

# Contribution of Traditional Games to the Quality of Students' Relations and Frequency of Students' Socialization in Primary Education

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## Abstract

*The goal of this research was to examine the contribution of traditional games to the quality of relations and to the frequency of students' socialization in primary education. A modified version of the School Violence Questionnaire was implemented on a sample of 232 students in the second, third and fourth grades in four primary schools in Karlovac. The first testing determined the quality of students' relations and the frequency of their socialization. After applying the traditional games, in June 2010, a final test was implemented. Two hypotheses assumed the existence of a statistically significant difference in the quality of relations and the frequency of students' socializations before and after the implementation of traditional games. The research results have shown an improvement of human relations between students in class, and an increase of students' socialization outside classes, after implementing traditional games in school.*

**Key words:** *human relation; primary education; students' association; traditional play.*

## Introduction

Play can be considered a form of behaviour, which takes place according to rules, in a specific space and time. Due to its features, play has become the subject of study in different sciences. The interest in the study of play arises in pedagogy, psychology,

sociology, ethnology, philosophy, but is also an important segment of art, economy and other areas. That fact confirms the importance of play as a unique phenomenon which accompanies us throughout our lives, from early childhood. There are a large number of games which are meant for different age groups of children and adults. Some of those are used in working with children, due to the possible effects on the improvement of a child's psycho-physical state. Play gives the child a possibility of active participation and enables development, achieving self-confidence and better relations within the group. At a younger school age, play has a special significance for children's development and can easily be integrated in the teaching process. In higher grades play can be used within workshops, with the goal of improving children's communication skills and nonviolent conflict resolution. The multitude of games intended for school age also gives numerous possibilities for their application in working with children. Games are changing and are adjusted to the requirements of time in which they are implemented. Some old, traditional games, common in the past, are forgotten and disappear because today's children no longer know them. The problem of communication between people of different generations arises, but also between peers who spend less and less time in joint activities.

Traditional games, which were the integral part of our ancestors' childhood, have almost vanished. Our parents' generations still recall some of those, but children in modern society know them poorly. They have had a great significance and have left a mark in the childhood of every human who played them. Traditional games did not require expensive props and everyone could play, regardless of age or gender. The question that arises is why parents no longer pass on traditional games to their children. Perhaps it is because they are trying to be contemporary or, due to the influence of the consumer society we live in, they have replaced genuine activities with their children with material goods.

Today's children are poorer, because the feeling of togetherness which pervades in traditional games is lacking. Through those games children learned the skills of socialisation and acquired rules of behaviour which apply during play. Every game has certain rules, and abiding by those rules gives meaning to the game. In the past, many more games than today existed, and there was no technique which made a young person physically passive during play (Vujanović, 2009).

In traditional games the players pay attention to abiding by the rules and warn each other about certain deflections. Children are very critical and consistent in implementing certain rules. During play they warn each other about behaviour which is not allowed. Today, the basic problem in working with children is adopting the rules and respecting agreements. It is very important to absorb the rules of behaviour at the beginning of schooling. Through play children learn the fastest and acquire rules easier. The problem which arises with some children at the beginning of schooling is poor socialisation which results in difficulties in child's learning and behaviour. Play helps to develop the ability of communication, instigates faster socialisation of a

child and helps with establishing better relations with others. Play is an indispensable part of growing up. With it we can influence the positive growth and development of an independent child who cooperates with his/her peers. Traditional games give huge possibilities for teachers, parents and children, so it is necessary to protect them from oblivion. Each of the games is designed for a certain number of players, from pair games to games in larger groups. Games are defined by rules and fill players with pleasure, and in doing so have the power of positive influence on those who play them. This feature of the game makes it possible for it to be widely implemented in working with children of preschool and early school age. With its influence, play helps fight negative influences amongst children and develop their positive characteristics. Play influences versatile developments of a child and creates new learning possibilities.

## **Play and Child's Development**

Play is an activity tied to childhood and it is an integral part of growing up. Some games revive the sense of belonging to a certain group, awaken emotions and send us back to the time of childhood. 'Each of us knows play – knows it from our own experiences and from watching the everyday surroundings of man. As a phenomenon, play is familiar, close to us and ordinary' (Fink, 2000, p.14)<sup>1</sup>.

Maleš and Stričević (1991) name play as a dominant activity of a child, form of behaviour and the need which is necessary for its development. Play is the cause and effect of behaviour which characterises human development. At the same time, play is the need for movement, joy, socialising and activity. Findak (1996) defines play as a form of human activity which follows man from the earliest childhood and does not lose its role throughout life, when it gives a grown man a chance to relax from work. 'Play can be defined as a voluntary and often spontaneous activity of the most developed animal organisms and man, whose purpose is not satisfying life's needs, but recreation, learning, spending excess energy' (Furlan, 1981, p. 63). The need for movement and activity prompts the child's development, by making it possible for that child to know and examine the world around it. Man is occupied with play since the earliest childhood. It is his natural activity. The types of games and team-mates change during the process of growing up, but play is man's companion throughout his/her whole life. It is the phenomenon associated with pleasant feelings and pleasure. It can be used for educational purposes, because learning through play is close to and interesting for children.

'As a multifunctional activity, play creates tension and excitement. It is realised in specific verbal and nonverbal communications (signals, agreements, rules, messages, and requirements). Play is motivated from within, so it is always free, open and valuable for children' (Stevanović, 2000, p. 227). Through play, a child experiments

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<sup>1</sup> The quotes in this article are translations of the Croatian original made for the purpose of this paper, unless otherwise indicated.

and learns with a series of attempts and mistakes, cooperating with others. Through play, a child develops and communicates with its surroundings. Play is the activity which is different for a child and for adults, because adults consider it as fun in their free time. For a child, play is a work activity, form of learning and way of having fun. Preoccupation with play gives the players a possibility to imagine some other space and time in which it is happening. In play, a child stops being aware of surrounding reality, real people and events. It enters its imaginary world, creating the illusion of reality and some made up world in which special laws apply. Play is not only the preparation for future life, but also the content of child's life (Malić & Mužić, 1986). A child makes its first social contacts by playing with other children and, because of that, play is an important segment in realising relations of individuals within a certain group.

Play is a significant factor in the overall child's development, escort of childhood and an indicator of child's psycho-physical development in a certain moment (Došen-Dobud, 1982). Play gives an incentive to growth; it is one of the forms of knowing the environment in which a child lives. Through play, a child tests his/her own strengths and possibilities, checks gained knowledge and skills. Also, play shows the degree of a child's psycho-physical functions. Stevanović (2000) considers play a form and means of upbringing. By playing, a child acquires knowledge and spontaneously learns behaviours, so play can be regarded as a form of child's early education.

Play is considered to be the most important aspect of a child's activity. It becomes the result of a little child's exploration of its surroundings. At the same time, it is the examination of a child's personal abilities in play. Through play, a child processes real life experiences and, in such a way, realises itself. Positive and negative experiences similar to real life, for which a child is being prepared through play, are intertwined. A child learns to deal with positive and negative emotions created in interaction with others. Games contribute to the diversity of a child's personality, so they should be encouraged. The wealth of games, played by a child during its childhood, positively affects the overall development of personality. Play is not only fun for a child, but can also be called the condition of optimal growth of every child. Andrić and Čudina-Obradović (1994) consider the organism's growth the only process in which psychic and physical functions are developed at the same time. They state physical, psychomotor, cognitive, emotional and social growth as aspects of development. The most visible is bodily development which is evident in height, weight and change of bodily proportions.

In the process of growing up, a child communicates with other children and adults in different situations. This communication is tied to curricular and extracurricular activities in school and free time, through which a child is constantly developing and progressing. Play gives possibilities for learning social roles and acquiring behavioural norms. A child communicates with other participants in the game. Through play, it

learns about itself and others, and also gets to know the values which it will encounter throughout life. It is necessary to learn to accept the standpoints of others and to respect opinions of others, which is made possible for a child by participating in a game with its peers. Roller-Halačev and Vegar (1986) accentuate the role of play in the developmental process. Child's play ensures unity in respect to physical, intellectual, emotional and social growth of a child. Play affects child's bodily growth and development. Through play, a child develops and progresses in communication with others, and is also being prepared for life in society. At the same time, a child plays and learns, so we can speak of educational importance of play. Therapeutic influence of play in releasing emotional tension is also important.

Play influences the overall child's development. Thinking is developed in play, from concrete to abstract, and leads a child to logical reasoning. Play influences child's communication with others and motivates child's imagination and creativity. In play, a child develops bodily abilities because its need for movement is being fulfilled. Play is a difficult activity, but is also enjoyment. It is important for a child that it spends most time in play. Šagud and Petrović-Sočo (2001) accentuate the development of child's potential through play. In symbolic play, a child is prepared for abstract thinking because it is separated from concrete reality and functions in symbols. Play is a way in which a child examines his/her own possibilities, states ideas and emotions, solves problems and develops his/her own creativity. Play can be regarded as the preparation for responsibility which accompanies adult age of every human. The meaning of play is in accepting the rules, but also in the feeling of pleasure which accompanies child's play. A child who spends enough time in play with other children is ready for serious tasks which await him/her in the next life period. It takes on school obligations more readily and more prepared, and then other tasks at an adult age.

## **Traditional Games**

Traditional games are part of one's heritage and cultural tradition, but, with the passing of time, they are being forgotten and are not passed on to younger generations, due to modern lifestyle and growing alienation. 'Many old games have lasted long, fiercely resisting all changes in people's lives, so some of them survived till the present day and, even if they are not present in today's inventory of children's games, at least they remained in the memory of older generations' (Kožić, 1988, p. 51).

Traditional games are linked to life in the country. They are an integral part of childhood in rural areas. These games cannot be seen outside the context of time and space in which they existed. By knowing the conditions of life in our villages in the past, we can understand their simplicity and modesty in the use of props. The cause of this is poverty and modest conditions in which people lived in the country. Children used props from the natural surroundings in which they lived and, by using imaginative solutions, they played freely and had fun. Matoković (2003) accentuates that the type of child's play and its performance were defined by seasons, environment

and space in which it took place. Children played in the meadows, pastures and planes where cattle grazed, by rivers and streams where they bathed, in the courtyards and on village roads. In winter, games were played in houses and in the snow, in river beds, frozen rivers and streams. With song and dance, children participated in customs connected with religious holidays throughout the whole year. Despite their obligations children found the time and place for play. Traditional games are connected with watching over cattle on pastures, and they were adjusted to these conditions. In time, changes occurred in rural life and many games disappeared. Due to the progress in technology and settlements spreading, small shepherds disappeared and, with them, their interesting games.

With the change of social environment, strict division of games according to gender vanishes, although we are witnesses of the difference between games played by boys and those played by girls in everyday life. That difference does not concern toys which are given to children, but those games which children themselves choose and participate in. The social environment in which a child lives has an effect on the choice of a child's game. Lack of space for play and insufficient safety for children arises as a problem in cities, so a child will play in its home more than in open and dangerous space surrounded by cars. This limits children's freedom. Children in the country are not as free as they used to be, because places for play are not as safe as they used to be. Those facts will have an effect on the choice of a certain game, because conditions for safe play outside the home do not exist. Traditional games in the country were most often played outside, and winter period was reserved for indoor games, but those in the snow as well (Peršić-Kovač, 2004).

Traditional games are structured in such a way to directly influence the psychomotor, cognitive and emotional development of a child. They can influence the improvement of certain players' features and positively influence their overall development. Each of the chosen games primarily affects a certain segment of a child's development, but also the overall development. The stated games influence the cognitive growth, when the players are required to think and find solutions by using thinking processes, and the realisation is supplemented by physical activity of the participants. The influence of those games on emotional and social development is significant, because they are implemented in groups of children. Traditional groups are insufficiently represented and are not used enough when working with children. They can be used with the goal of carrying out educational tasks when working with the youngest. They have a therapeutic effect and the possibility of their application is great. Special value of traditional games is that we see them within the cultural heritage and consider a part of traditional culture which should be preserved. Since passing traditional games on to new generations of children is diminishing, due to the changes in the way of living, the need for creating conditions for learning traditional games arises. One of the possibilities of learning is introducing traditional games into primary education.

## Studying Traditional Games

The phenomenon of play was studied by numerous psychologists and pedagogues. Traditional games are also connected with the culture of some community, its customs and cultural rituals, so ethnologists have likewise studied children's dances and games in their works. Here, folklore and national customs of a certain area are mostly mentioned. Traditional children's games which need to be preserved as part of a cultural heritage can also be found. Hameršak (2003) states the importance of Alice B. Gomme in studying children's folklore. She wrote down more than two hundred traditional games and analysed them on the basis of older narrators' memories, considering them to be a historical source. Hameršak (2003) also mentions Dorothy Howard, with her dissertation on American children's songs from 1938. Two of them and Peter Opie as well cooperated with about 5000 children and, with the help of teachers, they have described and systematized contemporary children's games on the basis of children's statements. Their book *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* is considered one of the most famous studies of children's folklore.

Knežević (2002) mentions children's games with singing as an interesting and diverse form of children's creation. Children's games are a part of children's folklore in which they are intertwined with song and dance. Traditional children's games are regionally represented in literature and insufficiently studied. Systematic research, which would examine the children's knowledge of traditional games and the games' influence on behaviour, has not been implemented. There is a collection of games which had at one time been played and are kept in our areas. Games are usually linked with folk customs and children's dances of a certain area. 'Traditional games are a part of the purest ethnological heritage which, with its archaic and original structure, are passed on from generation to generation. They present a very important segment of overall traditional folklore' (Knežević, 1988, p. 9). The concept of traditional games is linked with traditional culture and concerns games our grandparents played when they were children and are part of cultural heritage. These old games are unjustly neglected and children know them less and less today. Generations of children have grown up alongside them and have played without expensive equipment and toys, only with few props, songs, and a lot of imagination. They represent great cultural wealth which should be kept from oblivion. Moslavac (1998) states that some children's games are not performed in their original form today, however they are revived in children's folklore choreographies or at festivals.

Traditional games are studied and noted with the goal of preserving some region's tradition, or influence of a certain game on the child and its development is being examined. One of the methods which are used to study traditional games is noting games in their original form, the way they are described by older villagers (interview). Some games exist in the memory of older narrators who describe them. Games are noted and so valuable collections of games which are no longer played are created, but

the testimonies of those who had once played them remain. Kolbas (1999) describes the way population passed the time with shepherd's games, children's games and adult fun. Shepherd's games are numerous because shepherds had much time for various forms of entertainment, and today old people remember these games which are mostly unknown to young people. With their testimonies, narrators who participate in research help save some of the old folk's games from oblivion. Usually they are older people who remember games from their own childhood, and their descriptions of customs and games are of extreme importance in keeping traditional heritage.

Mirjana Duran (1995) has studied traditional games in Croatia and she noted how children in Slavonija used to play. The author brings the collection of traditional games which are a part of the traditional culture of Slavonija and which are, by that fact, saved from oblivion. She compares games in Slavonija with games around the world and links them with children's games from remote parts of the world. Duran (1994) deals with the problem area of games and games tradition in her thesis. Dinter-Letica and Atanasov-Piljek (2006) bring a selection of traditional games which are appropriate for work with school children. When working with children of a younger school age, traditional games could find their place and justify their application for the purpose of educational influence which can be achieved through them. Bognar (1986) pays special attention to play in teaching and here, play appears in a new context. Play is used as a method of work in teaching, and the role of play is well known in teaching physical education. Play is present in maths teaching and in all other school subjects.

Findak (1996) regards play as a physical education tool which has a significant educational function. In teaching, play has a certain goal linked to the teaching process, and it is used for achieving educational teaching tasks. Traditional games do not have to be linked exclusively with only one school subject, but some games can successfully be used in teaching. The important educational influence of traditional games opens possibilities of pedagogic action and maintaining better relations between students in class.

By applying homeland traditional games in teaching, we encourage researcher in attitudes towards work, and by correlating and integrating teaching contents we link homeland past and present. With homeland traditional games we encourage children to preserve home cultural heritage (Bebek, 2005, p. 125). The pedagogical influence of traditional games goes beyond school classes; it impinges upon students' free time and includes their relations. Communication between people is extremely important today. The lack of it is felt amongst children. These games give a chance to maintain better relations within a certain group of children and the opportunity to teach tolerance, togetherness and respect of the rules. Traditional games and their study can be organised within extracurricular activities, during open door days and integrated days dedicated to play. Osman (2001) states that play is a child's work; different teaching activities can be linked with play. An integrated teaching day dedicated to

play develops emotional intelligence and the ability which will help children be more successful and content with their lives.

## Research

### Goal

*The goal of the research* is to examine the contribution of traditional games to the quality of pupils' relations and to the frequency of pupils' socializations in primary education.

### Problems

*The research problems are:*

- a) to examine the differences in the quality of students' relations in class, before and after the implementation of traditional games,
- b) to examine the differences in the frequency of playing during break time after implementing traditional games,
- c) to examine the differences in socialization frequency after classes, before and after the implementation of traditional games,
- d) to examine the differences in the number of friends before and after implementing traditional games.

### Hypotheses

Hypothesis  $H_1$  = there is a statistically significant difference in the quality of relations between students before and after implementing traditional games. It is assumed that traditional games will have an effect on relations between students in class.

Hypothesis  $H_2$  = There is a statistically significant difference in the frequency of students' socializations before and after implementing traditional games. It is expected that traditional games will contribute to the frequency of students' associations.

### Sample

The research was carried out on the appropriate dependent sample which consisted of a total of 232 students ( $N=232$ ) of second, third and fourth primary school grades in the Karlovac area (primary schools Grabrik, Dubovac, Turanj and Dragojla Jarnević), out of which 124 were boys (53%) and 108 girls (47%). The sample consisted of nearly the same number of eight-, nine- and ten-year-olds (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Interviewed students according to schools and grades

School	Second grade		Third grade		Fourth grade		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Primary School Grabrik	38	53	-	-	21	27	59	25
Primary School Dubovac	17	24	46	56	-	-	63	27
Primary School Turanj	17	24	19	23	-	-	36	16
Primary School D. Jarnević	-	-	17	21	57	73	74	32
Total	72	100	82	100	78	100	232	100

An appropriate sample of students was questioned using *The Questionnaire* on two occasions. The first interview was conducted in the period from 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> April 2010. After that, in April and May, students learned ten traditional games and then played them till mid June 2010. The second interview was conducted in the period from 11<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> June.

### **Research Instruments**

In the initial research *Questionnaire I* was used. It was designed for the needs of this research according to *The School Violence Questionnaire 2003* (SVQ-2003) by authors Buljan-Flander, Karlović and Štimac (2003), with the Clinic for Children's Protection in Zagreb. The questionnaire includes basic information about the child (grade, school and gender), sense of acceptance/rejection in class, quality of relations with other students, frequency of associating with others during and outside classes, number of friends in class, frequency of experiencing certain forms of violence, gender and number of bullies, frequency of certain forms of executed violence, and the solution to the problem of violence amongst children in school. All the questions in the questionnaire refer to the whole school year.

*Questionnaire II* was used in the final interview, and the questions refer to the period in which students played traditional games (two months). It consists of the same questions as the first questionnaire. Two additional questions refer to the influence of traditional games on students' relations in class and students' grade for each of the ten traditional games.

### **Research Procedure**

Initial interviews with the students were conducted in the period from April 12 to 16, 2010. In this way, data about relations between the second, third and fourth grade students, in schools in the Karlovac area, were gathered. After the interviews, acquisition of traditional games' rules within regular classes followed. Since ten traditional games were introduced into the work with children, two every week, the learning of games lasted five weeks (from April 19 to May 21, 2010). Students learned the rules during PE and form-master classes. Different games are a constituent of these school subjects, so the easiest way was to adjust traditional games to the structure of the instruction of these school subjects. Only one game was introduced per lesson. The teacher explained the rules and then monitored the play. Learning traditional games does not require much time, because the games are simple and the rules clear and intelligible. Students play one game at the same time, divided into more groups, in the space which is prepared for play (in the gym, in class or school yard). Students have acquired the rules of ten traditional games: *Swallows Go By; Crocodile; Blind Mouse; Black Queen One, Two, Three; How Much, Godfather, Pot; Noughts and Crosses; Granny, Granny, What's the Time?; Toothpaste; Come On, Children, Home; Cat Goes Round.*

After learning the rules of a particular game in class, children continued to play independently. Children needed to be motivated for learning new games and playing

in their free time as frequently as possible, in order to examine the significance of a certain game on students' behaviour. In this stage of playing, children played during the break, before and after classes, or when teacher planned the game within some school subject. Each play is recorded in the classroom, on the poster named according to teacher's and students' choice. One student from the class is in charge of noting each play session. Not all students simultaneously participate in every game. It is enough that few students from class participate in the game, and that play is recorded on the poster.

After acquiring the rules for all of the ten games, a time was reserved for independent playing of all the games acquired in the period of three weeks (May 24 to June 11, 2010). The process of playing also enclosed other activities thematically linked to the game, and with the goal of motivating students for implementing traditional games (oral and written exercise entitled *Game That I Love*, students' research work: *Games of my parents and grandparents*, art work on the topic *Our Games*, project: *Traditional games of our homeland* (games collecting), making picture books or class paper on the games topic, competition in traditional games).

In every school, at least two teachers were included in implementing the programme, for the purpose of mutual cooperation and support. At the beginning of the project, a two-hour workshop was organised in order for teachers to become acquainted with traditional games, and monitoring in the form of observation protocol. Each week, sessions with all the teachers who implemented the programme were held in order to exchange experiences. Eighteen teachers of primary education were involved in the project, and they taught the students in their classes ten traditional games. The overall process of play lasted eight weeks. In the period from June 11 to June 16, 2010 the final interviews with the students were carried out.

## Results and Discussion

Students were asked questions about the relations with other students in class, playing with other students during the break and after classes, and questions about the number of friends they play with. The analysis of students' answers before and after the implementation of traditional games gave the information presented in *Table 2*.

- 1) Mc Nemar's test (for two dependent samples) was implemented, with the contingency table which contained only categories 'good' and 'neither good nor bad' (low frequencies of other categories had to be excluded), i.e. with  $N=218$ .
- 2) Mc Nemar's test was implemented with  $N = 204$ , i.e. with category 'no' excluded, due to low frequencies.
- 3) Chi-square test was implemented with all available frequencies ( $N = 232$ ), for all three categories of answers.
- 4) Wilcoxon sign test was implemented with all frequencies ( $N = 232$ ) on the basis of median instead of arithmetic means, because of distribution's abnormality. Sign Test, which gave the results ( $z = -0.744$ ,  $p = 0.457$ ) which confirmed the conclusion based on Wilcoxon sign test, was implemented with the same data.

**Table 2.** Relations with other students before and after playing traditional games

Variable	Category	Before traditional games		After traditional games		Implemented test of the differences' significance	Results of the implemented test	The effect of traditional games
2- Relations with other students in class	good	176	76%	197	85%	Mc Nemar's Test <sup>1)</sup>	$\chi^2 = 121.72$ $p < 0.001$	Improvement
	neither good nor bad	50	22%	26	11%			
	bad	-	-	2	1%			
	doesn't know	6	2%	7	3%			
	total	232	100%	232	100%			
3- Playing with other students during the break	yes	162	70%	146	63%	Mc Nemar's Test <sup>2)</sup>	$\chi^2 = 47.69$ $p < 0.001$	Lower frequency
	sometimes	62	27%	75	32%			
	no	8	3%	11	5%			
	total	232	100%	232	100%			
4- Associating after classes	yes	83	36%	119	51%	Chi-square Test <sup>3)</sup>	$\chi^2 = 24.033$ $p < 0.001$	Higher frequency
	sometimes	113	49%	81	35%			
	no	36	15%	32	14%			
	total	232	100%	232	100%			
5- Number of friends played with	1	9	4%	7	3%	Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test <sup>4)</sup>	$z = -1.445$ $p = 0.149$	Without significant changes

Absolute and relative proportions in *Table 2* indicate the improvement of relations with other students in class. 76% of the students before and 85% of the students after the implementation of traditional games assessed the relations with other students as good (variable 2). Students' socializing after classes was more frequent, which was stated by 36% of the students before and 51% of the students after implementing traditional games (variable 4).

Playing with other students from class during break (variable 3) was less intense after traditional games (70% of the students before, 63% of the students after implementing traditional games). The number of friends students play with (variable 5) did not show significant changes after traditional games application. So, the average number of friends before implementing traditional games was nearly 6.20, and after traditional games 6.06.

It is possible to analyse question 4, which is linked with students' socializations, in the following way: if we compare the frequency of associating of every student, before traditional games application, (yes, sometimes, no) with the frequency of associating after traditional games, we can expect three different situations presented in *Table 3*.

By comparing the first with the third frequency ( $N = 39$  and  $N = 74$ , i.e. 17% with 32%), the improvement in students' socialization frequency after playing traditional games becomes evident. Thus, it is possible to make certain conclusions about hypotheses  $H_1$ , which refers to the quality of human relations (variable 2), and  $H_2$ , which refers to socialization frequency (variables 3, 4 and 5).

**Table 3.** Changes of students' socializations frequency after traditional games in reference to the state before traditional games

Change in the socialization frequency	Number of students	%
less frequent	39	17
same frequency	119	51
more frequent	74	32
total	232	100

Hypothesis  $H_1$  assumed the existence of statistically significant difference in the quality of human relations of students before and after implementing traditional games. Hypothesis  $H_{1_1}$  about the existence of statistically significant difference in the quality of students' relations before and after traditional games implementation is accepted, because that quality has changed significantly, i.e. improved, and the research results confirmed better relations between students in class after the implementation of traditional games.

The data acquired have shown the improvement of students' relations in class after implementing traditional games, in comparison to relations in class before the application of traditional games. A high percentage of students who regard their relations with others as good before the games implementation (76%) can be explained with students' good acceptance and mutual respect, significant influence of teachers, parents and friends in that period of childhood. Positive class atmosphere largely affects the development of good relations between students in school.

The effect of traditional games is visible in the improvement of relations between students in class. After the implementation of games, 85% of the students regarded the relations with other students as good, and that confirms the efficiency of play and justifies its application in class teaching. The results have shown that traditional games can be considered the cause of positive change and efficient mean in acquiring better students' relations in class.

Hypothesis  $H_2$  assumes the existence of statistically significant difference in students' socialization before and after the implementation of traditional games. The conclusion linked to  $H_2$  hypothesis is less deductible. The results show lower frequency of playing with other students during the break, after implementing traditional games, while higher frequency after classes, after implementing traditional games, was determined. The number of friends after the implementation of traditional games does not show significant change. The research has shown that students played less during the break, associated more after classes, and the number of friends they associated with remained the same.

Thus, it is possible to partly accept hypothesis  $H_2$ , about the existence of statistically significant difference in the frequency of socialization between students, before and after the application of traditional games. It is also possible to check this hypothesis with additional research.

After the project's implementation, students' opinion of traditional games contribution to the improvement of relations in class was examined. *Table 4* presents the data about the significance of implemented traditional games for improving relations in class.

**Table 4.** *Improvement of the relations in class*

Traditional games would improve relations in class	Number of students	%
yes	131	56
partly	83	36
no	18	8
total	232	100

More than half of the students included in the sample (56%) stated that traditional games could improve their relations. Just over one third of the students (36%) considered that traditional games could partly improve relations in class, while only 8% of the students considered that traditional games could not affect the betterment of their relations.

## Conclusion

The research results have shown the improvement of students' relations after traditional games implementation. Before the implementation, 76% of the students in class teaching considered relations with other students to be good, and after the application of traditional games that percentage was 85%. The results have also shown that students played traditional games less during school breaks, and more after classes. More than one reason can be stated to explain the given results. At the beginning of implementing the programme, some difficulties connected with the lack of space and time for playing in school occurred, due to larger number of students in classes and insufficient space for playing. Since students learned the games in school, it took time to acquire the rules of particular games, and the problem of disregard for the games' rules also arose demanding teacher's intervention. It was harder to secure the mentioned conditions for playing in school, so it is understandable that students played the traditional games more outside of school.

Furthermore, the research results have shown an increase in students' socializations after classes, and they were 36% prior to implementing traditional games and 51% after the implementation. Those results confirm the positive contribution of traditional games to spending quality free time outside classes. They also show the students' interest in this kind of content, which can be used in organising extracurricular activities.

By analysing the data gathered before and after traditional games application, it was determined that the number of friends children played with has not changed significantly. Mostly, children played with six or more of their classmates, and that confirms good friendly relations between students in primary education. Good

relations within the class can be considered the result of positive classroom climate in lower grades of primary school, and also the teacher's influence which affects the development of friendly relations in class by directly working with the students. Parents also have an important role in developing friendly relations in class. By encouraging their own child's socialization, they encourage the development of friendship with other students as well.

Students have shown an interest and accepted traditional games, despite many modern games which are available today. 56% of the interviewed students consider that traditional games can improve their relations in class.

It is important to accentuate that the implementation of traditional games alone does not require additional teacher's work, but his/her knowledge of the games and the desire to preserve tradition to which traditional games surely belong to. When introducing traditional games in teaching, different possibilities for their application in working with children have revealed themselves. In the course of the research, traditional games were used in PE teaching, but they can serve as motivation within all school subjects. In the initial primary school grades, games can be used with the goal of achieving better children's socialisation. It is possible to introduce traditional games as one of the extracurricular activities in school, through which students would learn and examine traditional games and customs of their homeland themselves through project and research work. Togetherness, which springs in play, is a prerequisite for more harmonious relationship within particular groups of children.

The important segment in preserving traditional games is connecting with members of older generations, who pass their knowledge and experiences onto children. During this research, students examined and discovered new games in the course of their conversations with parents, relatives and other fellow-citizens. In this way, they got to know the tradition and values of their folk heritage. Further research is needed to examine traditional games of a certain area. Students, who would present the results to other students and parents, and organise presentations and competitions in traditional games, could participate in this research. Traditional games could, in such a way, be used to improve the quality of spending students' free time. This is one of the possibilities we can offer children, with the goal of their mutual relations improvement and the reduction of violent behaviour amongst school children.

Traditional games are a cultural virtue and part of a tradition which should be nurtured and kept from oblivion. Play is an indispensable part of growing up and with it we can influence positive children's growth and their development as autonomous people. Therefore, traditional games offer immense possibilities for teachers, parents and children. This research contributes to the prevention of oblivion of some interesting games, played by generations before us, and their educational values which are unjustly neglected and almost forgotten. A well deserved place should be secured for play and we should benefit from its positive effect on children's development.

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# Doprinos tradicijskih igara kvaliteti međuljudskih odnosa i učestalosti druženja učenika u primarnom obrazovanju

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## **Sažetak**

*Cilj ovog istraživanja bio je ispitati doprinos tradicijskih igara kvaliteti međuljudskih odnosa i učestalosti druženja učenika primarnog obrazovanja. Modificirana verzija Upitnika o školskom nasilju (Buljan Flander, Karlović, Štimac, 2003) primijenjena je na uzorku od 232 učenika drugih, trećih i četvrtih razreda u četiri karlovačke osnovne škole. Prvim je ispitivanjem utvrđena kvaliteta međuljudskih odnosa i učestalost druženja učenika, a nakon primjene deset tradicijskih igara, u lipnju 2010. godine, provedeno je finalno ispitivanje. Dvjema hipotezama pretpostavljeno je postojanje statistički značajne razlike u kvaliteti međuljudskih odnosa i učestalosti druženja učenika prije i nakon provođenja tradicijskih igara. Rezultati istraživanja pokazali su poboljšanje međuljudskih odnosa među učenicima u razredu te porast druženja učenika izvan nastave nakon provođenja tradicijskih igara u školi.*

**Ključne riječi:** *druženje učenika; međuljudski odnosi; primarno obrazovanje; tradicijska igra.*