Traditional games to develop dynamic body control in children from an early childhood educational institution

Juegos tradicionales para desarrollar el dominio corporal dinámico en niños de una institución educativa inicial

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to analyze the extent to which a traditional games program promotes the development of dynamic body control in five-year-old children attending an educational institution in Piura, Peru, during the year 2024. This research arose from the need to address difficulties in children's motor development, especially in post-pandemic contexts and in inclusive environments. To this end, an applied approach and a pre-experimental design were adopted. The intervention was carried out with a single group of 30 children, who were administered a validated and reliable checklist before and after the program. The activity plan consisted of 12 sessions with traditional Peruvian games, carefully selected to stimulate different dimensions of dynamic body control. The games used included chapaditas, encantados, three-legged race, jump rope, airplane, sack race, statues, hula hoop, the king rules, mata gente, tower of cans, and tug-of-war. As a result, statistically significant improvements ($p<0.01$) were observed in the development of dynamic body control and its specific dimensions: general coordination, dynamic balance, and visual-motor coordination. In conclusion, traditional games are consolidated as an effective pedagogical strategy for promoting psychomotor development in preschool education, especially in inclusive settings.

Keywords: motor development, early childhood education, educational play.

Resumen

El presente artículo tiene como propósito analizar en qué medida un programa de juegos tradicionales impulsa el desarrollo del dominio corporal dinámico en niños de cinco años de una institución educativa de Piura, Perú, durante el año 2024. Esta investigación surge ante la necesidad de abordar las dificultades en el desarrollo motor infantil, especialmente en contextos posteriores a la pandemia y en ambientes inclusivos. Para ello, se adoptó un enfoque aplicado y un diseño preexperimental. La intervención se llevó a cabo con un grupo único de 30 niños, a quienes se les aplicó una lista de cotejo validada y confiable antes y después del programa. El plan de actividades constó de 12 sesiones con juegos tradicionales peruanos, seleccionados cuidadosamente para estimular distintas dimensiones del dominio corporal dinámico. Entre los juegos empleados se encuentran chapaditas, encantados, carrera de tres piernas, saltar la soga, el avioncito, carrera de sacos, las estatuas, ula ula, el rey manda, mata gente, torre de latas y jalar la soga. Como resultado, se evidencian mejoras estadísticamente significativas ($p<0.01$) en el desarrollo del dominio corporal dinámico y en sus dimensiones específicas: coordinación general, equilibrio dinámico y coordinación visomotriz. En conclusión, los juegos tradicionales se consolidan como una estrategia pedagógica eficaz para fomentar el desarrollo psicomotor en la educación preescolar, especialmente en contextos inclusivos.

Palabras clave: desarrollo motor, educación de la primera infancia, juego educativo.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the motor development of preschool children, particularly affecting gross motor skills. The extended suspension of school and social activities limited opportunities for movement, hindering coordination, balance, and self-confidence in their abilities, to the extent that these children have been labeled "pandemic children" (Riquelme, 2022). It is important to note that gross motor skills form the foundation upon which fine motor skills are developed, underscoring the seriousness of this issue (Pinargote et al., 2019).

Additionally, research conducted in countries such as Malaysia, Peru, the United States, Indonesia, and the Czech Republic had already indicated motor difficulties in childhood prior to the pandemic, difficulties that intensified during the lockdown (Jakiwa & Suppiah, 2020; Brian et al., 2019; Rechtik et al., 2019; Bakhtiar, 2014). Recent studies in Taiwan, Uruguay, and Mexico confirm that the current motor development of children is lower compared to previous generations, manifesting as issues with coordination, balance, and motor safety (Cheng et al., 2023; González, 2022; Alonso-López et al., 2023). In Peru, research conducted in regions such as Amazonas, Cusco, and Oxapampa reports high levels of difficulty in basic motor skills (Tiwi & Weepiu, 2021; Bedia, 2022; Rapray et al., 2021; Ipanaque, 2023; Huaman, 2022), and in Piura, many children do not achieve expected milestones in gross motor skills (Pintado, 2022; Ipanaque, 2023).

In this context, play, particularly traditional games, has been proposed as an effective strategy to stimulate children's motor development, both internationally and nationally (Quinga et al., 2023; Chero-Pacheco et al., 2022; Huaman, 2020). Various studies have demonstrated that engaging in these games contributes to improved coordination, balance, and movement synchronization (Lozano, 2022; Delgado, 2016). Their social relevance lies in not only strengthening psychomotor development but also promoting active and inclusive participation while preserving the cultural heritage of the educational community. Thus, the proposal provides teachers and families with accessible and meaningful tools to stimulate children's motor development, supported by approaches that recognize play as the central axis of comprehensive development, especially relevant in the post-pandemic context where play has been overshadowed by excessive technology use.

Therefore, this research aims to determine the extent to which a traditional games program enhances dynamic body control in five-year-old children at an educational institution in Piura, Peru, during the year 2024.

Previous studies

Various international studies agree that traditional games significantly improve children's gross motor skills. For instance, in Ecuador, Arroba & Santana (2023) reported a 38% improvement following an intervention with traditional games. In Indonesia, Kamaruddin et al. (2023) found positive results ($p < .001$) in motor skills through games such as hopscotch and jump rope. In Pakistan, Hussain & Cheong (2022) demonstrated that random practice of traditional games significantly enhances motor learning ($p < .001$). In Israel, Yanovich & Bar-

Shalom (2022) confirmed that a brief program improves both dynamic and static balance ($p < .05$). Similarly, Emami et al. (2021) in Iran observed significant improvements in the balance of children with cerebral palsy following the application of games ($p < .001$).

At the national level, recent research in Huánuco, Huancavelica, and other regions of Peru shows that traditional games enhance gross motor skills in preschool children. Cayetano (2023), Huincho (2023), and Salazar (2022) recorded significant improvements in coordination and balance after implementing playful programs ($p < .05$). Gonzales (2021) observed a 52% increase in motor achievement in his experimental group ($p < .001$).

Locally, studies conducted in Piura indicate similar results, demonstrating that traditional games strengthen coordination, balance, and motor laterality in children aged 4 to 5 years, with statistically significant improvements ($p < .05$), confirming their effectiveness (Alvarado, 2024; Chero, 2022; Coloma, 2022; Sandoval, 2022; Huaman, 2020).

Furthermore, motor development in childhood, particularly gross motor skills, is essential for autonomy, interaction with the environment, and learning. Dynamic body control, as a component of gross motor skills, encompasses general coordination, dynamic balance, and visuomotor coordination (Comellas & Perpinyá, 2003; Pardo, 2021), and is influenced by both biological factors and the opportunities provided by the environment (Akbari et al., 2009).

Moreover, teaching is understood as a communicative interaction that integrates various didactic strategies, including playful ones that combine emotion, cognition, and action (Córdoba et al., 2017; Sánchez, 2019). Play, especially traditional play, serves as a cultural and educational means that stimulates motor, social, and emotional development (Bracho & Bracho, 2020).

From this perspective, authors such as Vygotsky emphasize the role of play in development within the zone of proximal development; Piaget highlights its value in symbolic and motor development; and Bruner underscores its utility in discovery learning (Colliver & Veraksa, 2021; Hugar et al., 2017; Bruner, 1996).

Consequently, traditional games, due to their cultural, playful, and socializing nature, emerge as an effective strategy to stimulate dynamic body control. Therefore, the program implemented in this study included 13 traditional Peruvian games, organized according to the skills to be developed: running games (chapaditas, encantados, three-legged race), jumping games (jump rope, airplane, sack race), balance and movement games (the statues, ula ula, the king commands), aiming and throwing games (mata gente, can tower, hoop toss), and a strength game (tug of war). These activities promote improvements in overall coordination, postural stability, and eye-hand-foot coordination, within a motivating and culturally significant environment (Sánchez, 2017; Bracho & Bracho, 2020).

Finally, within the framework of inclusive education, the Ministry of Education (MINEDU, 2022) promotes access and participation for all students, including those with special educational needs, reinforcing the relevance of this study in working with diverse children in an inclusive institution.

Methodology

For the development of this study, an applied experimental methodology was employed, utilizing a pre-experimental design that included pre- and post-tests within a single group. The sample, selected through non-probability convenience sampling, consisted of 30 five-year-old children from an Initial Educational Institution in Piura. Data collection utilized a checklist focused on dynamic body control, which was validated by three experts and presented a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.906.

Additionally, a program of traditional games designed by the researcher was implemented, consisting of 12 sessions. The dynamic body control of the children was evaluated before and after the intervention using the checklist and direct observation. For statistical analysis, frequencies, measures of central tendency and dispersion, the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, and the non-parametric Wilcoxon test were utilized.

Regarding ethical aspects, all citations of authors have been duly referenced, and responsibility for possible errors or omissions has been assumed. The privacy of participants was respected, with informed consent obtained from parents and the corresponding authorization from the educational institution.

Results and discussion

Table 1

Dynamic Body Control of Five-Year-Old Children from an Initial Educational Institution in Piura

Level	Pre-test		Post-test	
	f	%	f	%
Start	20	66.7%	0	0.0%
Process	6	20.0%	0	0.0%
Achieved	4	13.3%	30	100.0%
Total	**30**	**100.0%**	**30**	**100.0%**

Table 2

Dimensions of Dynamic Body Control of Five-Year-Old Children from an Initial Educational Institution in Piura

Level	Pre-test						Post-test					
	General Coordination		Dynamic Balance		Visual Coordination		General Coordination		Dynamic Balance		Visual Coordination	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Start	5	16.7%	24	80%	19	63.3%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Process	18	60%	4	13.3%	9	30.0%	0	0%	1	3.3%	0	0%
Achieved	7	23.3%	2	6.7%	2	6.7%	30	100%	29	96.7%	30	100%
Total	**30**	**100%**	**30**	**100%**	**30**	**100%**	**30**	**100%**	**30**	**100%**	**30**	**100%**

Table 3

Statistical Measures of Dynamic Body Control of Five-Year-Old Children from an Initial Educational Institution in *Piura*

Statistical measures	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean	5.77	17.70
Standard deviation	4.49	0.53
Coefficient of variation	78%	3%

Table 4

Normality tests

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Difference in Dynamic Body Control	0.869	30	0.002
Difference in General Coordination	0.927	30	0.041
Difference in Dynamic Balance	0.787	30	0.000
Difference in Visual Coordination	0.821	30	0.000

Table 5

Wilcoxon Test

Test Statistics		
		Pre-test – Post-test (paired)
Dynamic Body Control	Z	-4,712[b]
	Sig. asymptotic (two-tailed)	0.000
Dimension – General Coordination	Z	-4,400[b]
	Sig. asymptotic (two-tailed)	0.000

Dimension – Dynamic Balance	Z	-4,776[b]
	Sig. asymptotic (two-tailed)	0.000
Dimension – Visual Coordination	Z	-4,760[b]
	Sig. asymptotic (two-tailed)	0.000
a. Wilcoxon signed-rank test		
b. It is based on negative ranks		

The findings of this research show that the traditional games program had a significant impact on the development of dynamic body control in five-year-old children (see Table 5), aligning with previous studies both internationally and nationally. After the intervention, most children, who initially were at the "start" level, achieved the "achieved" level (see Table 1), demonstrating clear progress in their motor skills, particularly in aspects such as general coordination, dynamic balance, and visuomotor coordination.

These results coincide with those reported by Arroba & Santana (2023), Kamaruddin et al. (2023), and Hussain & Cheong (2022), who demonstrated that traditional games foster substantial improvements in children's gross motor skills. Similarly, national research conducted by Cayetano (2023), Huincho (2023), and Gonzales (2021) also highlights significant advances from similar programs.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings are framed within the postulates of Vygotsky, who emphasizes the role of play in development within the zone of proximal development, as well as the contributions of Piaget and Bruner, who recognize play as a fundamental means for exploring, symbolizing, and constructing knowledge.

The improvement observed across the three dimensions of dynamic body control (see Table 2) suggests that traditional games, due to their playful, social, and cultural nature, create a conducive environment for acquiring and strengthening motor skills. This is particularly relevant in the post-pandemic context, where many children have experienced delays in their physical development due to confinement and reduced motor experiences (Cheng et al., 2023; González, 2022).

Additionally, the homogeneous results obtained after the intervention (see Table 3) indicate that the program was effective even in a group with individual diversity and inclusive characteristics, supporting its applicability in inclusive education contexts, as proposed by MINEDU (2022).

The program's design considered that traditional games strengthen basic motor skills such as running, jumping, throwing, and maintaining balance (Wdiarti & Anggita, 2022), while promoting socialization and teamwork (Hasanah, 2016). Rooted in local culture, these activities are accessible, understandable, and motivating for children, facilitating their active participation and natural repetition in both school and family settings (Sánchez, 2017). In this regard, incorporating them into the classroom addresses the need for implementing playful, student-centered strategies that integrate emotion, cognition, and affection, allowing for the identification of difficulties and adjustments in pedagogical interventions (Córdoba et al., 2017).

However, it is important to note some limitations of the study. The population of five-year-old children in the educational institution was small, leading to the decision to work with all available children rather than applying selective sampling. Additionally, while several traditional games were not originally designed with inclusive criteria, adaptations were made to their rules and modes of participation in this research to ensure the inclusion of all children, particularly those with motor disabilities. This demonstrates that, despite the barriers present in their original forms, traditional games can be pedagogically modified to promote the full participation of all students.

Overall, the results support the pedagogical, cultural, and formative value of traditional games as an effective tool for strengthening children's motor development, particularly in inclusive contexts and in situations of lag resulting from the pandemic.

Conclusions

The results obtained allow us to conclude that the traditional games program had a significant impact on the development of dynamic body control in five-year-old children from a preschool institution in Piura. Thanks to this intervention, notable advances were achieved in general coordination, dynamic balance, and visuomotor coordination. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the program was evident in a group of students with inclusive characteristics, demonstrating its validity as a methodological tool in diverse educational contexts.

It is noteworthy that the use of traditional games not only fosters motor development but also strengthens social interaction, reinforces cultural identity, and promotes active learning—elements that align with contemporary

pedagogical approaches and theories of child development. In this regard, it is recommended to systematically incorporate traditional games as a pedagogical strategy in early education, especially in institutions serving populations with developmental lags. These games represent a playful, inclusive, and culturally significant alternative for enhancing holistic development during early childhood.

Finally, it is essential to revalue play within early education, particularly in post-pandemic environments, where the deficit in motor skills needs to be addressed through accessible, cultural, and playful strategies that meet the current needs of children.

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