



Implementation Of Character Education Through Handball Extracurricular Activities In Supporting SDGs In The Field Of Education

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ABSTRACT

Character education has become an essential component of quality education and is closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, which emphasizes inclusive and holistic educational development. Sports extracurricular activities provide a strategic medium for fostering positive character values among students. This study aimed to determine how the integration of positive sports values influences the character development of students participating in the handball extracurricular program at Jepara Islamic High School. This research employed a quantitative descriptive approach using a survey method. The sample consisted of 16 students involved in the handball extracurricular activity. Data were collected through a questionnaire designed to measure the implementation of positive sports values, including discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and self-confidence. The research was conducted in three stages: pre-field preparation, field data collection, and data analysis. Data analysis involved data tabulation, descriptive statistical analysis, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that the implementation of positive sports values in character development achieved an average score of 67.99, which falls within the "Very Good" category. The findings indicate that students demonstrated strong character development through the values of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and self-confidence. These outcomes suggest that handball extracurricular activities effectively support character formation and contribute to the achievement of educational objectives related to the SDGs.

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A. Conception and design of the study;
B. Acquisition of data;
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INTRODUCTION

Character education is a crucial aspect of education, aiming to develop individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also possess good morals, discipline, responsibility, and teamwork. Character education is particularly relevant in extracurricular sports activities, including handball, as sports not only hone physical skills but also foster the values of honesty, sportsmanship, hard work, and a sense of responsibility (Saiful et al., 2022).



Handball is a team sport in which two teams of seven players each (six players and one goalkeeper) attempt to score a goal by putting the ball into the opposing team's goal. The game is similar to soccer, but the ball is moved with the players' hands, not their feet (Popalri & Fikri, 2019). The handball field measures 50 m x 20 m with a dividing line in the middle and a goal in the middle of each short side. A line is drawn around the goal to mark the area where only the goalkeeper can enter. The ball used is smaller than a soccer ball. Handball is played for two 30-minute periods. Penalties are taken from a distance of 29 meters. Handball is also contested in the Olympics. (Balfasa et al., 2022)

Education is a conscious effort to realize a cultural heritage from one generation to the next. Education makes this generation a role model for the teachings of previous generations. To this day, education lacks a comprehensive definition due to its complex nature, such as its target audience: human beings. This complexity is often referred to as educational science. Educational science is a continuation of education. Educational science is more closely related to educational theory, which prioritizes scientific thinking. Education and educational science are related in both practical and theoretical terms. Therefore, in the process of human life, the two collaborate. (Abd Rahman et al., 2022)

Character is linked and interchangeable with the terms ethics, morals, and/or values and is related to moral strength, having a positive rather than neutral connotation. Meanwhile, according to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (2008), character is the psychological, moral, or character traits that distinguish one person from another. Thus, character is a unique set of values, both ingrained in the individual and manifested in behavior. Character coherently emanates from the results of a person's or group's thought processes, heart processes, feelings and will processes, and sports. Character is also often associated with the term so-called temperament, which places more emphasis on the psychosocial definition related to education and environmental context. Meanwhile, character, seen from a behavioral perspective, places more emphasis on the somatopsychic elements that a person has had since birth. Thus, it can be said that the process of character development in a person is influenced by many unique factors present in the person concerned, also called innate factors (nature) and the environment (nurture) where the person concerned grows and develops. (Riadi, 2018)

Character education is a government program implemented through educational institutions, from the lowest level (early childhood education) to higher education. This is to facilitate the government's efforts to build the desired national character, in line with the nation's aspirations. Through this, students will develop good character through habitual implementation and practice, both within the school, family, and community environment. (Fadilah et al., 2021)

Character education is a system of naming character values, encompassing components of knowledge, awareness or will, and actions to implement these values, both towards God Almighty, oneself, others, the environment, and the nation. National character development can be achieved through the development of an individual's character. However, because humans live in specific social and cultural environments,

the development of an individual's character can only occur within that specific social and cultural environment. This means that the development of culture and character can be carried out in an educational process that does not separate students from the social environment, community culture, and national culture. The social and cultural environment of the nation is Pancasila, so cultural and character education is developing Pancasila values in students through education of the heart, brain, and physical. (Omeri, 2015)

Strengthening character is also an important effort to instill moral values that can serve as a foundation for social life. Good character will help students be disciplined, respect others, and take responsibility in all their activities. Therefore, education must provide a space for students to develop this character. Cerlin (2024) explains that education has a responsibility to help students adapt to their environment positively. Education that emphasizes character will produce a generation better prepared to face various social pressures and the challenges of the times. (Fauzen, 2025)

The 2013 curriculum's Physical Education (PJOK) subject also indirectly focuses on overall character development, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Therefore, teachers need to understand the meaning of PJOK in the 2013 curriculum. PJOK is a key learning area within the curriculum that focuses on developing the movement skills and concepts needed for students to participate in physical activities with competence and confidence (Lynch, 2019, p. 72). Physical Education is defined as an educational process that uses physical activity as a means to help individuals acquire skills, fitness, knowledge, and attitudes that contribute to optimal development and well-being for students. (Mustafa, 2020)

The importance of character building at an early age through sports activities is crucial for the growth and development of young people. Therefore, it can be concluded that character building in children must begin early and be done in a supportive environment for them to develop positive character traits. Some sports that can develop character in children include physical activities such as martial arts, dance, outdoor activities, and swimming. These have been shown to help develop various aspects of positive character in children, including responsibility, discipline, self-confidence, honesty, cooperation, leadership, and courage. (Hardiansyah et al., 2024)

The education system in Indonesia remains inadequate, making it a challenge for many countries, including Indonesia, to build a high-quality, compassionate, egalitarian, and accessible education system in this Fourth Industrial Revolution. Although not common, many individuals lack the resources necessary to obtain a proper education and a decent standard of living. (Ratnasari & Nugraheni, 2024)

Extracurricular activities play a vital role in education, providing students with the opportunity to develop various aspects of their potential and personality outside of regular school hours. There are two common types of extracurricular activities: mandatory and elective. Mandatory extracurricular activities are those that must be organized by the school and attended by all students. The objectives of these activities may vary, depending on the school's policies and vision. For example, mandatory

extracurricular activities may include sports, arts, or social activities aimed at fostering student cooperation and independence. Elective extracurricular activities, on the other hand, are those that can be developed and organized by the school, allowing students to choose activities according to their talents and interests. These activities are more diverse and varied, encompassing areas such as music, dance, drama, science clubs, journalism, and more. The purpose of this activity is to provide students with the opportunity to explore their interests, develop their talents, and develop specific skills in their chosen field. (Alivia & Sudadi, 2023)

The basic techniques of handball are considered modifications of soccer and basketball. According to Agus Mahendra (2000, p. 6), this is because the basic technical skills of playing with the ball with the hands are more similar to basketball techniques, including passing, dribbling, and shooting. Furthermore, during the game, most of the action in handball occurs around the defensive area. The attackers use all their skills and various tactics to try to score against the opposing team (Ridwan Haris, 1986, p. 11). The playing field, on the other hand, resembles a soccer field, consisting of netted goals and areas demarcated by rules that restrict player movement, including the game's mechanics. (Sumarsono et al., 2019)

Handball is a game that falls into the category of large ball games. It's less widely known. It's a game that seems to be dormant, as children tend to only know popular sports or games like volleyball, soccer, basketball, and even futsal. Yet, upon closer inspection, handball is no less engaging than other large ball games. The benefits of handball significantly influence the harmonious development of individuals, encompassing physical and spiritual development. Physical development, in this case, fosters good posture, encompassing anatomy, physiology, and health, as well as speed, agility, endurance, strength, and flexibility. Spiritual development, in which the psychological, personality, and character aspects develop in a positive direction, aligning with the demands of Indonesian society, is crucial. Therefore, playing handball promotes the development of thinking, willpower, and emotions. Furthermore, personality development, particularly self-control, discipline, cooperation, and responsibility for one's actions, is fostered. (Yusdiantara et al., 2024)

Education is a pillar of a nation's strength. It is through education that the nation will stand and be able to maintain its dignity. In Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Article 3, it is stated "National education functions to develop the ability and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to enlighten the life of the nation, aiming to develop the potential of students to become people who believe in and fear God Almighty, have noble morals, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. The implementation of education is not only to produce intelligent graduates but graduates who have contributed to national development, both the broader culture of the Indonesian nation to realize the competitiveness of the Indonesian nation in the international world, in accordance with its vision. (Martien, 2015)

METHODS

This research is a qualitative study aimed at exploring and understanding the application of character education to handball athletes through extracurricular handball activities. This study focuses on the experiences, perspectives, and actions of coaches and athletes in developing character values, particularly discipline, teamwork, and sportsmanship.

Qualitative research, as a research methodology, does not yet have a standard definition and is generally agreed upon for use. However, a more comprehensive and integrative definition can be drawn by examining definitions proposed by experts, thus forming a coherent definition. Therefore, this section will present several definitions of qualitative research, including Creswell's research, which defines qualitative research as follows: "Qualitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants; describes and analyzes these words for themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner." Qualitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants or informants: the researcher asks extensive questions, asks general questions, collects data consisting largely of the words (or text) of participants, describes and analyzes the text into themes, and makes subjective and biased inquiries (prompting further questions). (Safarudin et al., 2023)

The research focus in this study was conducted to limit the study and determine the focus of the problem being discussed. According to Spradley in Sugiyono's book (2019:275), focus can be a single domain or multiple related domains within a social situation. The primary focus of this study is on coaches' efforts to implement character education, specifically the values of discipline, cooperation, and sportsmanship, through extracurricular handball activities. By emphasizing these character values, this study aims to understand how coaches can play a role in shaping the character of handball athletes and creating a sporting environment that supports the mental and social development of athletes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study aimed to examine the implementation of character education through handball extracurricular activities at Jepara Islamic High School and its contribution to supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. Character education was assessed through the integration of positive sports values, namely discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and self-confidence. Data were collected using a 20-item questionnaire distributed to students participating in the handball extracurricular program and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

The overall results indicate that the implementation of positive sports values in character development achieved an average score of 67.99, which falls into the "Very Good" category. These findings demonstrate that handball extracurricular activities serve as an effective medium for fostering positive character traits among students.

Overall Implementation of Positive Sports Values

Table 1 presents the overall results of positive sports value implementation among handball extracurricular students.

Table 1.

Overall Implementation of Positive Sports Values

Variable	Total Score	Mean Score	Category
Positive Sports Values Integration	1088	67.99	Very Good

The results show that students generally demonstrated a high level of positive character development through participation in handball extracurricular activities. The findings suggest that sports-based educational programs can contribute significantly to character formation while supporting educational development goals.

Implementation of Discipline Values

Discipline is one of the fundamental character values developed through handball training activities. The analysis revealed that the average score for discipline implementation was 17.25, categorized as Very Good.

Table 2.

Distribution of Discipline Value Implementation

No	Interval	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
1	16.26 – 20.00	Very Good	10	62.50%
2	12.51 – 16.25	Good	6	37.50%
3	8.76 – 12.50	Fair Good	0	0.00%
4	5.00 – 8.75	Poor	0	0.00%

The majority of students (62.50%) demonstrated a very high level of discipline, while the remaining 37.50% were categorized as good. No students were classified within the fair or poor categories. These findings indicate that regular participation in handball activities successfully cultivates punctuality, rule compliance, commitment to training schedules, and respect for team regulations.

Implementation of Responsibility Values

Responsibility was another important character dimension measured in this study. The mean score obtained was 17.06, which is categorized as Very Good.

Table 3.

Distribution of Responsibility Value Implementation

No	Interval	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
1	16.26 – 20.00	Very Good	10	62.50%
2	12.51 – 16.25	Good	6	37.50%
3	8.76 – 12.50	Fair Good	0	0.00%
4	5.00 – 8.75	Poor	0	0.00%

The findings reveal that most students demonstrated strong responsibility toward their individual duties and team obligations. Participation in handball activities appears to encourage students to become more accountable for their actions, training commitments, and contributions to team success.

Implementation of Cooperation Values

Cooperation is a key element in team sports such as handball. The analysis showed that students achieved an average score of 17.18, categorized as Very Good.

Table 4.
Distribution of Cooperation Value Implementation

No	Interval	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
1	16.26 – 20.00	Very Good	9	56.25%
2	12.51 – 16.25	Good	7	43.75%
3	8.76 – 12.50	Fair Good	0	0.00%
4	5.00 – 8.75	Poor	0	0.00%

More than half of the students (56.25%) demonstrated a very good level of cooperation, while 43.75% were categorized as good. These results indicate that handball activities effectively promote teamwork, communication, mutual respect, and collaborative problem-solving among participants.

Implementation of Self-Confidence Values

Self-confidence was also assessed as part of the character education outcomes. The average score obtained was 16.50, which falls into the Good category.

Table 5.
Distribution of Self-Confidence Value Implementation

No	Interval	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
1	16.26 – 20.00	Very Good	8	50.00%
2	12.51 – 16.25	Good	8	50.00%
3	8.76 – 12.50	Fair Good	0	0.00%
4	5.00 – 8.75	Poor	0	0.00%

The results indicate that half of the students achieved a very good level of self-confidence, while the other half were categorized as good. Although self-confidence recorded the lowest average among the four indicators, the overall result remains positive, suggesting that participation in handball contributes to students' confidence in expressing themselves, making decisions, and performing in competitive situations.

Comparison of Character Education Indicators

To provide a clearer overview of the implementation of positive sports values, the results for each indicator are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6.
Summary of Positive Sports Value Indicators

No	Indicator	Total Score	Mean Score	Category
1	Discipline	276	17.25	Very Good
2	Responsibility	273	17.06	Very Good
3	Cooperation	275	17.18	Very Good
4	Self-Confidence	264	16.50	Good
Total	Overall Character Education	1088	67.99	Very Good

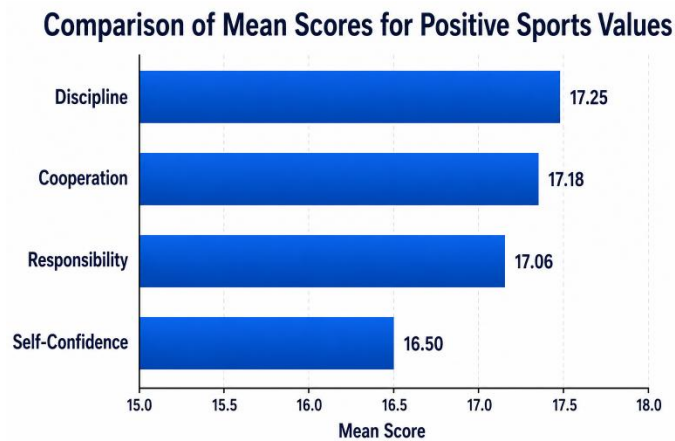


Figure 1.

Comparison of Mean Scores for Positive Sports Values

Figure 1 shows that **Discipline** achieved the highest average score (17.25), followed closely by **Cooperation** (17.18) and **Responsibility** (17.06). Meanwhile, **Self-Confidence** obtained the lowest average score (16.50), although it still falls within the good category. Overall, the findings demonstrate that handball extracurricular activities play a substantial role in promoting positive character values among students. The strong development of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and self-confidence supports the achievement of SDG 4 by fostering holistic student development that integrates cognitive, social, emotional, and moral competencies through sports-based education.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of character education through handball extracurricular activities at Jepra Islamic High School has been highly successful. The overall mean score of 67.99, categorized as "Very Good," indicates that students have effectively internalized positive sports values, including discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and self-confidence. These findings reinforce the growing recognition that sport-based educational programs are effective tools for character development and contribute directly to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which emphasizes quality education, inclusive learning environments, and the holistic development of students (UNESCO, 2023; Bailey et al., 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, sport serves not only as a medium for physical development but also as a powerful socialization process through which values, attitudes, and behaviors are transmitted and reinforced (Holt et al., 2017). The positive outcomes observed in this study align with the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework, which emphasizes that structured sports participation promotes competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring among adolescents (Lerner et al., 2019; Bean & Forneris, 2017). Through regular participation in handball activities, students are exposed to situations that require adherence to rules, cooperation with peers, accountability for actions, and confidence in performance, all of which contribute to comprehensive character formation.

The first major finding concerns the value of discipline, which obtained the highest average score (17.25) and was categorized as "Very Good." This result suggests that handball extracurricular activities effectively cultivate students' ability to comply with regulations, maintain punctuality, and demonstrate commitment to training routines. Discipline is considered one of the fundamental pillars of character education because it shapes self-regulation and behavioral consistency (Aulia et al., 2022; Kurniawan & Suryadi, 2021). In handball, athletes are required to follow game rules, training schedules, and coaching instructions. Repeated exposure to these structured environments gradually develops disciplined behavior that extends beyond sports contexts. Previous studies have similarly reported that participation in organized sports significantly improves students' self-control, rule obedience, and academic discipline (Sukoco et al., 2020; Hardman et al., 2021). The transfer of discipline from sports settings to educational and family environments supports the notion that extracurricular activities function as informal educational institutions capable of strengthening character development (Mutohir et al., 2020).

The second finding relates to the value of responsibility, which achieved a mean score of 17.06 and was also categorized as "Very Good." Responsibility is a critical component of character education because it encourages individuals to recognize and fulfill their obligations while accepting the consequences of their actions (Lickona, 2018). In handball, every player has a specific role that contributes to team performance. Defenders are responsible for preventing goals, attackers must create scoring opportunities, and goalkeepers are tasked with protecting the net. Such role differentiation encourages students to understand the importance of accountability and commitment. Research by Camiré and Santos (2019) suggests that team sports provide authentic opportunities for youth to practice responsibility through task execution and collective goal achievement. Similar findings have been reported in Indonesian educational contexts, where sports participation positively influences students' sense of accountability, leadership, and commitment to school responsibilities (Prasetyo et al., 2022; Rahmat et al., 2021). Therefore, the high responsibility scores observed in this study indicate that handball serves as an effective medium for nurturing responsible behavior among adolescents.

Another important finding is related to the value of cooperation, which obtained an average score of 17.18 and was categorized as "Very Good." Cooperation is a core characteristic of team sports and represents an essential competency for twenty-first-century learners (OECD, 2022). Effective handball performance requires communication, coordination, mutual trust, and collaborative problem-solving among team members. Students learn that success cannot be achieved individually but rather through collective effort and mutual support. This finding is consistent with studies indicating that team-based sports foster social competence, empathy, teamwork, and interpersonal communication skills (Turnnidge et al., 2018; Jacobs & Wright, 2020). Furthermore, cooperation is closely associated with SDG 4 because collaborative learning environments encourage inclusivity, participation, and social cohesion within educational settings (UNESCO, 2023). The strong cooperation observed among

participants suggests that handball extracurricular activities contribute not only to athletic development but also to the cultivation of social values necessary for active citizenship and lifelong learning.

The final indicator assessed in this study was self-confidence, which obtained an average score of 16.50 and was categorized as "Good." Although this value was slightly lower than the other indicators, it still reflects a positive outcome. Self-confidence plays a crucial role in adolescent development because it influences motivation, resilience, decision-making, and academic achievement (Bandura, 2019). Sports participation provides numerous opportunities for students to challenge themselves, overcome obstacles, and experience success, thereby enhancing self-belief and personal efficacy. During handball training and competitions, students are encouraged to trust their abilities, make independent decisions, and perform under pressure. Such experiences contribute to the development of confidence and psychological resilience (Gucciardi et al., 2021). Previous studies have demonstrated that sports-based interventions significantly improve self-esteem and self-confidence among adolescents, particularly when supported by positive coaching practices and constructive feedback (Vella et al., 2020; Harwood et al., 2019). The fact that self-confidence was categorized as "Good" rather than "Very Good" may indicate that some students still experience performance anxiety or hesitation during competitive situations. Therefore, coaches should continue implementing psychological skills training, positive reinforcement, and athlete-centered coaching approaches to further strengthen students' confidence.

The overall findings of this study also have important implications for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4. Quality education is no longer limited to academic achievement but encompasses the development of cognitive, social, emotional, and ethical competencies necessary for sustainable development (United Nations, 2024). Character education integrated into sports extracurricular activities provides an effective strategy for achieving these broader educational objectives. Through handball participation, students acquire essential life skills such as discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and self-confidence, which are recognized as key competencies for personal and societal development (Bailey et al., 2021; OECD, 2022).

Furthermore, the findings support the growing body of literature advocating the integration of sport and education as complementary approaches to youth development (Holt et al., 2017; Camiré & Santos, 2019). The positive character outcomes observed among handball participants suggest that extracurricular sports programs can serve as practical vehicles for implementing character education policies within schools. Educational institutions should therefore continue strengthening extracurricular programs, providing qualified coaches, and designing structured character-based learning experiences to maximize student development outcomes.

In summary, this study confirms that handball extracurricular activities contribute significantly to character education through the development of discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and self-confidence. The very good overall implementation

score demonstrates that sports-based educational programs can effectively support the realization of SDG 4 by promoting holistic student development. These findings highlight the strategic role of handball and other team sports as educational tools capable of producing not only physically active students but also responsible, disciplined, cooperative, and confident future citizens.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of character education through handball extracurricular activities at Jepara Islamic High School has been highly effective in fostering positive character values among students and supporting the objectives of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 in the field of quality education. The findings revealed an overall mean score of 67.99, which falls within the "Very Good" category, indicating that the integration of positive sports values has been successfully implemented through the handball program.

The results further demonstrate that students exhibited strong character development across the four assessed dimensions. Discipline achieved the highest mean score of 17.25, followed by Cooperation (17.18), Responsibility (17.06), and Self-Confidence (16.50). Discipline, responsibility, and cooperation were categorized as "Very Good," while self-confidence was categorized as "Good." These findings indicate that participation in handball extracurricular activities provides meaningful opportunities for students to internalize values such as adherence to rules, accountability, teamwork, and confidence in their abilities.

From both conceptual and empirical perspectives, handball serves not only as a medium for physical development but also as an effective educational tool for character formation. Therefore, coaches and schools should continue maintaining and strengthening these positive values through structured training, reflective learning experiences, and character-based coaching practices. Sustained implementation of such programs can contribute to the development of responsible, disciplined, cooperative, and confident students who are well prepared to become productive members of society.

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