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Cultural Pretend Play with Minangkabau Songs to Enhance Mother Tongue and Character in Early Childhood: A SEM-PLS Analysis

Juego de simulación cultural con canciones Minangkabau para fortalecer la lengua materna y el carácter en la primera infancia: un análisis SEM-PLS

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ABSTRACT

Mother tongue plays a crucial role in shaping children's communication skills, cultural identity, and cognitive development. This study examines the effect of integrating cultural pretend play and Minangkabau songs on the development of mother tongue and character in early childhood. A total of 60 children aged 5–6 years from three early childhood centers in West Sumatra participated in a four-week intervention combining Minangkabau-themed pretend play and traditional songs. Using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), results showed that cultural pretend play (ß = 0,462, p < 0,001) and Minangkabau songs (ß = 0,378, p < 0,001) significantly enhanced children's mother tongue development, which in turn positively influenced character development (ß = 0,509, p < 0,001). The R^2 values indicated that 52,4 % of mother tongue development and 45,9 % of character development variance were explained by the model. The findings highlight that culturally responsive play-based learning strengthens both linguistic and moral growth. Integrating local culture and traditional music into early education fosters children's language mastery, confidence, respect, and social awareness while supporting the preservation of Indonesia's linguistic heritage.

Keywords: Cultural Pretend Play, Minangkabau Songs, Mother Tongue Development, Character Development, SEM-PLS, Early Childhood Education.

RESUMEN

La lengua materna desempeña un papel crucial en la formación de las habilidades de comunicación, la identidad cultural y el desarrollo cognitivo de los niños. Este estudio examina el efecto de la integración del juego de simulación cultural y las canciones Minangkabau en el desarrollo de la lengua materna y el carácter en la primera infancia. Un total de 60 niños de 5 a 6 años de tres centros de primera infancia en Sumatra Occidental participaron en una intervención de cuatro semanas que combinó el juego de simulación con la temática de Minangkabau y canciones tradicionales. Utilizando el Modelo de Ecuaciones Estructurales-Mínimos Cuadrados Parciales (SEM-PLS), los resultados mostraron que el juego de simulación cultural (ß = 0,462, p < 0,001) y las canciones Minangkabau (ß = 0,378, p < 0,001) mejoraron significativamente el desarrollo de la lengua materna de los niños, lo que a su vez influyó positivamente en el desarrollo del carácter (ß = 0,509, p < 0,001). Los valores de R^2 indicaron que el modelo explicó el 52,4 % del desarrollo de la lengua materna y el 45,9 % de la varianza del desarrollo del carácter. Los hallazgos destacan que el aprendizaje basado en el juego, culturalmente receptivo, fortalece el desarrollo lingüístico y moral. La integración de la cultura local y la música tradicional en la educación temprana fomenta el dominio del idioma, la confianza, el respeto y la conciencia social de los niños, a la vez que contribuye a la preservación del patrimonio lingüístico de Indonesia.

Palabras clave: Juego de Simulación Cultural; Canciones Minangkabau; Desarrollo de la Lengua Materna, Desarrollo del Carácter; SEM-PLS; Educación de la Primera Infancia.

made up the sample of this research possess reliable knowledge about the variables self-efficacy, frequency in food consumption, eating habits, knowledge of nutrition and food safety and behavior in hygiene practices, which indicates that most students possess notions about these practices, which can serve as protection.

Keywords: Adolescents; Health; Dietary Habits; Food Consumption; Nutrition; Nursing.

INTRODUCTION

Mother tongue is a vital foundation for children to build communication skills, cultural identity, and cognitive development. In multicultural societies such as Indonesia, local languages are often at risk of being marginalized. Early childhood is a sensitive period for language development, character formation, and integrating local culture through play and music can provide a meaningful learning context.[1,2,3,4,5,6] Therefore, this study aims to assess how the integration of cultural pretend play and Minangkabau songs supports the development of children's mother tongue and character through a structural model that links socio-cultural factors, parental interaction, and learning media in early childhood education. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is designed to support the holistic growth and development of young children.[7,8,9] It aims to provide opportunities for children to develop their personality and reach their full potential. To achieve this, ECE institutions offer various activities that nurture multiple developmental domains including cognitive skills, social skills, emotional skills, physical skills, motor skills, artistic skills, and language skills. On the other hand, the mother tongue is the first language acquired by a child.[7,10] The use of mother tongues or local languages in education is supported by Indonesian legislation. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003, Article 34, paragraph 2 states: "Regional languages can be used as the language of instruction in the early stages of education if needed in conveying certain knowledge and/or skills." With its remarkable linguistic diversity, Indonesia becomes the second most linguistically diverse country in the world. Data from the Agency for Language Development and Cultivation support this, stating that there are 718 regional languages spoken across the country.

An analysis of language vitality reveals that 90 percent of endangered languages are found in eastern Indonesia: 428 in Papua, 80 in Maluku, 72 in East Nusa Tenggara, and 62 in Sulawesi. Annual studies conducted by the Language Agency highlight a growing concern: eight local languages have become extinct, five are critically endangered, 24 are threatened with the extinction, 12 are in decline, 24 are vulnerable (stable but at risk), and only 21 are considered safe. This situation must be addressed thoughtfully to prevent the gradual disappearance of these languages, which part of Indonesia's rich intangible cultural heritage.

One of the regions that rich in linguistic and cultural diversity is West Sumatra, where the Minangkabau language serves as the local language used in everyday communication.[11] However, with the widespread influence of information and technology across the archipelago, the use of the Minangkabau language has significantly declined.[12,13] This has affected children's acquisition of the Minangkabau as their mother tongue, which has distinctive pragmatic features. As a result, many children no longer uphold traditional values, customs, or politeness in communication.[11] Such values are encapsulated in the cultural rule system and known as Kato Nan Ampek.

Language acquisition refers to the process through which children gain fluent control of their native language.[14] While the ability to learn and understand language is genetically inherited, the specific language a child learns is shaped and passed down through cultural and environmental influences. The use of the mother tongue is less likely to be affected by intellectual impairments than the development of other cognitive skills.[10] Children across the world acquire their mother tongue naturally and without formal instruction. This process differs from learning other skills such as swimming, dancing, or gymnastics.[15]

The acquisition of a first language is facilitated by a child's innate neurological structure and cognitive tendency toward language learning, which is a unique human genetic trait. Language learning, therefore, is not merely the result of stimulus-response mechanisms as suggested by behaviorist theories. According to Stephen J. Gaies, language learning involves more than imitation and the reinforcement of habits through external stimuli and it also requires active cognitive engagement.[16]

The mother tongue or first language, is typically acquired from birth through interactions with parents and close family members.[17] Proficiency in the mother tongue significantly influences the ability to learn a second language.[18,19,20] As highlighted in the discussions above, outstanding skills in using mother tongue plays a crucial role in developing a child's intellectual capacity. Consequently, language acquisition is closely linked to the quality of environmental stimulation a child receives during early language learning. The process of learning the mother tongue not only supports language development but also enhances intellectual growth, thereby strengthening the foundation for second language acquisition.[7,19,21,22]

Pretend play not only supports language development, but also stimulates character development in early childhood. Character education, which includes moral and religious values outlined in the Nine Pillars of Character, cannot be fully implemented if left solely to teachers in schools.[3] The Nine Pillars of Character

include: 1) Love of God and the universe; 2) Responsibility, discipline, and independence; 3) Honesty, respect, and courtesy; 4) Compassion, caring, and cooperation; 5) Confidence, creativity, perseverance; 6) Justice and leadership; 7) Kindness and humility; 8) Tolerance and peace; and 9) Unity.[23]

Pretend play involves imaginative actions that simulate real-life scenarios.[24] Pretend play differs from role play, which emphasizes adopting specific roles. On the contrary, pretend play focuses on symbolic equipment, defined rules, and object representation, enabling children to assign meaning and symbols to the objects and actions. This promotes the development of symbolic thinking, which is the ability to associate actions, objects, or words with broader meanings.[25] In addition, pretend play helps build self-confidence, supports emotional regulation, and reduces boredom.[26] When combined with Minangkabau-themed creative animated song, pretend play is expected to both strengthen children's mother tongue abilities and nurture their character development in enjoyable way.

METHOD
Research Design
This study used a quasi-experimental design with a mixed methods approach (quantitative and qualitative). The aim was to evaluate the effect of integrating cultural role-playing and Minangkabau songs on the development of mother tongue and character in early childhood. The study was conducted in three early childhood education (PAUD) centers in West Sumatra, Indonesia, which have a strong Minangkabau cultural background. The study period was four months, from March to June 2025, covering the preparation phase, intervention implementation, data collection, and analysis of results.

Participants
The study involved 60 kindergarten children aged 5 to 6 years from three early childhood education centers in West Sumatra, Indonesia. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, with the following criteria:
1. Children were enrolled in the B group (final year of kindergarten),
2. Had basic speaking skills in Minangkabau,
3. Had been exposed to Minangkabau cultural elements either at home or through school activities.

Parental consent and institutional approval were obtained before participation.

Exclusion Criteria
Children were excluded from participation if they met any of the following conditions:
1. Having language development delays or communication disorders as identified by teachers or parents,
2. Demonstrating difficulty adapting to classroom routines or showing reluctance to actively participate in pretend play and singing activities,
3. Frequent absenteeism, defined as attending less than 80 % of the intervention sessions,
4. Lack of written parental consent for participation in the study,
5. Transferring to another school or experiencing significant changes in circumstances that could affect their participation during the research period.

Research Design and Intervention Procedure
The intervention was implemented over a period of four weeks, with three learning sessions per week, each lasting approximately 60–75 minutes. During each session, children engaged in activities combining:
1. Cultural Pretend Play: role-playing based on Minangkabau daily life and customs (e.g., scenes in traditional market, family life, ceremonies).
2. Minangkabau Songs: traditional and adapted children's songs featuring local vocabulary, melodies, and values, accompanied by gestures and simple dance movements.

The sessions were designed to simultaneously stimulate children's language acquisition and promote positive character traits, such as cooperation, discipline, and respect.

Instruments
To measure the variables, this study employed the following research instruments:
1. Observation Sheets: used by trained observers and teachers to document children's verbal expressions, language comprehension, and behavior during and after activities.
2. Teacher Rating Scales: structured assessments to evaluate children's use of mother tongue vocabulary and the demonstration of character traits.
3. Construct Indicators: each latent variable was measured using four key indicators as presented in table 1.

Table 1. Construct Indicator	
Construct	**Indicators Description**
Cultural Pretend Play (CPP)	Cultural role enactment, symbolic play, collaboration, imagination
Minangkabau Songs (MS)	Song comprehension, cultural meaning, rhythm response, vocabulary exposure
Mother Tongue Development (MTD)	Oral vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, spontaneous speech
Character Development (CD)	Respect, confidence, discipline, social interaction

All instruments were validated by two early childhood education experts and a cultural expert, and pilot-tested to ensure reliability and clarity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis stage is the initial step in developing a game model that aims to identify the needs, challenges, and potential within the context of early childhood education, particularly in developing mother tongue (Minangkabau) skills. Based on the results of observations, interviews with Kindergarten teachers, and documentation studies conducted in the field, it was revealed that the current learning process for the mother tongue is not optimal. This is mainly due to two factors: the limited availability of game models that align with early childhood characteristics, and the minimal integration of local culture into play-based learning activities. The data obtained illustrate the current condition of children's mother tongue abilities, as shown in table 2.

Table 2. Initial Data on Mother Tongue Skills of Children Aged 5–6 Years Old				
Indicator	**Assessment scale**			
	BM[1]	MM[2]	C[3]	M[4]
Children can repeat Minangkabau vocabulary based on the theme clearly	44 %	46 %	8 %	2 %
Children can mention vocabulary according to the mother tongue dialect (e.g., *tarimokasih* means thank you, *mohonmaaf* means I'm sorry, and *maaf* means sorry)	40 %	42 %	10 %	8 %
Children pronounce Minangkabau pronouns based on *katomandaki* (e.g., *kito, denai, ambo/kami* and *saya* in polite context)	46 %	43 %	8 %	3 %
Children pronounce Minangkabau pronouns based on *katomandata* (*awak, kanti, kawan/kami* used among peers)	45 %	48 %	5 %	2 %
Children are able to arrange words into simple sentence patterns	45 %	45 %	7 %	3 %
Children are able to pronounce sentences correctly according to S-V-O-C structure	45 %	47 %	5 %	3 %
Children ask questions using the words *apo, sia* (what, who)	47 %	48 %	4 %	1 %
Children ask questions using the words *baa, manga* (how, why)	47 %	48 %	4 %	1 %
Children show expressions during traditional Minangkabau games	52 %	45 %	3 %	0 %
Children express feelings with adjectives (*sanang* or happy, *sadiah* or sad, *ibohati* or heartbroken) after activities	50 %	45 %	5 %	0 %
Children express facial expressions when telling stories about past activities	50 %	45 %	5 %	0 %
Children speak Minangkabau language while maintaining eye contact with the listener	53 %	45 %	2 %	0 %
Children recount their own experiences in Minangkabau language according to the theme	50 %	42 %	6 %	2 %
Children express opinions clearly using Minangkabau language	50 %	48 %	2 %	1 %
Note: [1]Beginning Mastery. [2]Moderate Mastery. [3]Competent. [4]Mastery.				

To address the challenges identified above, a p retend play model integrated with Minangkabau animated music videos was designed based on the developmental stages and characteristics of early childhood. This model aims to stimulate and enhance children's Minangkabau language skills through meaningful and engaging play. One of the main component of this model is the use of Minangkabau-themed animated music videos as a form of ICT-based educational media. These videos combine thematic Minangkabau songs with visually engaging animations that are specifically designed to attract and maintain young children's attention. A recent study demonstrated that using animated song media rooted in local culture effectively stimulates mother-tongue

development by engaging children's imagination and enabling them to express ideas in their native language. [27] Moreover, studies on animated stimuli show that brief animations enhance expressive language skills in children aged 3–9, outperforming static images. [28] Therefore, by embedding local language, values, and culture into both the lyrics and visuals, the videos serve as a multisensory learning tool that supports early language development in a culturally responsive manner. Unlike conventional learning materials, animated music videos offer dynamic visual storytelling that helps children grasp the meaning of Minangkabau words and expressions through context and imagery. [27] The animation style is designed to be colorful, cheerful, and age-appropriate, incorporating familiar settings and community activities thus reinforcing the relevance of the language to the children's daily lives.

Furthermore, the pretend play model consists of two main scenarios: Free Play scenario (FP) and Structured Toy Play scenario (SP). [26] In the FP scenario, children are encouraged to engage in open-ended play with a variety of available objects in the classroom. Teachers observe and interact minimally, allowing children to explore freely and express themselves using Minangkabau vocabulary. In the SP scenario, teachers prepare specific toys arranged in the center of the classroom. Each child is provided with a personal set of toys to ensure equal participation. The Pretend Play model is designed to meet the basic developmental needs of children. [24,29,30,31] Play in early childhood serve as powerful tools for learning and personal growth. Through play, children learn to understand and follow rules, communicate and interact with peers, manage emotions, practice cooperation and tolerance, and develop a sense of sportsmanship. [17,32,33] Play also offers a safe outlet for children to express and release emotional energy in a constructive way. Song lyrics especially those rooted in tradition, often carry mythical and symbolic meanings. Similarly, the Minangkabau songs created for this model are imbued with cultural values and traditional norms that reflecting the everyday experiences and moral teachings of the community. The term "Minangkabau song" in this context refers to songs originating from the Minangkabau or West Sumatra region. Due to regional dialects and local practices, these songs are more commonly referred to as "Minang songs." However, the songs developed for this model are original compositions that draw inspiration from local customs and language use, distinguishing them from general Indonesian folk songs.

To illustrate, figure 1 presents a scene from the animated children's song Macam-macam Karajo, which is part of the "Occupations" theme in early childhood education. The illustration features a farmer and a young girl standing in a rice field. Designed in a cheerful, cartoon-like style, the visuals aim to engage young viewers through bright colors and relatable rural settings. The song introduces various professions to children using culturally relevant animations and lyrics in the Minangkabau language. By embedding familiar daily activities and local occupations into the song, the animation supports both cognitive and linguistic development in early learners. It also encourages mother-tongue preservation by presenting occupational roles in a context that resonates with children's everyday experiences.

Figure 1. A Scene From The Macam-macam Karajo Music Vidio

Next, figure 2 shows a scene from the animated music video Babendi-bendi, which is part of the Transportation theme. It is depicting the traditional transportation, especially the use of Bendi (horse-drawn carriage) that still iconic in West Sumatra.

Figure 2. A Scene From The *Babendi-bendi* Music Vidio

Figure 3 depicted a scene from the animated children's song Pai Raun ka Jam Gadang, which is part of the "Recreation" theme in early childhood education. The illustration features children playing and a family enjoying time together in a vibrant public park, with the iconic Jam Gadang clock tower of Bukittinggi in the background. Rendered in a cheerful, cartoon-like style, the visuals are designed to appeal to young audiences through colorful and culturally familiar settings. The video introduces key vocabulary and expressions in the Minangkabau language, using engaging animations and local contexts to support early language acquisition. By embedding everyday scenes and regional landmarks into the lyrics, the animation reinforces children's understanding of their mother tongue in a meaningful and joyful way. It also promotes language preservation by integrating Minangkabau naturally into songs that reflect children's lived experiences and social environments.

Figure 3. A Scene From The Pai Raun ka Jam Gadang Music Video

Figure 4 presents a scene from the animated children's song *Manggaleh Di Pasa*, which is part of the "Occupations" theme in early childhood education. The illustration captures a lively traditional market setting with a young animated vendor calls out to customers, surrounded with various local vegetables, spices, traditional baskets, and rural market elements, including a rooster and passing traders. The visual is vibrant and culturally grounded, reflecting everyday scenes familiar to children in West Sumatra. At the bottom of the screen, the lyric *"Oi kawan-kawan singgahlah singgah sabanta"* is displayed, serving as an invitation to stop by the stall in the Minangkabau language. The video promotes mother tongue development by encouraging children to repeat, respond, and engage with context-based expressions. Through culturally authentic scenarios, the animation supports vocabulary building and oral interaction in the mother tongue. Additionally, it can be effectively used by teachers during pretend play activities, reinforcing language exposure in a meaningful and enjoyable way.

Figure 4. A Scene From The *Manggaleh Di Pasa* Music Video

Furthermore, the data analysis revealed that integrating cultural pretend play and Minangkabau songs significantly contributed to the development of mother tongue skills and character traits in early childhood as presented in table 3 and table 4. Table 3 provides the individual achievement data for each child across the different variables of mother tongue skills and Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of the skills that are related to mother tongue in children aged 5-6 years old. Four variables are highlighted including Cultural Pretend Play (CPP), Minangkabau Songs (MS), Mother Tongue Development, and Character Development (CD). The mean (M) values for each variable range from 80,1 to 85,2, indicating relatively high proficiency across all domains. Character Development shows the highest mean score (M = 85,2, SD = 6,2) suggesting that this area is the strongest among the children followed by Mother Tongue Development (M = 83,4). Even though Minangkabau Songs and Cultural Pretend Play have slightly lower averages (M = 80,1 and 81,5, respectively), they are still within a high range. Furthermore, the standard deviation (SD) values ranging from 6,2 to 7,9 which show moderate variability in children's performance.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics post-intervention of mother tongue language skills in children aged 5-6 years old

Variable	Min	Max	M	SD
Cultural Pretend Play (CPP)	65	95	81,5	7,3
Minangkabau Songs (MS)	62	93	80,1	7,9
Mother Tongue Development (MTD)	68	96	83,4	6,5
Character Development (CD)	70	98	85,2	6,2

Moreover, figure 5 visualizes the mean scores in a chart format, making it easier to compare the mean levels of each skill. The chart highlights Character Development as the most prominent area, while knowledge of Minangkabau Songs appears to be the lowest among the four, though still relatively strong (M = 80,1). This figure supports the data shown in the table by offering a quick visual overview of the children's early mother tongue proficiency across multiple dimensions.
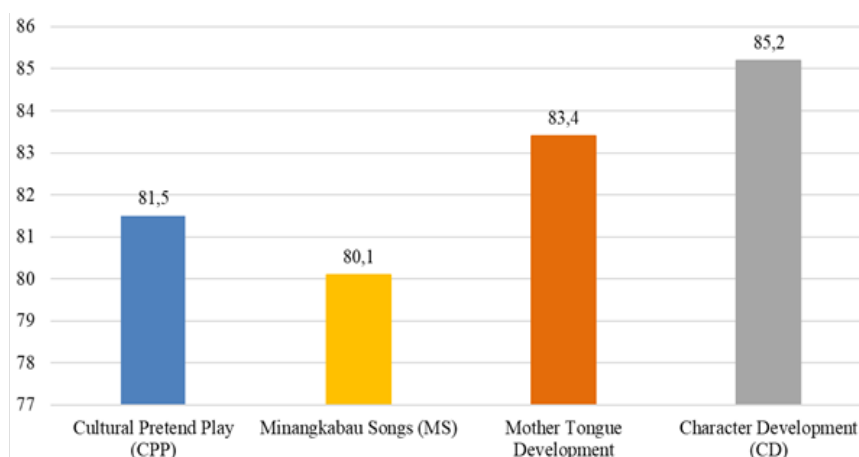

Figure 5. Mean Chart of Early Mother Tongue Proficiency in Children Aged 5-6years Old

Next, based on SEM-PLS analysis involving 60 children aged 5-6 years, the following findings were obtained:

1. Cultural Pretend Play had a significant effect on Mother Tongue Development, with a path coefficient of ß = 0,462 and t-value = 5,231 (p < 0,001). This suggests that engaging in culturally-rooted role-play scenarios enhances children's verbal expression, use of local vocabulary, and understanding of symbolic communication.

2. Minangkabau Songs also showed a significant impact on Mother Tongue Development, with ß = 0,378, t-value = 4,587 (p < 0,001). Through melody, rhythm, and lyrical repetition, children absorbed and practiced culturally relevant vocabulary, improving their comprehension and fluency.

3. Mother Tongue Development significantly influenced Character Development, with ß = 0,509 and t-value = 6,104 (p < 0,001). Children who improved in their mother tongue also demonstrated increased confidence, cooperation, respect, and discipline during learning activities.

Furthermore, the R^2 value for Mother Tongue Development was 0,524, indicating that both cultural pretend play and songs explained 52,4 % of the variance. The R^2 value for Character Development was 0,459, showing that mother tongue proficiency explained nearly half of the changes in character outcomes.

Descriptive Statistics

This study involved 60 children aged 5-6 years enrolled in Group B of a kindergarten in West Sumatra. The intervention used a culturally-based pretend play model incorporating Minangkabau traditional songs such as *Babendi-bendi* and *Pai Raun ka Jam Gadang.* Each child participated in both free and structured pretend play sessions over a period of four weeks. Their abilities were observed and rated using validated instruments. The average scores of children's competencies (on a scale of 1-5) before and after the intervention showed significant improvement across all three constructs including Pretend Play, Mother Tongue, and Character as summarized in the table 4

Table 4. Pretest and Posttest Result for Mother Tongue Skills of Children Aged 5-6 Years

Variable	Pretest mean	Posttest mean
Mother Tongue	2,89	4,12
Character Development	3,01	4,25
Pretend Play Performance	–	4,30

Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The outer model was tested to ensure validity and reliability. All indicator loadings exceeded the minimum threshold of 0,70. Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's Alpha were also within acceptable ranges. Table 5 suggest that all constructs demonstrated strong internal consistency and convergent validity.

Table 5. Result for Outer Model of Pretend Play

Construct	CR	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	Result
Pretend Play	0,93	0,90	0,81	Reliable & Valid
Mother Tongue	0,91	0,88	0,72	Reliable & Valid
Character Development	0,92	0,89	0,78	Reliable & Valid

Structural Model (Inner Model)

The path coefficients were estimated using bootstrapping with 5 000 subsamples. The model examined the direct and indirect effects between the constructs. Table 6 presents the results of the inner (structural) model, showing the estimated path coefficients (ß), t-values, and p-values for each hypothesized relationship. Table 6 confirms significant direct effects between Pretend Play, Mother Tongue, and Character Development.

Table 6. Result for Inner Model of Pretend Play

Path	Coefficient (ß)	T-Value	p-Value	Conclusion
Pretend Play using Mother Tongue	0,70	6,15	<0,001	Significant
Pretend Play for Character Development	0,49	4,02	<0,001	Significant
Mother Tongue for Character Development	0,45	3,55	0,001	Significant

Furthermore, the R^2 values were obtained from the structural model estimation. The R^2 value for Mother Tongue is 0,49, indicating that 49 % of the variance in Mother Tongue can be explained by Pretend Play. Meanwhile, the R^2 value for Character Development is 0,68, which means that 68 % of its variance is explained jointly by Pretend Play and Mother Tongue. These values demonstrate a moderate to substantial level of explanatory power in the model.

Mediation Analysis

The indirect effect of Pretend Play on Character Development through Mother Tongue was also significant with the Indirect Effect (0,70 × 0,45 = 0,315). This confirms partial mediation, meaning that mother tongue proficiency serves as a mediating variable between pretend play and character development.

Model Fit Indicators

Although SEM-PLS does not provide global fit indices similar to those used in covariance-based SEM, the following model fit values were assessed as presented in table 7.

Table 7. Result for Model Fit Indicators

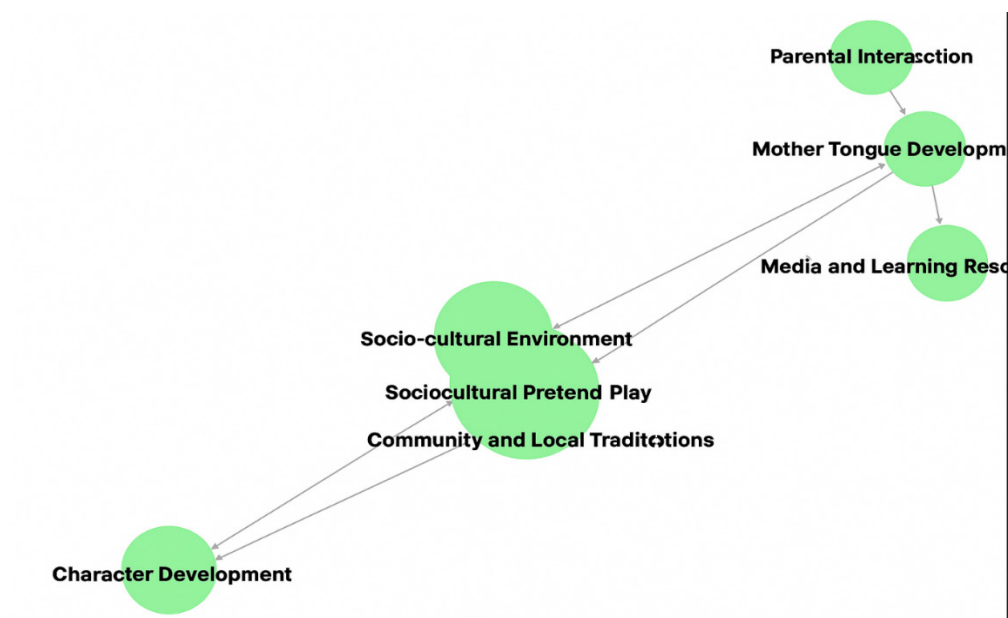| Indicator	Value	Criteria
SRMR	0,064	< 0,08 (Good)
NFI	0,921	> 0,90 (Good)

Figure 6. Extended SEM-PLS Model Factors Influencing Mother Tounge and Character Development

These results indicate that the model has an acceptable result based on the data. Building on this, figure 6 illustrates the extended SEM-PLS model elucidates the interconnected factors that influence mother tongue and character development in early childhood, particularly through the integration of cultural pretend play and Minangkabau traditional songs. Cultural pretend play serves as a meaningful strategy that mirrors real-life scenarios, allowing children to naturally engage in language use while internalizing social and emotional cues. Minangkabau songs, rich in local wisdom and linguistic patterns, provide children with authentic exposure to their cultural identity and native language. Parental interaction plays a crucial role, as consistent communication between parents and children significantly contributes to vocabulary growth, comprehension, and language structure. The socio-cultural environment further strengthens this process by creating a space where the mother tongue is valued and actively used, reinforcing language identity and behavioral norms. Additionally, access to media and culturally relevant learning resources such as storybooks, educational videos, and music supports language acquisition in an engaging and context-rich manner. Community participation and local traditions, including ceremonies, folklore, and group activities, provide real-world contexts for language use and foster the development of character traits such as respect, cooperation, and empathy. Altogether, these variables form a comprehensive framework where cultural practices and supportive environments synergize to enhance early childhood development, both linguistically and morally.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that integrating cultural pretend play and Minangkabau animated songs effectively supports both mother tongue development and character formation in early childhood. These activities provide meaningful linguistic and moral experiences that strengthen children's communication skills while nurturing values such as cooperation, respect, and confidence. The findings affirm that language acquisition is shaped by environmental interaction, consistent with behaviorist theory, where imitation and reinforcement play central roles. Culturally grounded learning contexts such as traditional role play and local songs serve as powerful stimuli for both linguistic and socio-emotional growth. Therefore, early childhood education should intentionally embed local language and cultural heritage into the curriculum to promote holistic development that.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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