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Insights, challenges, and strategies of teachers in the integration of traditional Filipino games in music, arts, physical education, and health instruction

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Abstract. Traditional Filipino games are activities played across generations, making use of local resources. This study aimed to gain a better understanding of teachers' experiences with integrating traditional Filipino games into the Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health (MAPEH) instruction of local public schools. Utilizing a basic qualitative research design, this study sought to grasp the present scenario in elementary schools through in-depth interviews and prolonged engagement with the six teachers chosen using inclusion criteria. Employing thematic analysis using Lichtman's (2017) three Cs, three major themes with a total of thirteen subthemes emerged as key findings of this research: (1) Valuing Games for Education with Sub-themes, (a) Reminiscing Childhood Games, (b) Recognizing Games Positive Impact in the Classroom, (c) Treasuring Traditional Filipino Games, (2) Overcoming Obstacles with Sub-themes (a) Motivating Unengaged Learners to Move amidst Media and Technology, (b) Managing Unruly Learners during Games, (c) Lacking Facilities and Supplies, (d) Limiting Opportunities for Playtime, (3) Strategizing in a Dynamic Learning Environment with Sub-themes (a) Encouraging Active Exploration, (b) Using Cues and Procedures to Refocus Positive Behavior (c) Improvising Space and Materials (d) Initiating Opportunities for Play, (e) Using Differentiated Playing Experiences, (f) Collaborating with Other Teachers. The results of this research provide supporting baseline data for enhancing the delivery of MAPEH instruction and promoting relevant, indigenized, and localized education through traditional games.

Keywords. Institutional Research, traditional games, MAPEH, elementary teachers, qualitative, Philippines

1.0 Introduction

Traditional games represent a country's cultural heritage, beliefs, passions, and living conditions at the time of their formation. They are based on readily accessible physical components across countries [1]. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [2] traditional sports and games must be protected and promoted as sports practices and intangible cultural heritage for the future development of sports and societies because they foster intercultural and intercommunity dialogues, peace, youth empowerment, and ethical sportsmanship. In relation to the educational curriculum, physical education (PE) is a component that contributes to the overall growth and development of all students and targets

all learning domains: psychomotor, cognitive, and affective, through physical activity [3]. Accordingly, the traditional game approach is one of the valuable strategies to enhance and strengthen content knowledge during the learning process in PE [4].

Teaching traditional games in early childhood education promotes and provides stimulation for holistic development [5]. Siregar and Ilham [6] support the idea that the game must be expanded in schools as part of the curriculum because children who play traditional games gain benefits for their physical and psychological health. Additionally, it strategically offers unique opportunities to develop lifelong physical fitness based on fun and active engagement experienced in a learning environment that promotes character development and overall well-being [7]. PE, a planned and systematic instruction, aims to cultivate these traditional games, where play has important benefits for children in elementary school [8].

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) curriculum, Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health are four major components merged into one learning area abbreviated as MAPEH. In this subject area, traditional games are taught in elementary physical education as part of the games and sports learning strands and as part of the assessment of physical activities and physical fitness. The design is built on active participation in diverse learner-centered activities that aim to foster the learners' artistic expression, cultural literacy, lifelong health, and wellness [9]. Nowadays, games and physical activities follow the flow of modernization and urbanization, which can lead to sedentary pursuits and eventually become a public health concern United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [10], as well as a gradual decline of Filipino games [11]. The Philippines Indigenous Games Preservation Act of 2017 encourages the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and the DepEd to take action to protect traditional games by incorporating them into the basic education system's curriculum and regularly highlighting them at public events and school activities [12].

After two years of modular or blended learning due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, elementary teachers in a local public school in Central Visayas encountered challenges as learners were reintroduced to the face-to-face modality. In relation to integrating traditional games, some problems they posed were the limited time available to explore the games because of shifting schedules and the fact that time is allotted more for improving learners' literacy and numeracy. Moreover, providing safe outdoor facilities where learners can play is another concern at their schools. There are still other matters that this study hopes to discover and understand through interviews with teachers about the integration of traditional games in elementary schools.

Thus far, insufficient research has been published regarding traditional Filipino games relative to education, specifically in MAPEH, as it has declined over time [13]. Teachers' proficiency and the school's effectiveness in providing active recreational activities, which include traditional games as opportunities to strengthen the curricular philosophy of fitness and movement education, have not been explored [14]. Also, there is a lack of emphasis and initiatives on teaching traditional Filipino games [15] throughout the grade level for lifelong physical activity participation and enculturation, particularly at the elementary level. Hence, this study fills in the gap in the literature by focusing on the public elementary teachers' perspective and practices on how they process these games in a moving learning environment and their implications for education.

As such, this study aimed to qualitatively capture the elementary teachers' insights, challenges, and strategies in integrating traditional games in MAPEH instruction through in-depth interviews and prolonged engagement. This study sought a new perspective on taking the initiative in education to engage in lifelong physical activity through playing traditional Filipino

games. In this light, the findings provide baseline data for practical application. Further, it aims to support the localization and indigenization of the curriculum.

2.0 Philosophical Assumptions

A philosophical assumption is a theoretical framework that influences the researcher's views, choices, questions, and processes that direct the study and ensure that findings are reliably and meaningfully established [16]. In this study, interpretivism or social constructivism influences how the researcher frames the ontological, epistemological, axiological, methodological assumptions.

Ontological. Ontology answers the question about the nature of reality and the nature of the human being in the world. To reduce bias, this qualitative research reported multiple realities, including various evidence in themes that employ the actual words of different elementary teachers. The researcher believes that the best course of study to let learners experience, appreciate, and enjoy traditional Filipino games is by integrating them with MAPEH content and activities to increase learners' physical fitness levels, utilizing active recreation, and preserving the significance of traditional games as part of the Philippines' history, cultural heritage, and identity.

Epistemological. In a subjectivist epistemology, the researcher and participants were involved in interactive and cooperative procedures. The researcher had prolonged engagement with the participants to establish truthfulness. Likewise, follow-up interviews were conducted to better understand their point of view and the practices at their school.

Axiological. Axiology seeks to know the nature of ethics and what the researcher believes is valuable and ethical [16]. The researcher values that the findings of this study will be beneficial in the teaching and learning process of MAPEH in an active learning environment. The researcher advocates for children's right to play, allowing them to enjoy, learn, and develop skills for future success. Moreover, integrated and sustainable education in elementary school is an instrument for the learner's holistic development and cultural transmission, which maintains the integrity of one's nation.

Methodological. It considers the research design, methodology, and language utilized to achieve research aims [16]. The logic employed was inductive and constructed from the ground up. This approach identified patterns and relationships from substantial data to reach conclusions. The steps involved range from specific to general, such as analyzing the interview data through Lichtman's [17] three Cs to better understand the insights, challenges, and strategies of the participants.

3.0 Methods

This study utilized a basic qualitative research design to explore and understand the insights, challenges, and strategies of elementary teachers in integrating traditional Filipino games into MAPEH instruction. Basic qualitative research allowed the participants to share their observations and experiences and expose ideas or practices relevant to the study [18].

The participants of the study were six public elementary school teachers selected using purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling. To carefully select the prospective eligible participants to answer the research question, the inclusion criteria required a male or female public elementary school teacher with at least three years of continuously teaching MAPEH subjects and integrating traditional Filipino games. Pseudonymization was used to assure anonymity among participants.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview. An interview guide was utilized to outline all areas to be covered, which consists of three primary open-ended questions with two to three sub-questions each. Lichtman's [17] three Cs were applied, and six steps were followed in conducting data analysis. The Four Dimension Criteria by Lincoln and Guba [19]: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, were employed in this study to establish rigor and trustworthiness in qualitative research. The researcher ensured the ethical integrity of the study and raised ethical awareness for the participants.

4.0 Results and Discussion

Thematic Insights

The researcher used Lichtman's [17] three Cs of data analysis—coding, categorizing, and concepts to transform raw data into themes. Three major themes with thirteen subthemes captured the insights, challenges, and strategies of elementary teachers in integrating Tradition Filipino Games in MAPEH instruction.

Theme 1: Valuing Games for Education

Games play a big role in a child's development. The teachers indicated an optimistic view of how traditional Filipino games affect themselves, the learners, and the learning process. The participants specified numerous games they integrated and mentioned why they were chosen for their MAPEH classes. Further, they expressed their views on why these games should be included in the curriculum, explaining their relevance for the present learners.

1.1. Reminiscing Childhood Games

Remembering playful memories, the teachers relate the games to their experiences when they were younger. They expressed how delightful it was during their childhood to play outdoors with their friends. They also identified the traditional games they used to play and valued them until today. Further, they tried to compare how this generation is less likely to develop this kind of fun as they are more exposed to technology. They shared:

Before, our playground was quite big where we played under kingdom. Just list what, chasing around where our dresses torn and playing block the runner and others. Our clothes were tattered, and we stumbled and resulted in slight wounds... (Jezebel, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

Bringing back the traditional activities of the children, like the games of jumping over the cow, knocking down the can, and under so that they can experience the outside world. Nowadays, it is all on cellphones and the internet, like that. So, it is nice to introduce these to kids... (Ella, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

So far, I am familiar with traditional games we used to play during childhood, like jumping rope, knocking down the prisoner, kicking, dodgeball... (Regine, personal communication, April 14, 2023).

Actually, playing then was a lot more enjoyable than it is now. Today, aside from the school's lack of equipment, you could play with anything you found in our days... (Danilo, personal communication, August 8, 2023).

Compared to our time, we like playing field games; we are very familiar with the rules and even have versions, right? (Mark, personal communication, August 8, 2023).

It was enjoyable then because gadgets and modern games were not widespread. Before, kids focused more on enjoying teams and group games like Chinese garter, jumping over thorns, stick games, and what else. There were many, like hole-in, knocking out coins on the ground, and hopscotch. Girls are playing games intended for boys; it seems unnecessary to select a game based on gender because everything is for everyone... (Rose, personal communication, August 14, 2023).

1.2. Recognizing Games Positive Impact in the Classroom

Traditional Filipino games aid the teachers in achieving their goals in MAPEH, whether with competencies, knowing learners' individual differences, or enjoying the teaching process in general. All teachers agreed that playing traditional Filipino games positively contributes to learners' holistic development, particularly in physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects. They mentioned several pertinent skills their students can achieve by incorporating these games into their instruction, as evident in their respective responses.

When that game helps achieve a goal in the MELC, I integrate it. For example, we played tug of war last week, looking for learner's flexibility. Also, we played the chasing game, the hawk and chicken, to enhance their stamina. You can pique their interests by focusing on the teaching process since they regularly engage in that. For the learner's end, these games will develop the learner's physical, mental, and social skills. When we are playing, it is not like we are studying or working; we are enjoying, and that is the most crucial aspect of learning... (Mark, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

Not only can you complete your lesson for today, but you can also fulfill your COT (classroom observation tool). You can combine and integrate different subjects into others, so it is not simply a game or something. Also, traditional games focus more on values, working out your body, and building healthy relationships and camaraderie in your group... (Jezebel, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

Learners will develop their skill-related fitness and health-related fitness as they play. You can determine which learners are interested in these activities and see their relationship as a group. You will see, detect, and understand their differences... (Danilo, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

If I introduce these to them, it will trigger their interest. They weigh their enjoyment in MAPEH compared to other subjects. That is why, when I walked into the room, I could see the shine on my students' faces as they yelled, "It is our MAPEH." So that is one of the enjoyments of a teacher in the teaching process... (Rose, personal communication, April 17, 2023)

For example, when playing target games, they focus and have concentration. They can use their body and mind. I can also feel that they are excited, saying, "Ma'am, when are we going to play this and that?" So, it made an impact... (Ella, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

So, I found out that they enjoy it, and at least it will stimulate their eagerness to play like dodgeball, the one we played on the field... (Regine, personal communication, April 14, 2023).

1.3. *Treasuring Traditional Filipino Games*

Teachers do not simply teach by the book, where knowledge and skills are based; they go beyond to model values and enlighten young minds. Understanding how traditional games positively impact learning, teachers hope that the learners may appreciate these games as much as they hold them in high regard. Treasuring them may help preserve these games and ensure they continue to be taught for posterity because of their relevance to our lives as Filipinos. They shared their aspirations:

We can treasure things from the past, unlike now, when kids are primarily on their cell phones. If we introduce traditional games, they can bring them home, demonstrate them to their playmates, and somehow distance themselves from the gadgets... (Ella, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

I integrated into the play. It is not only for entertainment but also for tracking back our roots, where they came from, and the reason or history behind those games for us to know more about ourselves. So, it is a good thing to let the learners understand... (Mark, personal communication, August 8, 2023).

I wish traditional games were given special attention in the learner's curriculum. Truthfully, there are some, but not like the games before. That is what I wish... (Rose, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

As a MAPEH teacher, I like integrating traditional games because games today are different. This way, we can see they are active in their lifestyle and do not focus on gadgets. Also, the activities we teach them must be helpful in their daily lives and applied at home. We must maintain traditional games. We must continue to teach them to the children... (Danilo, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

In our books, traditional games are indicated, but usually, today's generation does not play them. So, in our class, we still include it, and sometimes we revise it a little to be more modern, but with the same learning we can get from traditional ones... (Jezebel, personal communication, August 7, 2023).

As a MAPEH teacher, that is very important because traditional games involve physical skills. Until now, traditional games existed in competition. If I am correct, for example, the game kick or other football games still exist today. That is why it is essential to introduce and teach them to elementary pupils... (Regine, personal communication, August 14, 2023).

Participants underlined that the most important part of learning is enjoyment, and traditional Filipino games fulfill that. They shared how traditional Filipino games naturally stimulate the learners' interest as they learn more about their students, especially their individual differences while engaging in these activities. As a pedagogical approach, learning in playful contexts increases educational value because of the joy and iteration inherent in play. Positive emotions, or joy, have been associated with improved executive functioning, academic results, and even brain flexibility [20].

According to Yogman et al. [21], play highlights the need for a balanced curriculum incorporating playful learning to promote healthy child development. Similarly, playing

traditional games proves very beneficial in education, especially for elementary learners on a holistic level. It enhances students' process abilities, linguistic proficiency, character development, and gross motor skills, among several other areas [22,23,24,25]. For physical development, learners' skills and health-related fitness are focused, particularly their stamina, strength, power, coordination, muscle endurance, and strength, as mentioned by the participants. Moreover, these games present opportunities for socialization that encourage interaction and help children discover the value of others, which contributes to their affective and social development [26,27].

Recent researchers have explored how traditional or cultural games impact learning in various subject areas of the curriculum. Azlan et al. [28] incorporated fun and meaningful activities like traditional games into PE lessons that serve as an alternative approach to encouraging physical activity during school hours and found that it was more effective than free-play PE lessons. The level of performance of students exposed to indigenous games was higher than that of students who were not exposed to indigenous games [29]. Further, it was determined that the traditional game education program increased the children's language development in a positive way [22]. Additionally, Tupas and Palmares [30] asserted that the K–12 Basic Education Program of the DepEd can employ the traditional Philippine games as instructional materials and motivational activities to increase students' interest in learning science as the scientific ideas and concepts are embedded in the Philippine traditional games, especially for below-average learners.

With this, it can be said that traditional games are versatile and can not only be integrated with MAPEH but also be expanded into the basic education curriculum [6] because of their affirmative contributions to learners' development. Teachers from other subject areas may collaborate alongside MAPEH teachers to design instructional materials and activities that integrate traditional Filipino games as necessary to their subject area to stimulate learning interest and take a more student-centered approach. In addition, through thematic instruction surrounding traditional games, this can be an innovative strategy or program where all areas in the curriculum are connected to a theme [31,32] to accommodate learners' needs, motivate them, and build a meaningful experience by means of traditional Filipino games.

Theme 2: Overcoming Obstacles

Teachers face several obstacles daily that are similar to those in a game, particularly when dealing with diverse learners in a fast-paced environment. Teaching traditional games may seem simple in the eye of an observer, but digging deeper, there are some concerns that teachers raised with regard to how it is carried through. To understand this, teachers shared what obstacles they are confronting and how learners perceive, respond to, and behave, along with those of the school.

2.1. *Motivating Unengaged Learners to Move amidst Media and Technology*

As much as the learners like playing traditional Filipino games, there are instances where others appear to do the opposite or cannot simply participate due to circumstances, which gave rise to this subtheme. Teachers unanimously mentioned gadgets, technology, and media as distractors in playing traditional Filipino games, taking the child's interest away from physical games. From their point of view, they discussed how games have evolved since their time, which may have led to a progressive decline in knowledge about them and motivation for playing them. They narrated:

Some kids have no interest in playing. For example, he or she is not in the mood, so it is pretty challenging to boost them up by telling them, "You can do it. You should join because..." It is challenging today because there are mobile games, so their knowledge about Filipino games gradually diminishes. It is a challenge in my end as a teacher because they get distracted. Nowadays, the focus is less on physical and online games. So, if we are going to relate it to our PE activity, some kids will say, "I will not join, sir, because I am tired..." (Mark, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

We cannot avoid the fact that there are heavy challenges because modern children are prone to gadgets. So, somehow, learning and enjoying traditional games should have been noticed. Gadgets take away the interest of the children in going out. Some prefer to avoid getting sweaty, hot, or dusty. They will say, "Ma'am, is it all right to just stay here in the classroom? You play there, I will stay here," but they will play with his gadget... (Rose, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

Children nowadays do not know the traditional game because they are more focused on playing what they see on YouTube TikTok. It is because of the media that we adopt today. The media's influence gets the children's attention in their homes and even at school, where they bring their phones with them. They do not engage anymore in traditional games like we used to... (Jezebel, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

For example, they do not do their assignments or activities because they focus on their phones. Even during recess, children bring their phones and play Mobile Legends. Despite being at an elementary level, they already play Mobile Legends... (Ella, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

Others do not like to play it because they are focused on gadgets. It is a challenge because kids would rather play—I mean, even during school hours, they prefer to do nothing except observe... (Regine, personal communication, April 14, 2023).

Usually, kids focus primarily on gadgets, as though they do not know about traditional games. So, we teachers find it challenging to implement these games... (Danilo, personal communication, August 8, 2023).

2.2. Managing Unruly Learners during Games

Managing classes is second nature to teachers, ensuring the class flows smoothly. However, teachers expressed that most learners are eager and excited to play traditional Filipino games, which somehow becomes challenging to manage or contain more than forty learners. It becomes a dilemma for the participants, as they do not want to stop their enjoyment but still must handle their hyperactivity to prevent accidents. Other teachers find it difficult to explain instructions that led to disorganized classes, which they thought could be an effect of the two-year pandemic where learners stayed and studied at home. They convey their sentiments:

There are some learners' behaviors in which you cannot easily give them instructions, maybe because of the two years of the pandemic. They are not exposed to these games, so giving instructions is difficult. Sometimes they will not get it, sometimes you will scold them, and sometimes you will get irritated... (Danilo, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

Since they seldom go out, they do not observe, stop, look, or listen, like listening first, but now you have to repeat the instructions several times because they are too excited. They all want to play, so the teacher seems to have difficulty grasping them. Even when you say the selected will play first, others will become upset because they cannot join yet... (Jezebel, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

Maybe they get so excited that they cannot control their frolicking. They do anything; you do not want to cut off their enjoyment, but we have a so-called discipline. Others will frolic, but whatever happens to them, I will be held accountable, which is a struggle. The rest, however, is okay, and it is enjoyable. That is the only thing I complain about. Even though it is exhausting to constantly scold them when they play too much and are boisterous and out of your control, other teachers are holding classes, and we do not want them disturbed... (Ella, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

They sometimes behave like they are too excited to play. They occasionally move without awareness, which could cause mishaps; thus, the teacher must guide them during practice. There are also times when, no matter how often you have told them the precautions, there are still accidents... (Regine, personal communication, April 14, 2023).

It is challenging on my part because, even though you have already oriented them with dos and don'ts, there are still children that we cannot control when they are already on the field, right? (Mark, personal communication, August 8, 2023).

When you give them instructions, they comprehend them differently or will not grasp them immediately. I just changed the game because they do not get that when one runs, others will run too, so it does not seem right. (Rose, personal communication, August 14, 2023).

2.3. *Lacking Facilities and Supplies*

Teachers noted that resources and facilities influenced the inconsistency of teaching traditional Filipino games at the elementary level. Some games were overlooked because of a lack of materials, and selected games were only played depending on the available resources. The facilities were another concern of the participants, as they are not big enough to accommodate learners, which restricts them from moving and exploring the area freely. They voiced:

It is challenging because of the materials. We know that in a public school setting, many points of opportunity need to be improved to maximize the pupils' learning. So that is the physical aspect of it—the ball and the rest. The gymnasium is also reasonably small given the number of pupils, so in some cases, like Friday, other pupils may be using it as well, making it difficult for them to explore... (Mark, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

Sometimes, we only lack the availability of materials because, here in our school, we do not have available gadgets. We only utilize what the students and teachers can bring. So often, we disregard other traditional games... (Regine, personal communication, April 14, 2023).

We do not have balls or a net when we play ball games. Then the area is not conducive to play since we are reluctant to move around too freely for fear of bumping across younger kids because it is also their break time... (Rose, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

Because our school is smaller than others, and schools nowadays are full of classrooms, the area is small. Usually, children only have space to play at the gym. We do not have playgrounds and lack materials and facilities... (Jezebel, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

Finding a ball is easier if the teacher and the school have one when we need one. It is a struggle financially because you will have to pay out of pocket. Because our gym is next to the classrooms, it could be quieter. As a result, when the children yelled, the grade three students near the gym were distracted... (Ella, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

The school lacks equipment, materials, and facilities, so we also lack the means to carry out these activities... (Danilo, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

2.4. Limiting Opportunities for Playtime

MAPEH instruction is given for 40 minutes at the elementary level. Teachers revealed that there is not enough time to play these games, considering that MAPEH has four components, and somehow, they disregard traditional Filipino games because every so often, they must focus more on music, the arts, or health. Further, playtime is limited for many reasons, such as the amount of teachers' paperwork, a lack of facilities, and having a large class. They expressed:

If we play it during our time, we do not have enough time considering I have forty-five pupils... (Mark, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

I observed that since MAPEH has only 40 minutes of instructional time, we cannot put the traditional games into action, like kicking and knocking down the prisoner. Since MAPEH has four components, we cannot concentrate on PE alone in our school. Sometimes, we are more focused on music, arts, or health. That is why we cannot zone in on playing traditional games at school... (Regine, personal communication, April 14, 2023).

We seldom have PE because of our paperwork, speaking of reality as a teacher. We cannot even have a proper class; as they say, they will lessen the paperwork, but look at what they are doing—even trivial things they research... (Jezebel, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

If we have PE, our time is limited. Introducing it is not consistent because we need to follow the guide. As we all know, MAPEH has four components, so we rarely play the games, say once a month, because we are mostly inside the room. It is a challenge for us to find time because we need more time to implement the four components; it is hard to insert them. Also, sometimes we wish to compete with other sections, but we do not have the exact schedules... (Rose, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

Only once a week if the gym is not crowded because many students have PE every Friday... (Ella, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

It takes much time to scold the pupils and give them instructions. As a result, you cannot complete the activity for the remaining time, given that you only have an hour. Then, you have to proceed to the next component... (Danilo, personal communication, August 8, 2023).

According to the participants, they find it simple to teach traditional Filipino games since students may have played them at home with their peers and because the necessary materials can be easily made at no or little expense. However, they perceived that learners today have little knowledge about it as they are more likely to sit and play with their gadgets than actively play outside, which is a frequent remark among the participants. Khan's et al. [33] findings indicate that cultural onslaught has been the primary cause of the decline of traditional games and the local community's apathy toward preserving its traditions and sports. As the prevalence of sedentary lifestyles rises, they hope to expose the learners to these enjoyable and engaging activities more often.

Observations of learners who were physically unmotivated, unengaged, and distracted by gadgets and media stood out. Children's academic performance and physical and mental health are all negatively impacted by children's excessive use of mobile apps, and these effects may be severe and irreversible [34]. In addition, screen exposure reduces the attention span in children [35]. Participants revealed that mobile and online gaming distract the learner's interest. They observed that modern learners focus less on physical games but prefer more online games, as they bring their mobile phones to school.

Furthermore, as education moves towards developing 21st-century skills and prepares learners for the future, some important skills are ignored or neglected. Digital literacy and physical and cultural literacy are currently at odds with each other. Physical inactivity due to the adverse effects of technology is another emerging concern in this study. According to Alotaibi et al. [36] screen time and the possession of electrical devices influence the lack of physical exercise among children. It can be a struggle, but there is never a competition between digital and physical games if teachers make the best of both worlds to engage children by utilizing digital sources as a supportive tool in teaching traditional games [37,38]. As such, Santos et al. [11] utilized mobile gaming applications to increase the knowledge and motivation of Filipinos to play real-life traditional games. If teachers devise a strategy that best suits their students' needs, the goal can be achieved.

Physical activity improves attention and coordination in school-aged children [39]. However, on the other hand, most learners are so enthused that managing them during the game might be challenging if not handled properly [40]. Though it is important to let learners play outdoors, their safety is always the top priority of the teachers, particularly in managing their hyperactivity. Other participants observed low retention of the learners, particularly when giving instructions. They had to repeat themselves several times. They hypothesized that the COVID-19 pandemic's two-year distance learning may have been the root of the issue [41,42]. After spending two school years at home, students may have found returning to school to be an overwhelming experience [43].

Additionally, traditional Filipino games are inconsistently taught as a result of the following issues: a lack of time considering the four components of MAPEH and due to the teacher's excessive amount of paperwork; a lack of school-provided materials; a lack of a

facility or playground for students to explore as the gym cannot accommodate all PE classes and is close to the classrooms [44,45,46]. These barriers led elementary teachers to remain in their rooms and miss some traditional games. These difficulties in physical education are not entirely new. Although it has existed, administrative, systemic, and financial limitations have made it difficult [47].

Theme 3: Strategizing in a Dynamic Learning Environment

Some of the characteristics of a teacher are being resourceful, innovative, and a problem solver. As the teachers faced the mentioned challenges, finding ways to cope with them and applying strategies to effectively address them were their means of overcoming obstacles. Students' learning was always prioritized to engage them in these games as teachers practiced the learner-centered approach and focused on cooperative play in an ever-changing learning space.

3.1. Encouraging Active Exploration

Integrating traditional Filipino games is a way to let learners move and explore amidst the diversion of media and technology. In dealing with unmotivated learners, teachers encourage active exploration by boosting learners' confidence and explaining the benefits of joining. Moreover, teachers play a big role in using a variety of approaches to let learners get involved in lifelong physical activity. They shared:

I boost their morale by suggesting that you join if you can. If it is not possible, I use their peers to encourage them to join as well. Sometimes, I do not force them because of the child protection policy. However, part of that significant factor in encouraging them to join is the teacher, as are the peers... (Mark, personal communication, August 8, 2023).

Since this is their PE time, I push them to participate so they can experience these games. They cannot just remain seated and refuse to participate. They can decline if they are not feeling well... (Jezebel, personal communication, August 7, 2023).

So, I tell them, "You need those children to play physically and sweat so that the toxins in your body will be released through perspiration. They will eventually get into it if you encourage them to join." A little encouragement will do... (Regine, personal communication, April 14, 2023).

I always teach them in the physical activity pyramid that they must not always play with gadgets. You must find other activities to develop your skills to become healthy and physically fit... (Danilo, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

Yes, like, "You join, it is nice. Try it, even once." Others will say they have asthma, so I am also concerned as their teacher. So, I let them sit and say, "Oh, you can cheer them while observing the play," so that at least they know what kind of game it is... (Ella, personal communication, August 11, 2023).

3.2. Using Cues and Procedures to Refocus Positive Behavior

Cues are important, as are the procedures or routines the class has established for classroom management. Teachers shared how they calmly conquer the chaotic behavior of their learners, especially when elementary ones are brought outdoors, and refocus them on positive

behavior. Depending on what the circumstances call for, these strategies assist them in teaching the games with ease and safety. They said:

I call their attention. For example, when I count to one, they clap. I will clap two to indicate silence. There should be a command... (Jezebel, personal communication, August 7, 2023).

I would stop the game if they did not behave. So, I use different bells and whistles to catch their attention... (Mark, personal communication, April 13, 2023, August 8, 2023).

Those kids, like if the game is going on with other groups, I sit beside them and talk to them so they can open up... (Rose, personal communication, August 14, 2023).

If they behave, they get plus points because they are conscious of their grades; if they have a minus, they feel sad. So if there is a plus, they follow the instructions... (Ella, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

You must be the authority in your class. Instilling the rules from the very start of the game would be best. It would be best to have rules from the beginning because it is hard when you do not have one... (Danilo, personal communication, August 8, 2023).

I do, of course, before we go for outdoor activities, remind them of the rules and regulations, pros and cons, so that I can manage them. When we were out, I also reminded them of safety and that they must listen to the teacher's instructions so that the flow of activities is smooth and we can reach our target for that day... (Regine, personal communication, August 14, 2023).

3.3. *Improvising Space and Materials*

Teachers in public schools have noted how a lack of resources and facilities affects the teaching of traditional Filipino games, yet this does not deter students from participating in games. A teacher noted that traditional games do not need expensive equipment to be played successfully; therefore, looking for comparable materials helps the game to happen. In addition, there may be space inside or outside the classroom where play can continue. They articulated:

If it is about the materials, for example, if that thing is not available, like coconut or what, we try to find other things that have the same quality. We improvise. Same game, but different material used... (Jezebel, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

We can play at the front of the classroom. That is why I mentioned every other week, at least, because there are cases where our schedule coincides with others. So, I can still schedule it in the afternoon or morning... (Mark, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

We ask the students, "O, who has this?" They also bring or provide because you cannot rely on the school. We can only play here at the gym, no other options, or maybe in the grass area... (Ella, personal communication, April 17, 2023, August 11, 2023).

If we want to play that game, I ask the students if they have the available materials at home. We do that because the school has none, so they bring the materials. We play at

the gym, on a field, or in an open space... (Rose, personal communication, August 14, 2023).

There are other games that we play in the classroom. If we lack materials, for example, if we have a target activity for that day and are aware that the school and even the grade level have no material, I ask the students who have an available ball or rope. So, others provide, as long as they have, but we lack... (Regine, personal communication, April 14, 2023, August 14, 2023).

We improvise materials, like during the tug of war. We try to find a rope in our school... (Danilo, personal communication, August 8, 2023).

3.4. *Initiating Opportunities for Play*

Lack of time does not prevent traditional Filipino games from being integrated consistently, so total exclusion is unnecessary. There are school activities to encourage playing these games at school, such as during Buwan ng Wika (National Language Month), Family Day, and MAPEH month or week celebrations, depending on the respective schools. These opportunities are advantageous for promoting traditional Filipino games at the elementary level. They narrated:

We have activities that involve parents, especially Family Day and National Language Month, and you know DepEd [Department of Education] has many activities that encourage the involvement of parents. There are traditional games like relay, pulling rope, etc. Even though it is not purely traditional, the essence of traditional games is there. Maybe there is just a little twist to it... (Mark, personal communication, August 8, 2023).

During the national language month, it is the time when we integrate many activities for the learners, and one of them is Filipino games... (Rose, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

We could apply it during national language week before, but August is a school break now... (Jezebel, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

Before we had a cultural, I mean MAPEH week, but it happened pre-pandemic. The learners have a program and preparation per grade. We played like a sock race, but that is pre-pandemic... (Regine, personal communication, April 14, 2023).

3.5. *Using Differentiated Playing Experiences*

Learner-centered teaching requires a variety of activities catering to their multiple intelligences. Differentiated instruction is an essential strategy for the learners so that they may be able to gain a sense of success at their own level of readiness, learning styles, and intelligence. To foster a learning process that enables learners to realize their full potential, this technique strongly emphasizes the learner and teachers as facilitators. They shared:

The strategies I am using are like learning by doing. What I impose in theory is what they learned from what I imparted, and then they put it into action if they remembered or learned it. Whatever we learned, or the next day, sometimes it takes two days before we have our application... (Regine, personal communication, April 14, 2023).

You do the groupings, and then they have a leader. If you are the teacher, your role is to guide, instruct, and facilitate. You can also integrate that; that is the reality of life. If you fail, you must stand; if not, a lot will be affected. You all cannot finish your game or race... (Jezebel, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

After the game, I am asking them to write a reflection, a very short reflection of what they have learned and what is the purpose of the game (Mark, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

These are the audience; these are the players. I give the learners variations to let them all join... (Rose, personal communication, April 17, 2023).

I show them pictures of the steps on TV. First, we tell them the benefits of playing these games to their bodies, then we present a video on how they are performed, what materials are needed, and the rules of the games... (Ella, personal communication, August 11, 2023).

They do not know much about these activities, like before we knew them, right? It surprised them, saying, "Oh, there is a game like this?" So, they just discovered and explored that there are games like these... (Danilo, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

3.6. Collaborating with Other Teachers

Teachers work together with their colleagues to provide well-rounded playing experiences for learners. This strategy helps them manage a group of learners and brainstorm creative ideas for play. On top of that, it allowed the learners to interact and develop with other students. They expressed:

I collaborate with other levels to make it more holistic. Like last time, we played tug of war with the fifth grade. I want to collaborate because it is different when the learners see that the teachers are cooperating... (Mark, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

We teamed up with the sixth-grade teacher. We put them together and played tug of war and sock race... (Jezebel, personal communication, August 7, 2023).

Previously, we had a competition, and I would handle one section versus another. For example, we have the same schedule from 2:30 to 3:30, inviting, "Let us have our sections compete in a game..." (Ella, personal communication, August 11, 2023).

Before the pandemic, we celebrated the national language month. Before that, my co-teachers would give suggestions, so we planned on playing traditional games... (Rose, personal communication, August 14, 2023).

We had an event here in our school like the MAPEH culmination. We focused on playing traditional games, for example, sock races and kicks. We did it, us MAPEH teachers, because we had our culmination after... (Regine, personal communication, August 14, 2023).

The motivation and performance of students can be improved by modifying teaching strategies to account for student learning preferences [48,49,50]. Participants tried to vocally suggest students participate in the play without pressuring them, which led to the subtheme encouraging active exploration. By clearly articulating the relevance of participating in sports and physical activity [51], the advantages of moving one's body, and the satisfaction and knowledge gained while playing, this strategy persuades children to become physically active early in life. A participant also used the learner's peers to boost their morale to support physical activity [52].

While elementary learners have a short attention span, teachers already have several strategies to help them stay on task. As teachers confronted challenges of hyperactivity during games, they used a variety of cues and procedures to refocus and manage learners, especially in an active space with diverse learning needs. Participants used verbal cues, whistles, and even bells to get their attention, as well as nonverbal cues [53], like sitting beside the unengaged learners. Also, instilling the procedures before the game helps set expectations and boundaries for how they should behave accordingly. Though it is a common concern among the participants, further support for teachers and a plan of action for handling extreme student behaviors must be addressed.

With regard to the lack of materials, the school is finding ways to address these concerns. Due to a shortage of resources, teachers provide and make their own materials while the school raises money to meet the requirements for learning. Other participants mentioned that their school is conducting fund-raising to provide for other school needs. Most participants mentioned that if they lack the necessary supply, they improvise the materials needed to proceed with the game, explaining that traditional Filipino games do not certainly need expensive resources. Despite not being under the teachers' control, they can be overcome with the help of the leadership, policy, and support of the school administration [54].

The MAPEH subject comprises four components, each given a week or two during each quarter. Although teachers lack instructional time to integrate traditional Filipino games into their classes, other opportunities exist to learn them at school. Participants mentioned school activities such as those during the celebration of National Language Month, MAPEH week or month, and Family Day. As the learners are reintroduced to school after the COVID-19 pandemic, most activities return to normal. It is worth highlighting that these are not merely educational events for students; teachers and parents also participate, making this a community-building event. Overall, traditional games aim to bring together indigenous and non-indigenous people, boost education retention, promote reconciliation, enhance physical health, build life skills, improve emotional bonds, pass heritage, and bridge generations [55,56].

Furthermore, every participant has their practices and has given a justification for why they are undertaking those activities that fit the needs of the learners. Differentiated instruction, such as gamifying lessons, experiential and cooperative learning, and independent and interactive instruction, puts learners at the center [57]. Notable practices include letting the learners write their reflections after the game, demonstrating how it should be played using pictures and videos on television, and letting learners discover the game themselves. These are strategies for integrating traditional Filipino games and helping teachers keep learners engaged and open to exploring new games. These means of instruction assist students in taking control of their learning based on their learning styles [58].

Mora-Ruano et al. [59] suggested that only when teachers specifically collaborate to talk about or give each other advice about student performance can a favorable impact on student progress be determined. The concept of collaborating with other teachers also came up as

participants shared their experiences to make the game a more effective learning experience. This shows that teachers can work hand in hand with a common goal, which is to bring the students together while learning. Teachers collaborate on plans, tactics, and ideas to ensure productive activity. This will ensure a safe space for students and teachers to grow, build healthy relationships, and share responsibility while playing traditional Filipino games. Further, collaborative culture has a favorable relationship with teachers' job satisfaction and affective commitment [60,61]. This strategy benefits both the teachers and the learners.

5.0 Conclusion

This reflected traditional Filipino games being integrated into local public elementary schools based on the insights of the six teachers. All participants implied that traditional games help learners achieve learning competencies in MAPEH instruction, which supports holistic child development. Further, these games are gradually becoming less common among children, along with cultural identity, traditions, and values, because of the influence of media, technology, and others; thus, it is crucial to incorporate them into the curriculum and promote active play. Finally, teachers hope to develop strategies or learning models that thematize traditional Filipino games instruction along with other subject areas and design school activities that may raise awareness in the classroom and the community.

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