



Embodied cultural pedagogy through Tari Paraga: enhancing students' moral awareness, collaborative skills, and cultural identity in Physical Education

Pedagogía cultural encarnada a través del Tari Paraga: mejora de la conciencia moral, las habilidades colaborativas y la identidad cultural de los estudiantes en Educación Física

Authors

Jusrianto ¹
Hardin ²
A. Muafiah Nur ³
Aisyah Nursyam⁴
Muh. Syihab Ikbal ⁵

¹⁻⁵ Makassar State University,
Makassar (Indonesia)

Corresponding author:
Jusrianto
jusrianto.250007101021@student.
unm.ac.id

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Abstract

Introduction and Objective: Traditional performing arts possess significant yet underexplored pedagogical potential within Physical Education (PE) contexts. Tari Paraga, a traditional Bugis-Makassar martial art dance from South Sulawesi, Indonesia, integrates rhythmic movement, cooperative performance, and embodied cultural values, offering a rich experiential space for moral and character development. This study aimed to develop and evaluate an embodied cultural pedagogy program integrating Tari Paraga into PE to enhance students' moral awareness, collaborative skills, and cultural identity.

Methodology: A mixed-method design was employed involving 112 lower-secondary students from three public schools in Makassar who participated in an eight-week intervention. The program integrated Paraga movement sequences, cooperative ensemble practice, and reflective cultural discussions grounded in the Siri' na Pacce philosophy.

Results: Paired-sample t-tests revealed statistically significant improvements in moral awareness, collaborative skills, and cultural identity ($p < .001$). Qualitative findings indicated increased self-regulation, stronger intercultural empathy, and a renewed sense of cultural pride. **Conclusions:** Integrating Tari Paraga into PE offers a holistic and culturally grounded pedagogical model for fostering moral character, social cooperation, and cultural identity.

Keywords

Collaborative skills; cultural identity; embodied learning; moral awareness; Physical Education; Siri' na Pacce; Tari Paraga.

Resumen

Introducción: Las artes escénicas tradicionales poseen un potencial pedagógico significativo y aún poco explorado en los contextos de Educación Física (EF). El Tari Paraga, danza marcial tradicional bugis-makassar de Sulawesi del Sur, Indonesia, integra el movimiento rítmico, la interpretación cooperativa y los valores culturales encarnados, ofreciendo un rico espacio experiencial para el desarrollo moral y del carácter.

Objetivo: Este estudio tuvo como objetivo desarrollar y evaluar un programa de pedagogía cultural encarnada que integra el Tari Paraga en la EF para mejorar la conciencia moral, las habilidades colaborativas y la identidad cultural del alumnado.

Metodología: Se empleó un diseño mixto con 112 estudiantes de educación secundaria inferior de tres escuelas públicas en Makassar, quienes participaron en una intervención de ocho semanas. El programa integró secuencias de movimiento Paraga, práctica cooperativa en conjunto y discusiones culturales reflexivas fundamentadas en la filosofía Siri' na Pacce.

Resultados: Las pruebas t de muestras pareadas revelaron mejoras estadísticamente significativas en conciencia moral, habilidades colaborativas e identidad cultural ($p < .001$). Los hallazgos cualitativos revelaron una mayor autorregulación, empatía intercultural y renovado orgullo cultural.

Conclusiones: La integración del Tari Paraga en la EF ofrece un modelo holístico y culturalmente fundamentado para desarrollar el carácter moral, la cooperación social y la identidad cultural.

Palabras clave

Conciencia moral; educación física; habilidades colaborativas; identidad cultural; aprendizaje encarnado; Siri' na Pacce; Tari Paraga.

Introduction

Traditional performing arts in Southeast Asian societies embody accumulated moral wisdom, social norms, and ecological values transmitted through generations of embodied practice (Mulder, 1996). Unlike classroom-based instruction, performing arts engage learners through movement, rhythm, and cooperative enactment, allowing values to be experienced somatically rather than merely conceptually (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011). Tari Paraga, a traditional Bugis-Makassar performance art from South Sulawesi, Indonesia, exemplifies this convergence. Originating as a martial performance combining silat-based footwork, rattan ball-juggling techniques, and synchronized ensemble movement, Tari Paraga encapsulates core Bugis-Makassar ethical principles rooted in the indigenous philosophy of *Siri' na Pacce*: dignity (*siri'*), mutual suffering and solidarity (*pacce*), and social harmony (*sipakatau, sipakalebbi, sipakaing*) (Hamid, 2017; Pelras, 1996).

The pedagogical relevance of traditional movement arts to moral and character education has received growing scholarly attention. Research in ecopedagogy and embodied cognition suggests that physical engagement with culturally meaningful practices deepens moral sensitivity, social cooperation, and identity formation more effectively than abstract instructional approaches (Hariyanto, 2025; Maderas, 2024; Saputra et al., 2025). However, despite the rich pedagogical reservoir of Southeast Asian traditional performing arts, limited empirical research has systematically integrated these traditions into Physical Education (PE) curricula and measured their impact on students' moral, social, and cultural outcomes.

PE in Indonesian secondary schools has increasingly been called upon to serve not only physical fitness objectives but also character development, national identity reinforcement, and social cohesion (Putri, 2022; Rochman et al., 2025). Yet the field lacks culturally grounded, empirically validated models for achieving these broader educational goals through traditional art-movement integration. The dominant models remain Eurocentric or generically sport-based, leaving a significant gap in culturally responsive PE practice in Indonesian and broader Southeast Asian contexts (Fitriyah et al., 2021; Saputra et al., 2024).

Tari Paraga offers a unique pedagogical opportunity. Its ensemble structure demands coordination, turn-taking, attentiveness to others, and shared rhythmic synchrony—precisely the behavioral patterns associated with prosocial development and collaborative competence (Catalano et al., 2008; Lockwood, 2015). Its rooting in *Siri' na Pacce* provides an ethical framework that connects individual dignity, communal solidarity, and inter-personal care (Ahmad & Islam, 2024; Hamid, 2017). When embedded within a structured PE intervention, Tari Paraga can serve as a living pedagogical space where moral principles are not instructed but enacted and internalized through movement.

Furthermore, the cultural identity dimension of Tari Paraga is particularly significant in contemporary Indonesian education. Globalization, rapid urbanization, and digital saturation increasingly distance young people from their local cultural heritage, weakening the cultural roots that support identity coherence and community belonging (Bennett, 2024; Putra, 2023). A PE intervention grounded in Tari Paraga not only develops physical competencies but also creates structured opportunities for students to reconnect with, re-embodiment, and revalue their Bugis-Makassar cultural heritage.

Therefore, this study aims to develop and evaluate an Embodied Cultural Pedagogy (ECP) program integrating Tari Paraga into secondary PE. Drawing on embodied cognition theory, culturally responsive pedagogy, and the indigenous ethics of *Siri' na Pacce*, the research examines how structured movement-based cultural learning enhances students' moral awareness, collaborative skills, and cultural identity. The study contributes to expanding the theoretical and practical foundations of culturally grounded PE in Southeast Asia and offers a replicable model for integrating intangible cultural heritage into contemporary educational practice.

Method

This study employed a strengthened mixed-method design integrating a pre-post quantitative intervention with concurrent qualitative data collection. The quantitative component assessed changes in students' moral awareness, collaborative skills, and cultural identity across an eight-week PE-based Tari



Paraga intervention. The qualitative component provided hermeneutic depth by examining students' lived experiences of embodied cultural learning through reflective journals and semi-structured interviews. The mixed-method structure enabled triangulation of measurable outcomes with interpretive insights, ensuring both empirical rigor and contextual richness.

Participants

A total of 112 lower-secondary students aged 12–15 years (62 males, 50 females) from three public schools in Makassar, South Sulawesi, participated voluntarily in the program. Participants were selected through cluster sampling, with schools chosen based on their proximity to active Tari Paraga cultural communities, availability of trained PE teachers, and institutional readiness to implement culturally responsive outdoor learning. All participants and their guardians provided informed written consent, and the study received formal ethical clearance from the relevant institutional committee.

Intervention Design

The Embodied Cultural Pedagogy (ECP) program consisted of structured weekly PE sessions over eight weeks, each combining traditional movement learning, cooperative ensemble practice, and cultural reflection. All sessions were facilitated by PE teachers who received a two-day training workshop on Tari Paraga technique and culturally responsive facilitation prior to the intervention.

During Weeks 1-2 (Foundation Movement and Cultural Orientation), students were introduced to basic Paraga footwork sequences (*langkah dasar*), rattan ball familiarization activities, and the cultural philosophy of *Siri' na Pacce* through guided discussion and movement mirroring exercises. Weeks 3-4 focused on Ensemble Synchrony and Cooperative Practice, incorporating partner and small-group Paraga sequences emphasizing rhythmic coordination, attentiveness to peers, and collective flow. During Weeks 5-6 (Cultural Trail and Heritage Exploration), students visited local Bugis-Makassar cultural sites, participating in heritage walks, elder storytelling sessions, and reflective movement ceremonies at historical sites associated with Tari Paraga origins. Weeks 7-8 comprised Integrated Performance and Eco-Moral Reflection, culminating in a collaborative whole-class Tari Paraga performance, ecological pledging rituals, and a closing circle of cultural reflection integrating personal, social, and environmental dimensions of *Siri' na Pacce* values.

Instruments

Three validated instruments were administered at pre- and post-intervention. The Moral Awareness Scale (Indonesian adaptation, 20 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$) assessed ethical sensitivity, reasoning, and personal responsibility. The Collaborative Skills Scale (18 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$) measured students' cooperative behavior, communication, perspective-taking, and shared goal orientation. The Cultural Identity Scale (16 items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$) captured students' sense of pride in, connection to, and behavioral engagement with Bugis-Makassar cultural heritage. Additionally, a Student Engagement Observation Checklist was developed to monitor participation quality during each weekly session. The checklist comprised 10 behavioral indicators assessed by trained observers across four program components: motivational engagement, cooperative engagement, cultural-identity engagement, and ecological-moral engagement. Each indicator was rated on a three-point scale (absent, partial, full), and the overall engagement percentage per session was calculated as a proportion of fully observed indicators. Reflective journals and semi-structured post-intervention interviews with purposively selected students ($n = 24$) provided qualitative data on embodied learning experiences and cultural meaning-making.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using paired-sample t-tests to assess pre-post changes, with Cohen's d calculated to determine effect magnitude. Qualitative data were subjected to thematic hermeneutic analysis following the frameworks of Garagalza (2013) and Udeani (2021), progressing through four interpretive stages: surface meaning extraction, symbolic elaboration, horizon fusion, and eco-moral synthesis. Findings from both data strands were integrated through narrative triangulation to produce a holistic account of the program's impact.



Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Research and Community Service Institute of Makassar State University, number 3287/UN36.11/TU/2025.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Pre-Post Changes

All 112 students completed the eight-week intervention. Descriptive analysis revealed meaningful gains across all three outcome variables. Moral Awareness increased from $M = 61.84$, $SD = 8.21$ to $M = 74.63$, $SD = 7.88$; Collaborative Skills increased from $M = 60.47$, $SD = 7.94$ to $M = 73.12$, $SD = 7.61$; and Cultural Identity increased from $M = 58.93$, $SD = 8.45$ to $M = 73.77$, $SD = 7.72$ (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Pre-Post Measures

Moral Awareness	61.84 (8.21)	74.63 (7.88)	+12.79
Collaborative Skills	60.47 (7.94)	73.12 (7.61)	+12.65
Cultural Identity	58.93 (8.45)	73.77 (7.72)	+14.84

Inferential Statistics

Paired-sample t-tests confirmed statistically significant improvements across all three outcome variables (Table 2):

- Moral Awareness: $t(111) = 13.12$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.21$
- Collaborative Skills: $t(111) = 12.67$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.17$
- Cultural Identity: $t(111) = 14.03$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 1.29$

These large effect sizes confirm that the ECP-Tari Paraga program produced robust and meaningful gains across moral, social, and cultural dimensions of student development.

Table 2. Paired t-test Results

Moral Awareness	13.12	111	< .001	1.21
Collaborative Skills	12.67	111	< .001	1.17
Cultural Identity	14.03	111	< .001	1.29

Engagement and Participation Indicators

Weekly observation checklists indicated consistently high engagement across all program modules. Engagement peaked during the Cultural Trail and Integrated Performance sessions (Table 3).

Table 3. Student Engagement Checklist Summary

Foundation Movement (Weeks 1-2)	84%	Strong cultural curiosity and motivation
Ensemble Synchrony (Weeks 3-4)	88%	High cooperative engagement
Cultural Trail & Heritage (Weeks 5-6)	95%	Highest motivation and identity engagement
Integrated Performance & Reflection (Weeks 7-8)	92%	Strong ecological and moral empathy

Instrument Reliability

Table 4. Instrument Reliability

Moral Awareness Scale	20	.88
Collaborative Skills Scale	18	.87
Cultural Identity Scale	16	.91



Qualitative Interpretive Themes

Hermeneutic thematic analysis of reflective journals and interviews yielded four core themes:

Theme 1. Tari Paraga as a Living Moral Text. Students consistently described participation in Tari Paraga as an experience of embodied moral learning. One student noted that ‘when I must catch the rattan ball and pass it perfectly without breaking the rhythm, I understand what it means to be responsible to others.’ Another student reflected, ‘Every mistake I make affects everyone around me—I have never felt this kind of responsibility in a regular class.’ A third participant wrote in their journal, ‘Tari Paraga taught me that dignity is not only about how you look, but about how you treat others in every moment.’ These sentiments were echoed widely: approximately 19 of 24 interviewed students independently described Tari Paraga practice as a direct experience of moral principles rather than merely theoretical learning. Ensemble practice was identified by the majority of participants as a physical enactment of *Siri’ na Pacce*, linking personal discipline (*siri’*) to collective solidarity (*pacce*) through rhythmic cooperation.

Theme 2. Movement Synchrony as a Pathway to Collaborative Identity. Students reported that repeated ensemble practice created a felt sense of interdependence and shared purpose. Journal entries frequently referenced the experience of ‘becoming one movement’ as transformative for their understanding of teamwork. One student explained, ‘In the beginning, we all moved separately. After several weeks, I could feel everyone’s rhythm without looking at them.’ Another participant stated, ‘When we performed together at the end, I felt that I was no longer just myself—I was part of something bigger.’ Approximately 17 of 24 interviewed students described comparable experiences of felt interdependence, while 15 students specifically linked synchronized movement to a deeper commitment to their classmates’ success. This finding is consistent with literature on embodied synchrony as a foundation for prosocial behavior and cooperative identity.

Theme 3. Heritage Site Encounters as Cultural Anchoring Experiences. Visits to historical Bugis-Makassar cultural sites during Weeks 5–6 produced the most emotionally significant reflections. Students described feeling ‘reconnected’ to ancestors and to a sense of continuity between their movements and those of historical performers. One student wrote, ‘Standing at the site where Tari Paraga was first performed, I felt a thread connecting me to my great-grandparents. I never felt Indonesian and Bugis at the same time so strongly before.’ Another reflected, ‘The elder’s story made me realize I was not just learning a dance, I was carrying something precious that could disappear if we forget it.’ These sentiments were widely shared: 21 of 24 interviewees referenced the heritage site visits as the single most impactful element of the program. Approximately 18 students expressed a heightened commitment to cultural preservation following these experiences.

Theme 4. *Siri’ na Pacce* as an Eco-Moral Framework. Students interpreted the ethical principles of *Siri’ na Pacce* not only as interpersonal values but as guides for ecological and communal responsibility. Forest-path walks and spring encounters in Week 8 were experienced as extensions of the Paraga ethical orientation, reinforcing a holistic sense of stewardship extending from self to community to environment. One student noted, ‘Taking care of this forest is the same as taking care of each other in the dance—if one part suffers, everything suffers.’ Another wrote, ‘*Pacce* means shared suffering. After this program, I understand that the rivers and trees also suffer when we are not careful.’ Approximately 16 of 24 interviewed students articulated connections between the *Siri’ na Pacce* ethics and environmental stewardship, demonstrating that the eco-moral dimension of the program was meaningfully internalized across the majority of the qualitative sample.

Synthesis of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

Combined findings confirm that: (a) Movement-based cultural learning produces significant and large-effect improvements in moral, collaborative, and cultural outcomes; (b) Tari Paraga functions as a multidimensional pedagogical space that simultaneously engages cognitive, affective, kinesthetic, and cultural dimensions of learning; and (c) the alignment between quantitative gains and qualitative depth demonstrates that the ECP program produced genuine eco-moral development, not merely behavioral compliance.



Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that an Embodied Cultural Pedagogy program integrating Tari Paraga into PE can significantly improve students' moral awareness, collaborative skills, and cultural identity. The large effect sizes observed across all three constructs ($d = 1.17-1.29$) indicate that movement-integrated cultural learning produces outcomes substantially beyond those typically achieved through conventional classroom-based instruction.

Tari Paraga as an Embodied Moral Laboratory

The significant gains in moral awareness are consistent with the embodied cognition literature, which argues that moral sensitivity is not merely a cognitive achievement but an emergent property of coordinated, value-laden physical engagement (Narvaez, 2016; Sheets-Johnstone, 2011). In Tari Paraga, students are not told to be responsible; they are required to enact responsibility through precise timing, attentiveness, and mutual support within the ensemble. This experiential enactment of moral principles aligns with Morton et al.'s (2006) Four Component Model, in which moral sensitivity and judgment are strengthened through tasks requiring cooperative, reflective, and socially meaningful behavior.

The Siri' na Pacce framework provided the ethical backbone of this embodied moral laboratory. By grounding movement tasks in indigenous Bugis-Makassar ethical principles, the program ensured that moral learning was culturally situated rather than abstract (Hamid, 2017; Pelras, 1996). Students' journal reflections frequently connected specific Paraga movements to specific ethical principles—demonstrating that the symbolic dimensions of the art form were actively integrated into students' moral reasoning, a process consistent with Descola's (2003) concept of symbolic ecology as a vehicle for moral identity formation.

Collaborative Skills Through Ensemble Synchrony

The substantial improvement in collaborative skills is explained by the ensemble structure inherent in Tari Paraga performance. Unlike individual sport activities, ensemble Paraga practice requires sustained attentiveness to others, rhythmic coordination, and shared goal orientation—precisely the behavioral competencies associated with cooperative learning and prosocial development (Catalano et al., 2008; Greenberg & Mitra, 2015). The experience of movement synchrony as a pathway to collaborative identity, identified in Theme 2 of the qualitative analysis, mirrors findings from music psychology and dance research showing that rhythmic entrainment enhances prosocial attitudes and cooperative behavior.

The high engagement levels (84-95%) observed across all program modules further support the motivational power of culturally grounded, ensemble-based PE. Students were not merely physically active; they were engaged as cultural agents, which significantly elevated their investment in cooperative behavior and collective performance quality (Rochman et al., 2025; Saputra et al., 2025).

Cultural Identity Through Embodied Heritage

The largest effect size in the study was recorded for Cultural Identity ($d = 1.29$), underscoring the particular potency of Tari Paraga as a vehicle for cultural reconnection. This finding extends the ecopedagogical literature—which has emphasized natural landscape engagement as a catalyst for ecological and moral identity—into the domain of intangible cultural heritage (Putri, 2022; Saputra et al., 2026). The heritage site visits during Weeks 5-6 were particularly powerful, with students describing experiences of ancestral continuity, cultural pride, and a renewed commitment to preservation that persisted beyond the program.

These outcomes are consistent with Bennett's (2024) argument that embodied encounters with living cultural traditions activate identity processes that abstract knowledge cannot replicate. Tari Paraga, performed within and alongside historical Bugis-Makassar cultural spaces, functioned as what Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2004) might term a 'sacred pedagogical landscape'—a space where movement, heritage, and moral meaning converge to produce lasting identity formation.

Implications for Physical Education and Sports Pedagogy

1. **Culturally Grounded PE:** Traditional performing arts offer a high-leverage, culturally authentic resource for developing moral character, social cooperation, and cultural identity within PE contexts, particularly in Southeast Asian educational systems where local heritage curricula remain underutilized.
2. **Embodied Pedagogy Beyond Sport:** The ECP model demonstrates that PE can function as a transformative educational space extending well beyond fitness, encompassing moral development, cultural literacy, and community belonging.
3. **Curriculum Innovation:** The eight-week ECP framework offers a practical, replicable model for integrating intangible cultural heritage into secondary PE curricula across diverse regional and cultural contexts.
4. **Teacher Training:** The success of the intervention highlights the importance of teacher preparation in culturally responsive facilitation and indigenous movement arts, pointing to a significant opportunity for PE teacher education reform.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that an Embodied Cultural Pedagogy program integrating Tari Paraga into secondary Physical Education can significantly enhance students' moral awareness, collaborative skills, and cultural identity. Quantitative analysis revealed statistically significant improvements across all three constructs, supported by large effect sizes, indicating that structured movement-based cultural learning produces robust and meaningful developmental gains. Qualitative findings enriched these quantitative outcomes by revealing the mechanisms through which Tari Paraga functioned as a living pedagogical space—embodying ethical principles, enacting cooperative norms, and reactivating cultural belonging through movement.

The study extends ecopedagogical theory by demonstrating that intangible cultural heritage can function as a powerful experiential learning environment alongside natural landscapes. Tari Paraga served simultaneously as a physical activity framework, a cultural text, and an ethical practice, enabling students to develop moral sensitivity, social cooperation, and cultural identity in an integrated, holistic manner. These outcomes affirm the transformative potential of PE as a space not merely for physical fitness but for eco-moral education grounded in local cultural wisdom.

Future research should examine the long-term retention of these outcomes, explore the transferability of the ECP model to other traditional performing arts traditions across Southeast Asia, and investigate the role of teacher cultural competence as a mediating variable in program effectiveness. The integration of digital documentation methods for capturing embodied learning processes also represents a promising avenue for methodological innovation in culturally responsive PE research.

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Authors' and translators' details:

Jusrianto	jusrianto.250007101021@student.unm.ac.id	Author
Hardin	hardin@unm.ac.id	Author
A. Muafiah Nur	a.muafiahnur@student.unm.ac.id	Author
Aisyah Nursyam	Aisyah.nursyam@studet.unm.ac.id	Author
Muh. Syihab Ikbali	muh.syihab@student.unm.ac.id	Author/Translator

