidence, discipline, cooperation, and social interaction. This result confirms that children's motor development and character formation can be strengthened when learning activities align with their cultural experiences, ecological environment, spatial memory, and everyday practices.

The integration of Kelik Lang Dance has theoretical, pedagogical, cultural, and institutional implications. Theoretically, the Eco-Kinesthetic Ethnopedagogy model expands the understanding of culturally responsive early childhood education by connecting ecological knowledge, bodily movement, indigenous identity, and character development within one pedagogical framework. It shows that nature-based indigenous movement practices can serve as legitimate educational resources rather than merely as cultural performances. Pedagogically, educators can adapt Kelik Lang movement patterns into structured lesson plans designed to develop gross motor skills and character values. Activities such as jumping, turning, balancing, imitating eagle movements, and performing coordinated group sequences can be organized according to children's developmental stages. These activities can also promote cooperation, discipline, self-expression, responsibility, and confidence. Culturally, integrating Kelik Lang Dance into early childhood education respects children as cultural subjects who learn through their own experiences, traditions, and environment. The approach creates a dialogue between formal education and local wisdom while supporting the sustainable preservation of Suku Dalam cultural heritage. Institutionally, the findings highlight the need for schools, teachers, traditional leaders, parents, and local governments to collaborate in developing a context-based curriculum that formally incorporates local cultural practices.

This study has several empirical limitations. First, the research was conducted within a specific cultural setting involving the Suku Dalam community in Jambi Province. Therefore, the findings cannot be directly generalized to other indigenous communities that possess different cultural traditions, ecological conditions, and educational structures. Second, the study relied primarily on qualitative data obtained through field observations and interviews with selected traditional leaders, parents, educators, and community members. The findings therefore reflect the experiences and perspectives of the participants involved in this specific research setting and may not represent all members of the Suku Dalam community. Third, the study did not employ standardized quantitative instruments to measure changes in children's locomotor skills, non-locomotor skills, balance, coordination, or character development. As a result, the identified developmental benefits were interpreted mainly from observed behavior, participant responses, and qualitative descriptions rather than from statistically measured changes. Fourth, Kelik Lang Dance had not been systematically implemented as part of a formal, standardized early childhood learning program during the study. Its educational application remained sporadic and depended largely on the individual initiatives of educators and community members. Consequently, this study could not fully evaluate the effectiveness of a consistent, long-term, and curriculum-based intervention.

Future research should test the Eco-Kinesthetic Ethnopedagogy model through structured intervention studies involving larger numbers of children, multiple learning groups, and longer implementation periods. Researchers should develop standardized learning modules, observation rubrics, and motor development instruments to measure locomotor skills, non-locomotor skills, balance, body coordination, rhythmic ability, and character development. Further studies may use mixed-method or quasi-experimental designs to compare children who participate in Kelik Lang Dance-based learning with those who receive conventional motor learning activities. Longitudinal research is also needed to examine whether the effects on motor competence, self-confidence, cooperation, discipline, cultural identity, and social interaction remain stable over time. Future research should also involve other indigenous communities to assess the adaptability of the Eco-Kinesthetic Ethnopedagogy model across different cultural and ecological contexts. Collaboration among researchers, educators, traditional leaders, parents, and local governments will be essential for developing a culturally responsive early childhood curriculum that is empirically validated, contextually relevant, and sustainable.

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