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Singing to Imagine: Culturally Adapted Musical Videos, Creativity, and Imaginative Play in Kindergarten.

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ABSTRAK

Studi ini mengeksplorasi peran video musik yang diadaptasi secara budaya dalam menumbuhkan kreativitas dan permainan imajinatif di kalangan anak-anak. Dalam pendidikan anak usia dini, musik dan permainan berfungsi sebagai jalur yang bermakna bagi anak-anak untuk mengekspresikan ide dan membangun pemahaman. Namun, media musik digital sering digunakan secara pasif, dengan perhatian terbatas pada potensinya dalam merangsang keterlibatan kreatif. Studi kasus kualitatif ini dilakukan di Taman Kanak-kanak Daarul Falah, Padang, dengan fokus pada anak-anak Kelompok B berusia 5–6 tahun. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, rekaman video, wawancara guru, dan dokumentasi, dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa video musik yang diadaptasi secara budaya meningkatkan keterlibatan anak-anak, mendorong gerakan ekspresif, dan mendukung permainan imajinatif, termasuk permainan peran dan representasi simbolik. Anak-anak diamati mengubah lagu menjadi gerakan, narasi, dan pertunjukan spontan, yang mencerminkan fleksibilitas dan orisinalitas. Guru juga memainkan peran kunci dalam memfasilitasi dan memperluas respons imajinatif anak-anak. Studi ini menyoroti bahwa video musik yang diadaptasi secara budaya dapat berfungsi sebagai alat pedagogis yang efektif yang mengintegrasikan media digital, budaya, dan permainan untuk mendukung kreativitas dan perkembangan imajinatif pada anak usia dini.

Kata kunci: video musik yang diadaptasi secara budaya; kreativitas; permainan imajinatif; pendidikan anak usia dini; studi kasus kualitatif.

ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of culturally adapted musical videos in fostering creativity and imaginative play among children. In early childhood education, music and play serve as meaningful pathways for children to express ideas and construct understanding. However, digital musical media is often used passively, with limited attention to its potential in stimulating creative engagement. This qualitative case study was conducted at Daarul Falah Kindergarten, Padang, focusing on Group B children aged 5–6 years. Data were collected through observations, video recordings, teacher interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings show that culturally adapted musical videos enhance children's engagement, encourage expressive movements, and support imaginative play, including role play and symbolic representation. Children were observed transforming songs into gestures, narratives, and spontaneous performances, reflecting flexibility and originality. The teacher also played a key role in facilitating and extending children's imaginative responses. This study highlights that culturally adapted musical videos can serve as an effective pedagogical tool that integrates digital media, culture, and play to support creativity and imaginative development in early childhood.

Keywords: culturally adapted musical videos; creativity; imaginative play; early childhood education; qualitative case study.

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood represents the most rapid and critical period of human development, during which children's personalities are formed and their cognitive, social, and emotional capacities develop at an accelerated pace (Bassok & Latham, 2017; Radesky & Christakis, 2016). At this stage, children are highly sensitive to environmental influences, particularly those stemming from their immediate surroundings, and remain open to a wide range of learning experiences (Ihmeideh & Al-Maadadi, 2020; Pertiwi & Prakosa, 2021). Consequently, the quality of experiences provided during early childhood plays a decisive role in shaping meaningful developmental trajectories and influencing children's future lives (Fatimah et al., 2025; Suryana, 2016).

From a developmental perspective, Jean Piaget emphasizes that children in early childhood are in the preoperational stage, where learning occurs through symbolic representation, imitation, and play (Byrnes, 2020). Similarly, Lev Vygotsky highlights the importance of social interaction and cultural tools in shaping children's learning, particularly through the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where children construct knowledge through guided participation (Kurniati, 2025). These perspectives underline that meaningful, socially situated, and culturally relevant experiences are essential for optimal learning in early childhood. In this regard, early childhood education holds a crucial responsibility in laying the foundation for children's holistic development, especially in fostering creativity and imagination as essential competencies for the 21st century. Learning should not be viewed merely as the transmission of knowledge, but as an active process in which children construct understanding through interaction with their environment, peers, and cultural context. This aligns with Jerome Bruner's constructivist view that learning is a process of meaning-making supported by scaffolding and representation.

Among various learning modalities, music and play occupy a central position in early childhood education (Nilsson et al., 2018). Music, in particular, has long been recognized as a powerful medium that engages multiple senses simultaneously through songs, rhythm, and movement, while supporting the development of cognitive, social, and emotional skills (Ghanamah & Eghbaria-Ghanamah, 2026). From the perspective of Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, musical and bodily-kinesthetic experiences play a significant role in developing diverse forms of intelligence beyond linguistic and logical domains . When combined with play, musical experiences provide opportunities for children to express ideas, explore emotions, and engage in symbolic thinking, all of which are essential for creativity and imagination (Allee-Herndon & Roberts, 2021).

With the advancement of technology, musical experiences are increasingly integrated with digital media, offering more dynamic and accessible learning opportunities. However, in many classroom practices, digital musical media—such as videos—are often used in a passive manner, where children are positioned primarily as viewers rather than active participants. This passive engagement limits the

potential of such media to stimulate creativity and imaginative involvement, reducing learning to surface-level interaction rather than deep meaning-making. From a pedagogical standpoint, this issue can be examined through the lens of the TPACK framework, which emphasizes the importance of integrating technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge in a balanced and meaningful way. In this context, the use of culturally adapted musical videos presents a promising pedagogical alternative. By incorporating familiar cultural elements, local languages, and contexts that resonate with children's lived experiences, these videos can function as cultural tools in Vygotskian terms, mediating children's understanding and engagement. Such familiarity encourages children not only to respond to what they see and hear, but also to reinterpret and reconstruct the content based on their own experiences. This process is closely related to the development of creativity and imaginative play, which are fundamental aspects of early childhood learning.

According to Vygotsky, imaginative play allows children to move beyond immediate reality by transforming objects, roles, and situations into new meanings. Through this process, children demonstrate key characteristics of creative thinking, including flexibility, originality, and the ability to elaborate ideas. Piaget also views play as a mechanism through which children assimilate and accommodate new experiences into their cognitive structures. Nevertheless, within formal learning environments, opportunities for imaginative play are often constrained by highly structured activities and predetermined outcomes. Similarly, although previous studies have examined the role of music or digital media in early childhood education, limited attention has been given to how culturally adapted musical videos specifically support the emergence of creativity and imaginative play in classroom settings. Addressing this gap, this study aims to explore how culturally adapted musical videos are implemented in early childhood classrooms and how they facilitate the development of creativity and imaginative play among children. By focusing on classroom interactions and children's responses, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how digital media; when meaningfully integrated with cultural elements can enrich learning experiences and support holistic development in early childhood education.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to explore how culturally adapted musical videos facilitate creativity and imaginative play in early childhood learning. The research was conducted at Daarul Falah Kindergarten, Padang; focusing on Group B children aged 5–6 years. The participants included one classroom teacher and a group of children who were actively involved in learning activities using musical videos. The subjects were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct participation in classroom interactions and their relevance to the focus of the study (Sugiyono, 2018). Data were collected through classroom observations, video recordings, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted during learning activities to capture children's

responses, behaviors, and interactions while engaging with culturally adapted musical videos. Video recordings were used to document children's gestures, movements, and forms of imaginative play that occurred during the activities. Semi-structured interviews with the teacher were carried out to gain insights into instructional strategies, the selection of musical videos, and the teacher's role in facilitating children's engagement. Documentation, including lesson plans and children's work, was used to support and enrich the data. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The process began with repeated reading and reviewing of field notes, video recordings, and interview transcripts to gain familiarity with the data. Initial codes were generated to identify meaningful units related to children's creative expressions and imaginative play. These codes were then organized into categories such as expressive movement, symbolic representation, role-based interaction, and narrative construction. Through an iterative process, broader themes were developed to explain how culturally adapted musical videos supported creativity and imaginative engagement. The analysis was conducted inductively while being informed by relevant theoretical perspectives on creativity, play, and early childhood learning. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation of data sources and methods was applied by comparing observations, interview data, and documentation. In addition, member checking was conducted with the teacher to confirm the accuracy of interpretations, and reflective notes were maintained throughout the research process to support analytical rigor.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate a progressive transformation in children's participation, creativity, and imaginative play following the implementation of culturally adapted musical videos in classroom learning activities. During the initial observation phase, children tended to engage with learning activities in a passive manner. Most children watched the videos attentively but demonstrated limited verbal responses, physical engagement, or imaginative involvement. Creative behaviors such as generating original movements, developing stories, or using objects symbolically were observed only among a small number of children. In many situations, children waited for teacher instructions before acting, suggesting that participation was largely reactive rather than self-initiated. This finding reflects a learning environment in which children functioned primarily as recipients of information rather than active constructors of meaning.

From a developmental perspective, this condition can be understood through Piaget's theory of cognitive development. As children in the preoperational stage learn through symbolic representation, imitation, and active engagement with their environment, opportunities for exploration play a crucial role in supporting cognitive growth (Byrnes, 2020). When learning experiences are dominated by observation and instruction, children have fewer opportunities to assimilate and accommodate new experiences through their own actions. Consequently, their participation tends to remain limited to following

directions rather than generating ideas independently. A gradual shift became visible after culturally adapted musical videos were introduced into the learning process. The integration of local language, familiar cultural contexts, and themes aligned with children's daily experiences appeared to increase both engagement and participation. Children became more responsive to songs and movements, often moving closer to the screen, singing along, clapping, and synchronizing their body movements with the rhythm of the music. More importantly, their participation extended beyond simple observation. Children began to interact with the content, respond to teacher questions, and demonstrate increasing confidence in expressing their thoughts.

One example occurred after children sang the song following the musical activity, the teacher invited children to observe their hands and the surface on which they were sitting. When asked what they noticed, one child immediately responded that the hands were dirty. The teacher then extended the discussion by asking additional questions, prompting other children to contribute their observations. Eventually, children collectively concluded that they needed to wash their hands. Although the interaction appeared simple, it illustrates an important pedagogical process. Rather than merely receiving information about hygiene, children actively constructed understanding through observation, reflection, and discussion. This finding aligns with Bruner's constructivist perspective, which emphasizes that learning occurs through active meaning-making supported by appropriate scaffolding. The teacher did not directly provide answers but facilitated children's thinking through guided questioning that encouraged independent reasoning.

The findings further reveal that culturally adapted musical videos supported the emergence of creativity among children. Initially, children's responses were largely imitative. Most children attempted to replicate the movements demonstrated in the videos and relied heavily on teacher guidance. However, as the activities progressed, children began to introduce their own interpretations. Some modified the demonstrated movements, while others combined different actions or added new gestures that were not present in the videos. These variations suggest that children were no longer simply reproducing information but were actively transforming and reconstructing experiences according to their own ideas.

Such behaviors reflect important dimensions of creativity, particularly flexibility and originality. Creativity in early childhood is often expressed not through complex products but through the ability to generate alternative responses, explore possibilities, and reinterpret experiences. Torrance describes creativity as the capacity to produce novel and meaningful ideas, while contemporary perspectives on early childhood creativity emphasize children's everyday creative actions within ordinary learning contexts (Marbun et al., 2022; Villarejo, 2019). The spontaneous modifications observed during musical activities demonstrate how creativity can emerge when children are provided with opportunities to explore rather than merely comply with predetermined instructions. The role of cultural familiarity appears particularly important in facilitating this process. The songs, language, and visual representations embedded within

the videos were closely connected to children's lived experiences. According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, learning is mediated through cultural tools that help children interpret and understand their world. In this study, the musical videos functioned as cultural tools that connected classroom learning with children's prior experiences and knowledge. Because children recognized elements from their own cultural environment, they were able to engage more meaningfully with the content and extend it beyond the immediate learning activity. The familiarity of the material appeared to reduce barriers to participation while simultaneously encouraging children to contribute their own interpretations.

Another significant finding concerns the emergence of imaginative play. Throughout the observation sessions, children increasingly transformed musical content into symbolic and role-based activities. Several children pretended to be singers, performers, or characters represented in the songs. Others used their bodies and nearby objects symbolically to represent elements associated with the musical narratives. In some instances, children developed simple storylines that extended beyond the content directly presented in the videos. These activities demonstrate that the children were not merely consuming digital content but were actively reconstructing and reimagining it through play. This finding supports Vygotsky's view that imaginative play is a fundamental mechanism through which children move beyond immediate reality and create new meanings. Through symbolic representation and role play, children learn to manipulate ideas, perspectives, and social roles in ways that support cognitive and social development. The symbolic use of objects observed during the study also reflects Piaget's concept of representational thinking, which characterizes the preoperational stage of development. When children assign new meanings to familiar objects, they demonstrate an emerging capacity for abstract and symbolic thought. Therefore, the imaginative behaviors observed in this study should not be viewed simply as play activities but as indicators of important developmental processes related to creativity, cognition, and meaning-making.

Interestingly, the findings challenge concerns that digital media inevitably reduces opportunities for imaginative engagement among young children. In this study, digital media did not replace play but instead provided a stimulus for its expansion. The videos acted as starting points from which children generated movements, stories, roles, and symbolic representations. This suggests that the educational value of digital media depends less on the technology itself and more on how the technology is designed and integrated into learning experiences. When digital content incorporates meaningful cultural contexts and allows opportunities for interaction, it can support rather than inhibit creativity and imagination. Nevertheless, the findings also demonstrate that creativity and imaginative play did not emerge automatically from exposure to musical videos. Variations were observed depending on how learning activities were facilitated. When teachers provided open-ended questions, encouraged exploration, and allowed flexibility in children's responses, creativity and imaginative engagement became more visible and sustained. Children demonstrated greater willingness to experiment with movements, create

narratives, and participate in symbolic play. Conversely, when activities became more structured and focused primarily on following instructions, children tended to return to imitative behaviors. Their responses became narrower and less exploratory. This finding reinforces the importance of pedagogy in the effective integration of technology in early childhood education. The effectiveness of culturally adapted musical videos in this study cannot be attributed solely to the media itself. Rather, it emerged from the interaction between culturally relevant content, purposeful pedagogical strategies, and opportunities for child-centered exploration. The teacher played a crucial role in creating an environment where children felt encouraged to experiment, interpret, and express their ideas. Overall, the findings suggest that culturally adapted musical videos can serve as powerful mediating tools that connect digital media, cultural experience, and play-based learning. Their effectiveness lies not only in their ability to attract children's attention but also in their capacity to stimulate participation, creativity, and imaginative engagement. By providing culturally meaningful experiences and opportunities for active exploration, these videos support children in becoming active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of information. The study therefore highlights the potential of culturally responsive digital media to enrich early childhood learning while supporting the development of creativity and imagination as essential competencies for lifelong learning.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that culturally adapted musical videos can function as an effective pedagogical medium for promoting children's participation, creativity, and imaginative play in early childhood education. The findings reveal a gradual shift from passive engagement, characterized by observation and imitation, toward more active involvement in which children interacted with learning content through movement, verbal responses, symbolic actions, and role-based play. The integration of culturally familiar elements, including local language and contexts related to children's everyday experiences, contributed to making learning activities more meaningful and accessible, thereby encouraging deeper engagement. The study also shows that creativity emerged when children were given opportunities to interpret, modify, and extend the musical experiences presented in the videos. Rather than merely reproducing demonstrated actions, children gradually developed their own movements, created simple narratives, and engaged in symbolic representations that reflected flexibility and originality. Similarly, imaginative play was observed through role enactment and the transformation of objects and experiences into new meanings, indicating that musical videos can serve as effective stimuli for imaginative thinking when integrated within play-based learning environments.

However, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of culturally adapted musical videos is not determined solely by the media itself. The teacher's role remains central in facilitating meaningful learning experiences. Open-ended questioning, guided interaction, and opportunities for exploration were found

to encourage richer creative and imaginative responses, whereas highly structured activities tended to limit children's engagement to imitation. Therefore, the educational value of digital media depends largely on how it is pedagogically designed and implemented. Overall, this study highlights the potential of culturally adapted musical videos to bridge digital technology, cultural relevance, and play-based learning in early childhood education. By providing meaningful cultural connections and opportunities for active participation, such videos can support the development of creativity and imagination while fostering more engaging and child-centered learning experiences. Future research may explore their long-term impact on different domains of child development and examine their implementation across diverse cultural and educational contexts.

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