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# GROSS MOTOR DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH RANUP LAMPUAN DANCE FROM ACEH

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the gross motor development of early childhood through the implementation of the Ranup Lampuan Dance from Aceh at Ulumul Qur'an Bireuen Kindergarten. This research was conducted because children's gross motor development requires appropriate and fun stimulation, while the use of local culture-based activities in early childhood learning is still not optimally utilized. The Ranup Lampuan dance was chosen because it has movements that involve body coordination, balance, agility, and muscle strength that are in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood development. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The research subjects consisted of children aged 5–6 years who participated in dance activities at Ulumul Qur'an Bireuen Kindergarten. Data collection was carried out through direct observation, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and documentation of learning activities. Data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques through the processes of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study showed that the implementation of the Ranup Lampuan Dance was able to positively stimulate various aspects of children's gross motor skills. The aspect of body balance obtained the highest achievement of 82% with the category of Very Good Development, followed by muscle strength of 80%, body coordination of 78%, motor control abilities of 77% and agility of 75%. Dance movements that are carried out gradually help children improve their body coordination skills, maintain balance, and follow movements according to the rhythm of music. This study concludes that the Ranup Lampuan Dance can be used as an effective learning medium to support the gross motor development of early childhood as well as introduce the local culture of Aceh from an early age. Further research may develop the use of other traditional dances as a stimulation of early childhood development.

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## Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays a fundamental role in fostering children's holistic growth by providing appropriate stimulation during the most critical stage of development. The primary objective of early childhood education is not only to prepare children for formal schooling but also to facilitate balanced development across multiple developmental domains, including religious and moral values, physical and motor development, cognitive abilities, language skills, social-emotional competence, and artistic expression (Mahyuddin et al. 2024). These developmental domains are closely interconnected, requiring educational experiences that address children's needs comprehensively rather than emphasizing only academic achievement.

Early childhood, generally referring to children aged 0–6 years, is widely recognized as the *golden age* because this developmental period is characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social growth (Fauziah Nasution et al. 2023). During this stage, the human brain develops remarkably fast, enabling children to acquire fundamental abilities that influence their future learning and overall well-being. Guswanti, Rayahu, and Sari (2023) emphasize that children experience extraordinary developmental changes during this period, making appropriate educational stimulation essential for maximizing their developmental potential. Consequently, learning activities for young children should emphasize active participation, exploration, and meaningful experiences rather than passive instruction.

One important aspect receiving considerable attention in early childhood education is gross motor development. Gross motor skills involve coordinated movements of large muscle groups, enabling children to perform essential physical activities such as walking, running, jumping, balancing, climbing, and maintaining postural control (Candra et al. 2023). These skills are not only important for children's physical fitness but also contribute significantly to cognitive performance, emotional regulation, self-confidence, and social participation. Previous developmental studies have demonstrated that children with well-developed gross motor abilities tend to participate more actively in classroom activities and exhibit greater independence in daily life.

The development of gross motor skills is closely associated with neurological and muscular maturation. As explained by Hasanah Cite in Tursina, Mahriza, and Ramaida (2022), motor development results from continuous interactions between the nervous system, muscles, and the brain, enabling children to gradually master increasingly complex movement patterns. Therefore, gross motor competence cannot develop optimally without continuous practice and appropriate environmental stimulation. Instead, it requires learning experiences that encourage children to move actively, explore their surroundings, and repeatedly practice various movement patterns through enjoyable activities.

Despite the recognized importance of physical movement during early childhood, many children today experience limited opportunities to engage in meaningful motor activities. Rapid technological development has increased children's exposure to digital devices, often replacing physically active play with sedentary behaviors. Consequently, many children spend more time interacting with gadgets than participating in outdoor games, physical exercise, or movement-based learning activities (Rahma et al. 2023). Such conditions may reduce opportunities to strengthen muscle coordination, balance, flexibility, and overall motor competence, potentially influencing children's readiness for

future learning experiences. Therefore, early childhood educators are encouraged to design learning environments that actively integrate movement into daily educational activities while maintaining children's enjoyment and motivation.

Among various learning approaches implemented in early childhood education, movement-based activities have received increasing attention because they combine physical exercise with enjoyable learning experiences. Young children naturally learn through movement, exploration, and play; therefore, learning activities that integrate body movements are considered more appropriate than passive instructional methods. Dance is one example of a movement-based activity that not only encourages children to be physically active but also stimulates cognitive, emotional, social, and creative development simultaneously (Tao et al. 2022). Through repeated movement patterns accompanied by rhythm and music, children are encouraged to improve body coordination, spatial awareness, balance, flexibility, and self-confidence while enjoying the learning process.

Movement activities through dance also create meaningful learning experiences because children actively participate rather than merely receiving information from teachers. As stated by Dianti and Nursafitri (2024), activities such as running, jumping, dancing, and role-playing effectively strengthen large muscle groups while improving children's overall body coordination. Similarly Barnett, Salmon, and Hesketh (2016), reported that limited opportunities for active movement during early childhood may hinder children's motor competence, affecting their ability to perform daily activities and participate confidently in subsequent educational settings. These findings indicate that movement-oriented learning should become an essential component of early childhood education rather than an additional classroom activity.

Traditional dance represents one of the movement-based learning media that offers both educational and cultural benefits. Besides encouraging physical activity, traditional dances introduce children to local cultural values, helping preserve cultural heritage from an early age. Integrating local culture into classroom learning also enables children to develop a sense of identity while participating in enjoyable educational experiences. Consequently, traditional dance has the potential to simultaneously support children's developmental outcomes and strengthen cultural awareness within early childhood education.

One traditional dance that possesses considerable educational potential is the Ranup Lampuan Dance, a well-known traditional dance originating from Aceh (Wigaringtyas 2023). This dance is characterized by rhythmic, coordinated, and relatively simple movement patterns that can be adapted to the developmental characteristics of young children. Various hand gestures, coordinated footwork, changes in body position, and synchronized movements provide opportunities for children to practice balance, muscle strength, flexibility, and coordination in an enjoyable manner. Furthermore, performing the dance collectively encourages children to develop concentration, discipline, cooperation, and confidence while interacting with their peers (Haryadi 2025).

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated the positive contribution of dance-based learning toward children's physical and motor development. Tao et al. (2022) emphasized that dance activities improve children's motor coordination while simultaneously supporting cognitive engagement and emotional expression. Likewise

Tursina et al. (2022) found that repetitive dance movements accompanied by musical rhythm help children develop balance, movement precision, and flexibility in a pleasant learning atmosphere. In addition, Djibran and Djibran (2023) argued that integrating dance into classroom instruction enables children to learn through enjoyable physical experiences rather than relying solely on conventional teacher-centered approaches.

Beyond its contribution to physical development, traditional dance also serves as an effective medium for introducing cultural heritage to younger generations. Khairunnisa, Saputra, and Ningsih (2025) explained that introducing traditional dance during early childhood contributes to cultural preservation by fostering children's appreciation of local traditions from an early age. Therefore, incorporating the Ranup Lampuan Dance into classroom learning offers dual educational benefits: enhancing children's gross motor development while simultaneously strengthening cultural identity. This dual function makes traditional dance a promising instructional medium for early childhood education within culturally diverse learning environments.

Although previous studies have consistently highlighted the positive role of dance-based learning in promoting children's physical and motor development, several limitations remain evident in the existing literature. Most previous research has primarily examined creative dance, modern dance, or general movement-based activities as instructional strategies for improving children's motor competence (Barnett, Salmon, and Hesketh 2016; Tao et al. 2022; Tursina et al. 2022). Other studies have emphasized the cultural significance of traditional dance or its role in preserving local heritage (Khairunnisa, Saputra, and Ningsih 2025). However, these studies generally investigated educational and cultural outcomes separately, providing limited evidence regarding how a culturally based traditional dance can simultaneously function as an effective pedagogical strategy for enhancing gross motor development in early childhood education.

Furthermore, empirical studies specifically examining the Ranup Lampuan Dance as a structured learning intervention for improving gross motor development among young children remain scarce, particularly within the context of Indonesian early childhood education. Existing research has largely focused on describing the characteristics of traditional dances or evaluating general movement activities without comprehensively exploring the educational potential of the Ranup Lampuan Dance in supporting children's gross motor competence. Consequently, evidence regarding its effectiveness as a culturally responsive learning medium remains limited, creating an important research gap that deserves further investigation.

Addressing this gap is particularly important because early childhood education increasingly emphasizes learning approaches that integrate developmental objectives with local cultural values. Rather than introducing movement activities solely for physical exercise, culturally responsive learning encourages children to experience meaningful educational activities while simultaneously developing an appreciation of their cultural identity. Therefore, investigating the educational value of the Ranup Lampuan Dance provides opportunities to expand current knowledge regarding culturally integrated learning strategies that support children's holistic development.

The novelty of this study lies in the integration of the Ranup Lampuan Dance as a culturally based instructional medium specifically designed to stimulate gross motor development in early childhood. Unlike previous studies that mainly discussed dance as

a general movement activity or focused solely on cultural preservation, this study positions the Ranup Lampuan Dance as an educational intervention that simultaneously promotes children's physical development and introduces Acehnese cultural heritage within early childhood learning. Consequently, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on culturally responsive pedagogy while providing practical evidence for integrating local cultural resources into early childhood education.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the implementation of the Ranup Lampuan Dance as a learning activity to improve gross motor development among early childhood children. Specifically, the study seeks to explore how structured dance-based learning contributes to children's balance, body coordination, flexibility, and movement control while simultaneously strengthening cultural awareness through participation in a traditional Acehnese dance. Based on the research background and the identified research gap, the following research question guides this study: How does the implementation of the Ranup Lampuan Dance influence the gross motor development of early childhood children?

## Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach using a single-case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the Ranup Lampuan Dance in supporting gross motor development among early childhood children (Septiana 2021). A single-case study was selected because the research focused on one bounded case, namely the learning activities conducted at Ulumul Qur'an Kindergarten, Bireuen, where the Ranup Lampuan Dance was integrated into daily classroom practices. This design enabled the researchers to explore the learning process, children's responses, and the educational context comprehensively within a real-life setting rather than measuring outcomes quantitatively. The study was conducted over three consecutive days in May 2026, involving children aged 5–6 years and classroom teachers who actively participated in and facilitated the dance activities.

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, allowing the researchers to obtain comprehensive information from multiple sources (Ardiansyah, Risnita, and Jailani 2023). Participant observation was conducted during the implementation of the Ranup Lampuan Dance to record children's gross motor performance, including balance, body coordination, agility, flexibility, and movement control based on early childhood gross motor development indicators. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with classroom teachers to explore their experiences, instructional strategies, and perceptions regarding the contribution of dance activities to children's motor development. Documentation, including photographs, learning records, lesson plans, and video recordings, was used to complement and verify the observational and interview data through source triangulation.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of (Miles 2014), which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation were first organized and coded according to the research focus, then categorized into meaningful themes describing the implementation of the Ranup Lampuan Dance and its contribution to children's gross motor development. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings,

method triangulation was applied by comparing information obtained from different data collection techniques, ensuring the credibility and consistency of the research results.

## Results

### A. Implementation of the Ranup Lampuan Dance Program

The implementation of the Ranup Lampuan Dance program at Ulumul Qur'an Kindergarten, Bireuen, was carried out over a period of ten weeks as part of the regular learning activities for children aged 5–6 years. The program was designed progressively, beginning with basic movement recognition and gradually introducing more complex movement patterns. Throughout the implementation, children participated in dance sessions lasting approximately 30–45 minutes under the guidance of classroom teachers. Each stage focused on stimulating specific gross motor skills through structured dance activities.

**Table 1. Stages of Implementation of the Ranup Lampuan Dance Program**

|   |            |                                                                                |                                                   |
|---|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Weeks 1-2  | Introduction of basic gestures: footsteps, hand swings, and standing positions | Static balance, leg muscle strength               |
| 2 | Weeks 3-4  | Opening movement network training (receiving betel nuts)                       | Coordination of movement, bilateral motor control |
| 3 | Weeks 5-6  | Combining movement with the rhythm of traditional Acehese music                | Agility, audio-motor coordination                 |
| 4 | Weeks 7-8  | Group floor formation and pattern exercises                                    | Spatial orientation, dynamic balance              |
| 5 | Weeks 9-10 | Small appearance and motion evaluation                                         | Integration of all gross motor aspects            |

*Source: Authors' elaboration based on field implementation (2026).*

Table 1 presents the sequence of dance activities implemented during the program. During the first two weeks, children were introduced to basic movements, including standing posture, foot placement, and simple hand gestures. In the following stages, children gradually learned coordinated hand and foot movements, synchronized movements with traditional Acehese music, group floor formations, and finally performed simple dance presentations. The progressive sequence enabled children to adapt to increasingly complex movement patterns according to their developmental readiness. Classroom observations showed that children became more confident in following movement instructions as the program progressed. Most participants were able to imitate dance movements independently after repeated practice, while others required occasional guidance from the teacher. The gradual implementation also encouraged active participation throughout the learning sessions, allowing children to practice movement skills consistently in an enjoyable classroom environment.

The interview findings supported the observational data. One classroom teacher explained:

*"We don't teach all the movements at once. There is a process. First, the children learn the footwork, then the hand movements, and finally combine them. It is similar to learning to read – from letters to words and then sentences."* (Teacher Interview, May 2026)

This statement indicates that the implementation of the Ranup Lampuan Dance followed a gradual instructional approach, allowing children to develop movement skills step by step according to their learning progress.

**B. Gross Motor Development Findings**

Observations, interviews, and documentation indicated that participation in the Ranup Lampuan Dance program contributed positively to several aspects of children's gross motor development. Five major gross motor components were identified during the study, namely body balance, movement coordination, agility, muscle strength, and motor control. Table 2 summarizes the level of achievement for each observed aspect.

**Table 2. Achievement of Children's Gross Motor Aspects through Ranup Lampuan Dance**

|   |                     |                                                                                              |     |                              |
|---|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------------------------------|
| 1 | Body Balance        | The child is able to stand on one leg during the dance pose (> 3 seconds)                    | 82% | Very Well Developed          |
| 2 | Motion Coordination | Children are able to coordinate hand and foot movements according to rhythm                  | 78% | Growing Up With Expectations |
| 3 | Agility             | Children are able to change positions quickly and accurately following the floor pattern     | 75% | Growing Up With Expectations |
| 4 | Muscle Strength     | The child is able to hold a squat position and stand repeatedly                              | 80% | Very Well Developed          |
| 5 | Motor Control       | Children are able to perform smooth and directed movements according to musical calculations | 77% | Growing Up With Expectations |

*Source: School Documentation, May 2026*

As presented in Table 2, body balance achieved the highest level of development, reaching 82%, which was categorized as Very Well Developed. During classroom observations, most children were able to maintain balance while performing tiptoe movements and standing on one leg for approximately three to five seconds. Teachers also reported noticeable improvements in children's postural stability during dance practice.

The second highest achievement was found in muscle strength, with a score of 80% and categorized as Very Well Developed. Observation showed that children were able to repeatedly perform standing, squatting, and tiptoe movements with better stability and endurance than during the initial learning sessions. Teachers also observed that children became more confident when performing daily movement activities requiring lower-body strength.

Movement coordination reached 78%, indicating that most children developed coordinated hand and foot movements according to the rhythm of the dance. During observation sessions, children demonstrated improved ability to synchronize upper- and lower-body movements while following the teacher's demonstrations. Although several children occasionally required verbal prompts, the majority successfully completed the movement sequences independently.

The motor control aspect obtained an achievement of 77%, categorized as Developing as Expected. Children showed increasing ability to regulate movement tempo, follow musical counts, and perform dance sequences more accurately. Repeated observations indicated that children gradually became more consistent in controlling the precision and timing of their movements throughout the learning sessions.

Among all observed components, agility recorded the lowest achievement at 75%, although it remained within the Developing as Expected category. During activities involving changes in floor patterns and movement directions, most children were able to change positions appropriately, while several participants still required teacher assistance to maintain movement accuracy and spatial orientation.

Interview findings further confirmed the observational results. Teachers consistently reported that children demonstrated noticeable progress in performing dance movements, maintaining body balance, coordinating limb movements, and participating confidently during group dance activities. Documentation collected throughout the study also illustrated children's gradual improvement across successive stages of the Ranup Lampuan Dance program.

### **1. Body Balance (82% - Very Well Developed)**

Body balance is the most prominent aspect of development (82%) in the Ranup Lampuan Dance program. This is not surprising, considering that the repetitive toe movement (standing on the tip of the toe) is a very effective balance exercise. When doing a tip-toed position, the body must maintain balance on a small support, namely the tips of the feet. This movement makes the body's muscles and nerves work more actively to maintain balance and regulate the position of the body so that it does not fall easily.

The classroom teacher observed a noticeable change during the program: "In the past, many children would fall off or hold on to a wall if they stood on one leg. Now it can last longer." (Interview, May 2026). During the observation, the researcher witnessed

firsthand how the children were able to maintain the tiptoe position for 3-5 seconds, which according to the teacher was much better than their initial ability when the program was just started.

## 2. Movement Coordination (78% – Progressing as expected)

Coordination of movements that involves synchronizing hand and foot movements simultaneously is the most complex and challenging aspect of the Ranup Lampuan Dance. In the basic movements of this dance, the child must simultaneously step on their feet in a certain pattern while swinging the hand holding Puan in different rhythms.



Figure 1. 1 Children Performing the Ranup Lampuan Dance Activity

The photo is a documentation of observation activities carried out when children participate in the Ranup Lampuan Dance lesson. In this activity, children can be seen practicing dance movements that involve coordination between hands and feet at the same time. Children try to follow the teacher's directions by moving the body according to the rhythm and movement patterns that have been exemplified. This activity was carried out to see the development of children's gross motor skills, especially in the ability to coordinate movements, balance, and agility of the body.

The teacher said that there were challenges faced: "These hand and foot movements are indeed the most difficult. The child's brain must process two instructions at once. But I see that children who have participated in this program for a few months are starting to be able to do well. No longer look stiff or pause to 'think' before moving." (Interview, May 2026).

78% achievement in the aspect of motion coordination is consistent in the article *Journal Research and Education Studies* It shows that children aged 5-6 years need a long enough exposure (at least 6-8 weeks) to complex movement patterns before bilateral coordination becomes automated. This automation of coordination is important because

it frees up the child's cognitive capacity to focus on the expressive aspects of dance (Nasution and Lubis 2025).

### 3. Agility (75% – Evolves On Expectations)

Agility is developed mainly through the components of movement movement, position shifting and changing floor patterns in the Ranup Lampuan Dance. In the Ranup Lampuan dance, dancers need to move from one formation to another quickly and still maintain the correct position relative to other dancers. For early childhood, these abilities require not only movement speed, but also motor planning and spatial orientation skills.

When observations were made, the researchers noted that most of the children were able to move positions independently with a fairly good reaction time, although a small number still needed guidance from the teacher. The teacher stated that this condition is the result of gradual development that has been seen since a few months of the program. The 75% achievement in the Agility aspect indicates good progress, although there is still room for further improvement.

### 4. Muscle Strength (80% – Very Well Developed)

Muscle strength develops significantly through the movements in the Ranup Lampuan Dance which demands repeated transitions between standing upright, half-squatting, and tiptoe. Postural transitions are effective eccentric and concentric reinforcement exercises.



*Figure 1.2 Children Performing the Ranup Lampuan Dance Activity*

The picture is one of the observation activities carried out when children take part in the Ranup Lampuan Dance lesson. In this activity, children can be seen doing various dance movements that involve leg muscle strength, body balance, and the ability to maintain body position when moving. The child seems to follow the movement gradually according to the example given by the teacher.

The teacher said that: "I see that children can now go up and down the stairs with more confidence. In the past, I still often held the handle. Now it's more independent. because they often practice dance." (Interview, May 2026).

The movements in the Ranup Lampuan Dance also train the strength of the leg muscles and the balance of the child's body gradually. When the child does a tip-toed position, bends the knees, and then stands up again, the leg muscles work more actively to support the weight of the body. Repetitive exercises help the muscles become stronger

and make the child more stable when moving. This condition can be seen from the ability of children who are starting to be more confident when walking, running, and doing daily activities.

In addition, the muscle strength developed through dance practice also supports the coordination of children's movements. Children become more able to regulate the movements of the hands and feet at the same time without easily losing balance. In the training process, the child's body learns to adjust position and maintain stability when moving around. This shows that dance activities not only train artistic skills, but also help overall physical motor development.

The development of muscle strength in children can also be seen from the increase in immunity when participating in learning activities. Children do not get tired easily when moving for a long time and look more active during activities. Through the Ranup Lampuan Dance practice which is carried out regularly, children get fun movement stimulation so that the process of strengthening muscles occurs naturally without making the child feel that they are doing strenuous physical exercises.

### **5. Motor Control (77% - Progressing as Expected)**

Motor control The ability to regulate the precision, speed, and efficiency of movements develops through the demands of dance that require children to move according to musical counts and follow a specified pattern. Aspects of motor control include the ability to stop movement precisely at certain counts, adjust the tempo of movements according to rhythm, and maintain accuracy of limb position.

The development of children's motor control can also be seen from their ability to follow changes in movement in a more directed way. Children begin to be able to adjust their steps, hand positions, and movement directions according to the instructions and rhythm of the music played. At the beginning of the practice, some children are still often late to follow the count, but after repeated practice, the child's movements become more regular and in harmony with the tempo of the dance. This shows an increase in the ability to control body movements more precisely.

In addition to helping the accuracy of movement, the Ranup Lampuan Dance exercise also trains the concentration and response of the child's body to sound and movement stimuli. Children learn to pay attention to cues, remember the sequence of movements, and coordinate their bodies to keep their balance during dancing. These activities help children develop motor skills gradually because the body and mind work simultaneously while following the dance movement pattern.

One of the interesting phenomena found in the observation is the process of internalizing motor control seen in children. In the early stages, movement control is external: the child relies on hard counts from the instructor. In the advanced stage, the child begins to internalize the rhythm and is able to regulate the tempo of the movement on his own. This process reflects a mechanism known in cognitive psychology as the internalization of external regulation to self-regulation, first described by Vygotsky (November 2025).

## Conclusion

This study shows that the implementation of the Ranup Lampuan Dance at Ulumul Qur'an Bireuen Kindergarten is going well and is carried out in stages for one semester. Dance activities are carried out by classroom teachers with full support from the school in introducing local culture to children from an early age. The results of the study show that the Ranup Lampuan Dance is able to help the gross motor development of early childhood in real time. The highest development was seen in the aspect of body balance with a percentage of 82%, then muscle strength of 80%, coordination of movement 78%, motor control 77%, and agility of 75%. The movements in the Ranup Lampuan Dance, such as tiptoe walking, crossing steps, regular hand swings, and body position shifts, help children practice their movement skills in a fun way. The high results in the aspect of balance and muscle strength show that this dance is very well used to train the stability of the body and the strength of movement of children. Meanwhile, the flexibility aspect still requires additional exercises such as stretching so that the child's development can be maximized. The success of this program is influenced by several supporting factors, such as the strong cultural value in dance, the support of the principal, and cooperation between teachers in the implementation of activities. On the other hand, there are several obstacles, such as the erratic presence of children, different early motor skills of children, and limited dance practice time. This research proves that the Ranup Lampuan Dance not only functions as a regional cultural art, but can also be used as an effective learning medium to stimulate gross motor skills in early childhood. Therefore, local traditional dance can be used as part of learning activities at PAUD as an effort to introduce culture while supporting children's development.

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