

TRADITIONAL JUMP ROPE AS A MEANS OF DECONSTRUCTING DIGITAL HEGEMONY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY IN MANADO, INDONESIA

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ABSTRAK

Hegemoni digital semakin mengatur cara anak-anak kecil bermain di perkotaan Indonesia, mempersempit gerakan fisik dan interaksi sosial langsung demi aktivitas berbasis layar. Penelitian ini meneliti apakah permainan tradisional, lompat tali, dapat berfungsi sebagai sarana untuk mendekonstruksi dominasi di kalangan anak-anak berusia empat hingga enam tahun di Manado, Sulawesi Utara. Desain etnografi kritis kualitatif digunakan. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif sesi lompat tali, wawancara mendalam dengan orang tua dan pendidik, dan dokumentasi visual, dengan peneliti bertindak sebagai instrumen utama yang didukung oleh panduan observasi keterlibatan anak dan catatan lapangan. Analisis mengikuti tiga tahap dekonstruksi, identifikasi hierarki, inversi, dan rekonstruksi, dan kepercayaan ditetapkan melalui triangulasi sumber dan waktu. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan gadget dinormalisasi melalui persetujuan sosial diam-diam dan bahwa permainan tradisional telah terpinggirkan. Memperkenalkan kembali lompat tali menggeser anak-anak dari penggunaan layar pasif ke permainan kolektif aktif dan dikaitkan dengan kesabaran yang lebih besar dalam mengambil giliran, penerimaan kekalahan, mengungkapkan empati, dan meningkatkan koordinasi dan keseimbangan mata-tangan-kaki. Perubahan berkelanjutan bergantung pada orang tua dan pendidik yang dengan sengaja membatasi penggunaan gadget, sementara permainan mentransmisikan nilai-nilai kerja sama dan solidaritas Mapalus lokal. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa lompat tali beroperasi sebagai sarana yang didasarkan pada budaya untuk mendekonstruksi dominasi digital tanpa menolak teknologi, menawarkan rute berbiaya rendah dan sensitif konteks untuk mendukung perkembangan motorik, sosial, dan budaya holistik anak-anak.

Kata kunci: Etnografi Kritis; Hegemoni Digital; Anak Usia Dini; Kearifan Lokal (Mapalus); Permainan Tradisional.

ABSTRACT

Digital hegemony increasingly governs how young children play in urban Indonesia, narrowing physical movement and direct social interaction in favour of screen-based activity. This study examined

whether a traditional game, jump rope, can serve as a means of deconstructing that dominance among children aged four to six in Manado, North Sulawesi. A qualitative critical-ethnographic design was used. Data were gathered through participatory observation of jump-rope sessions, in-depth interviews with parents and educators, and visual documentation, with the researcher acting as the main instrument supported by a child-engagement observation guide and field notes. Analysis followed three deconstruction stages, identification of hierarchy, inversion, and reconstruction, and trustworthiness was established through source and time triangulation. Findings indicate that gadget use is normalised through tacit social consent and that traditional play has been marginalised. Reintroducing jump rope shifted children from passive screen use toward active collective play and was associated with greater patience in turn-taking, acceptance of losing, expressed empathy, and improved eye-hand-foot coordination and balance. Sustained change depended on parents and educators who deliberately limited gadget use, while the game transmitted local Mapalus values of cooperation and solidarity. The study concludes that jump rope operates as a culturally grounded means of deconstructing digital dominance without rejecting technology, offering a low-cost, context-sensitive route to supporting children's holistic motor, social, and cultural development.

Keyword: *Critical Ethnography; Digital Hegemony; Early Childhood; Local Wisdom (Mapalus); Traditional Games*

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1. Introduction

In the digital era, screen-based gadgets have become the principal play space for young children. This has produced a condition of digital hegemony, in which technology is no longer a neutral facility but a force that orders children's thinking, behaviour, and social interaction. Manado, the largest and most developed city in North Sulawesi, is also the province's main centre of digital diffusion. The shift is visible in everyday habits: a community once oriented toward physical activity has grown dependent on gadgets, and local practices have receded as a result. Such dependence encourages passivity and reduces children's direct engagement with their surroundings, and for children who are still growing it can constrain the gross-motor and interpersonal capacities that develop through hands-on activity.

A substantial literature already addresses digital media and early childhood. Handayani and Munastiwi (2022) report that traditional games persist in early-childhood settings but are

increasingly displaced by digital culture. Nilapancuran et al. (2025) argue that digital technology in early learning must be accompanied by parental supervision to limit overexposure and weak digital literacy, while Mulyadi et al. (2022) show that parental mediation supports children's logical thinking. Cholimah et al. (2025) document parents' difficulties in supervising young gadget users, particularly in fostering discipline and emotional regulation. International cohort evidence reinforces these concerns: higher screen time in early childhood has been associated with poorer performance on developmental screening (Madigan et al., 2019) and with weaker language skills, although shared viewing and adult mediation appear protective (Madigan et al., 2020). At a broader level, Zuboff (2019) frames digital hegemony as a concentration of data power among a few global technology firms that erodes individual autonomy, and Mudjiyanto (in Munandar et al., 2023) describes social media and algorithms as hegemonic instruments that amplify dominant narratives while sidelining counter-narratives. Suhardi (2024) similarly characterises digital hegemony as a subtle form of subjugation in which users consent without awareness.

Across these studies two limitations recur. First, traditional games are treated mainly as recreation or sport rather than as a deliberate counter-practice to screen dominance. Second, most work on the effects of digital media on children relies on quantitative surveys, leaving little room for accounts of children's lived experience as they move from the screen to the rope. Existing research on digital hegemony has concentrated on large metropolitan centres, and no study has examined the social dynamics of deconstructing digital hegemony among young children in Manado through jump rope, or connected that practice to the local Mapalus ethic of cooperation that is largely absent from the global literature.

This study addresses that gap by treating jump rope not as physical exercise alone but as an instrument for reclaiming children's social and bodily play space from digital dependence. Drawing on Derrida's account of deconstruction as the dismantling of meanings assumed to be natural or neutral (in Constantina & Sitorus, 2023) and on Giroux's (2002) critical pedagogy of media, the study reads jump rope as a culturally embedded means of contesting the assumption that play must be mediated by technology. Its aim is to describe how reintroducing jump rope reorganises early-childhood play in Manado, shifting it from technology-dominated space toward direct human mediation by parents and educators in order to stimulate gross-motor development, coordination, balance, and social interaction, while strengthening local cultural identity amid widening modernisation. The following section sets out the qualitative critical-ethnographic approach used to pursue this aim.

2. Method

This study used a qualitative approach within a critical paradigm, chosen for its fit with the concepts of deconstruction and hegemony, which seek to expose and dismantle structures of digital dominance over young children in Manado. The design was critical ethnography: the researcher did not only observe children's interaction with jump rope but also analysed how that activity disrupted the dependence of children aged four to six on digital devices. Data were

collected through four techniques, summarised in Table 1: participatory observation, in-depth interviews with parents and educators, visual documentation, and the use of the researcher as the main (human) instrument supported by an observation guide framed as a child-engagement scale, field notes, and standard consumer-grade audio and camera devices. Because the study is qualitative, instrument adequacy rested on the observation guide and triangulation rather than on calibrated measurement tools.

Table 1. Data collection techniques

Technique	Procedure	Recorded data
Participatory observation	Researcher initiated and joined jump-rope sessions, observing children's shift from screen to physical play.	Changes in expression, social interaction, gross-motor activity
In-depth interview	Conducted with parents and educators on daily gadget use before and after the traditional-game intervention.	Reported gadget-use duration; perceptions of traditional play
Documentation	Photographs and video of play activities collected as visual evidence.	Visual records of behavioural change
Research instrument	Researcher as the main (human) instrument, supported by an observation guide (child-engagement scale) and field notes.	Field notes; audio recorder and camera (standard consumer-grade devices)

Data were analysed using a deconstruction technique adapted to a social setting and applied in three ordered stages. The first, identification of hierarchy, mapped the gadget as the centre of children's activity. The second, inversion, placed jump rope as the primary activity in order to reveal the instability of digital dominance. The third, reconstruction, sought new meaning in the social interaction and physical dexterity displaced by digital hegemony. Trustworthiness was established through triangulation: source triangulation compared accounts from children, parents, and educators, and time triangulation involved observation at different times to assess the consistency of each child's behaviour. The Results are reported in the same three-stage order used here.

3. Result and Discussion

Result

The analysis produced six themes grouped under the three deconstruction stages, as summarised in Table 2 and synthesised in the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1. Findings are reported in the order of the analytic stages described in the Method.

Table 2. Summary Of Thematic Findings By Deconstruction Stage

Stage	Theme	Representative finding
1	Dominance of digital media in daily activity	Most children showed high gadget use for digital games, animated video, and visual social media; activity was individual, physically passive, and low in direct interaction.
1	Marginalisation of traditional play	Jump rope was rarely played and seen as outdated; children had limited knowledge of its rules, although adults recognised its developmental potential.
2	Jump rope as a space of deconstruction	Reintroducing jump rope moved children from screen use toward active collective play built on the body, rhythm, and social interaction, without rejecting technology outright.
2	Social and emotional change	Children became more patient in waiting turns, accepted losing, showed empathy, and appeared more expressive and confident; eye-hand-foot coordination and balance improved.
3	Role of parents and educators	Adults who deliberately limited gadget use and introduced traditional play sustained the practice; home-school collaboration produced a more balanced play ecosystem.
3	Cultural meaning of jump rope	Jump rope transmitted local Mapalus values, strengthening community identity, solidarity, and cross-generational collective memory.

Stage 1: Identification of hierarchy

Initial observation showed that most young children in Manado used gadgets intensively. Children habitually used smartphones and tablets for digital games, animated video, and visual social media. This activity was individual, physically passive, and low in direct social interaction. Parents and educators described gadgets as a means of distraction that substituted for outdoor play, forming a relation of power in which digital technology hegemonically set children's play patterns, ways of thinking, and entertainment preferences from an early age.

Interviews with parents and educators indicated that traditional games, including jump rope, were played less and less. The games were regarded as outdated, unappealing, and less competitive than digital games, and children showed limited knowledge of their rules and values. At the same time, adults acknowledged that traditional play held considerable potential for developing motor, social, and emotional capacities and a sense of togetherness not found in digital play.

Stage 2: Inversion

When jump rope was placed at the centre of children's activity, interaction and behaviour changed. Children began to engage physically, to communicate with peers, and to negotiate shared rules. In this setting jump rope functioned as a space for deconstructing digital hegemony, drawing children from the screen toward collective physical activity and offering play grounded in the body, rhythm, and social interaction. It also fostered an awareness that enjoyment does not depend on technology. Deconstruction here did not reject technology outright but unsettled the single dominance of digital media over children's play. Follow-up observation showed gains in social capacity after children took part in jump rope. They became more patient in waiting their turn, more able to accept losing, and more willing to show empathy toward peers who struggled. Emotionally they appeared more expressive, cheerful, and confident, and the direct interaction of traditional play opened space for dialogue, laughter, and negotiation that had not arisen during individual gadget use. Motor skill also improved, with better eye-hand-foot coordination and balance as children learned to time their jumps to avoid the rope.

Stage 3: Reconstruction

The success of deconstruction depended strongly on adults. Parents and educators who consciously limited gadget use and actively introduced traditional play had a positive effect on the continuity of jump rope. Collaboration between school and family produced a more balanced play ecosystem in which technology was not eliminated but placed in a measured way within children's growth and development. Beyond physical activity, jump rope served as a means of transmitting local Mapalus values. The game strengthened community identity, solidarity, and cross-generational collective memory in Manado. Through it, children learned togetherness, sportsmanship, and local wisdom that worked as a counter-narrative to the cultural homogenisation carried by digital media.

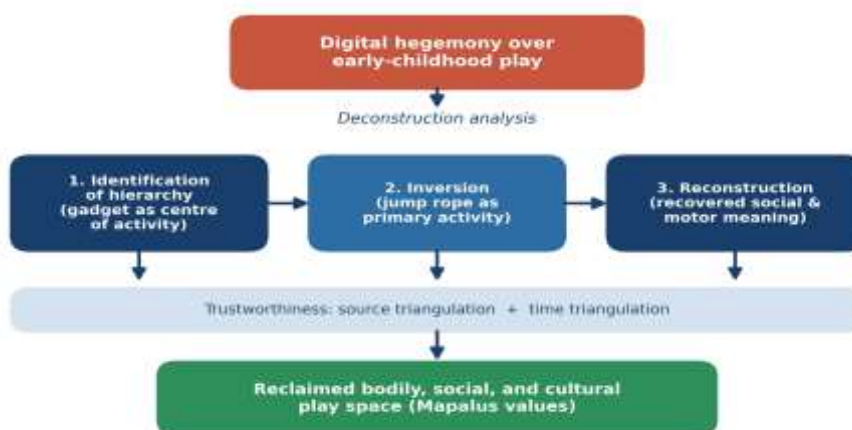


Figure 1. Early Childhood Games

Discussion

The findings position jump rope as a culturally specific response to a pattern that the wider literature describes in more general terms. Zuboff (2019) locates digital hegemony in the concentration of data power, and Suhardi (2024) stresses its subtle, consent-based *Thofan Rame, Melius Lahagu, Jiffry Kawung/Traditional Jump Rope As A Means Of Deconstructing Digital Hegemony In Early Childhood: A Critical Ethnographic Study In Manado, Indonesia*

character; the present results show that same consent operating at the level of early-childhood play, where parents and the surrounding social system tacitly legitimise the gadget as a tool for entertainment, education, and practical care, a dynamic that recalls Gramsci's (1971) account of hegemony as domination secured through consent rather than coercion. This extends Cholimah et al. (2025), who report parental difficulty in supervising young gadget users, by showing that the difficulty is not only practical but structural, sustained by the unquestioned acceptance that play should be screen-mediated.

Where Handayani and Munastiwi (2022) observe that traditional games survive but are displaced by digital culture, the present study suggests a more active role for such games. Rather than treating jump rope as residual recreation, the results show it functioning as symbolic resistance: children who took part renegotiated the meaning of play from screen-based toward body- and relation-based activity. This reading aligns with Giroux's (2002) critical pedagogy of media and with Derrida's account of deconstruction as the dismantling of meanings assumed to be natural (in Constantina & Sitorus, 2023), and it specifies a concrete practice through which that dismantling occurs in an early-childhood setting. Comparable Indonesian studies using qualitative and ethnographic designs report that traditional games such as horse racing (Ihlah et al., 2021) and engklek (Darmawati & Widyasari, 2022) strengthen children's gross-motor coordination and balance, which is consistent with the present finding that jump rope improved eye-hand-foot coordination and the timing of jumps.

The results also speak to the mediation theme in Nilapancuran et al. (2025) and Mulyadi et al. (2022). Both stress adult supervision; the present findings indicate that supervision is most effective when it is generative rather than restrictive, that is, when adults supply an alternative activity rather than only limiting screen time. The continuity of jump rope depended on parents and educators who actively introduced the game, which suggests that deconstructing digital dominance is less a matter of prohibition than of providing meaningful, low-cost play space.

Finally, the local dimension distinguishes this case from work centred on metropolitan settings. The Mapalus ethic of cooperation, expressed in turn-taking and shared rule-making, gave the practice a cultural anchor absent from the global literature on digital hegemony. Jump rope therefore operated on two levels at once, as a means of deconstructing digital dominance and as a vehicle for preserving local identity, indicating that culturally grounded play can support a balance between technology use and the strengthening of local values rather than a choice between them.

4. Conclusion

Returning to the aim set out in the Introduction, the study finds that jump rope can serve as a culturally grounded means of deconstructing digital hegemony among young children in Manado. Reintroducing the game reorganised play from technology-dominated space toward direct human mediation, and it did so without rejecting technology, instead placing it in a measured role within children's development. The contribution lies in linking

a traditional game to a critical reading of digital dominance and to the local Mapalus ethic, showing how reclaiming physical and social play space can loosen patterns of digital dependence through an emancipatory pedagogy of play. Because the present account is qualitative and situated, further research could combine it with empirical or quantitative measurement to assess more precisely how far traditional play reduces the adverse effects of digital hegemony in early childhood, and could test other traditional games as additional media for the same purpose.

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