INTEGRATION OF STUDENTS' CHARACTER EDUCATION THROUGH EXTRACURRICULAR PROGRAMS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to explore the significant relationship between students' participation in extracurricular activities and character development, while identifying key internal and external factors that influence the effectiveness of these activities in schools.

Research Design & Methods: This study used a systematic literature review approach to identify, examine, and comprehensively analyze the relationship between extracurricular activities and character education as well as the factors that influence student participation, with the main data sources from journals and proceedings between 2020-2023 that were systematically selected using the PRISMA method.

Findings: The study found that active involvement in extracurricular activities contributes significantly to instilling positive values such as social justice, self-esteem, self-confidence, and citizenship. It also enhances students' intellectual skills, teamwork, and engagement in the school community. The success of extracurricular programs relies heavily on quality internal management, a supportive school environment, and active student participation, as well as external support from parents, adequate facilities, and manageable scheduling.

Implications & Recommendations: Schools should prioritize well-structured extracurricular programs that foster holistic character education, ensuring sufficient resources and parental involvement. Policy makers and educators are encouraged to view extracurricular activities as an essential component of education, rather than a supplement, to support students' academic success and social-emotional development.

Contribution & Value Added: This study highlights the integral role of extracurricular activities in character education and provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the factors that maximize their effectiveness, offering practical insights for educators and school administrators aiming to enhance students' holistic development.

Keywords: Extracurricular, Character Education, Inclusive Education

INTRODUCTION

Student participation in extracurricular activities is an important part of the educational experience that not only complements academic learning but also supports students' personal, social, and character development (Cole et al., 2007). Extracurricular activities provide space for students to build social identity, a sense of belonging, and attachment to the school environment. The study by Berger et al., (2020) emphasizes that in the context of extracurricular activities, symmetrical and shared interest-based peer relationships create a strong sense of belonging. This

supports the process of "identity work" and shapes healthy social-emotional developmental pathways, such as self-confidence, empathy, and social skills. Extracurricular activities play an important role in religious character building (Hayati et al., 2022; Negara et al., 2024), as well as in the development of moral judgment among students (Walker et al., 2017).

Historically, character education has actually been an integral part of the educational process since the beginning of human civilization, because education not only aims to transfer knowledge, but also shapes the character and personality of students. In Indonesia, the concept of character education is not new. The teachings of educational figures such as Ki Hajar Dewantara have emphasized the importance of moral values and character in national education. The principles of "Ing Ngarsa Sung Tulada, Ing Madya Mangun Karsa, Tut Wuri Handayani" reflect an educational approach that emphasizes role modeling, empowerment, and strong moral support. However, the term "character education" itself became popular globally, particularly in the United States, in the last decade of the 20th century, as a response to declining morality among the younger generation (Mahmudi & Fauzi, 2024). In Indonesia, the implementation of extracurricular activities is officially regulated through the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 62 of 2014, which emphasizes the importance of systematic planning, implementation, and evaluation of extracurricular activities in educational units. This policy shows a commitment to optimally develop the potential of students through non-academic activities, but still needs to consider a balance with children's basic needs for free play and independent exploration.

Referring to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia No. 62 of 2014, this activity aims to optimally develop the potential, interests, talents, abilities, personality, and attitudes of cooperation and independence of students in order to support the achievement of national education goals. In this context, Shaffer (2019) emphasizes that to support children's overall development, emotionally, physically, and morally, active involvement in co-curricular and extracurricular activities is needed, which can enrich learning experiences and shape children's character more fully. Participation in extracurricular activities is considered effective in equipping students with moral and social competencies that are crucial for facing the various challenges and dynamics of global life in the 21st century (Aningsih et al., 2022; Afandi et al., 2019). In the realm of character education, extracurricular activities have been recognized as one of the effective strategies that play an important role in the implementation of character education in the school environment. In addition to traditional methods such as providing examples of good behaviour, habituation of positive values, and integration of character values into various subjects, extracurricular activities offer a practical approach that allows students to internalize these values directly through real experiences (Aningsih et al., 2022).

Extracurricular activities are now increasingly valued as an important means of developing students' practical skills and bridging curriculum materials with real-life experiences. Through these activities, students have the opportunity to learn in a social context that not only stimulates cognitive abilities but also encourages them to reflect on what they are learning (Hammoda, 2025). Moreover, extracurricular activities provide a space for experiential learning and social interaction that is essential for students' development. However, in order to ensure effective and meaningful learning, a deeper reflection process is needed so that the experiential learning cycle can be completed well and have a lasting impact (Preedy et al., 2020).

Inequality in access to quality education is still a serious issue in many countries, although every child has the right to receive an equal education regardless of socioeconomic background. Interestingly, research by Kosaretsky and Ivanov (2020) shows that children from families with economic limitations tend to be more active in extracurricular activities at school as a means to broaden their horizons and develop themselves. This phenomenon shows that schools have an important role in creating inclusive and equitable education for all students. The main challenge of modern education is to provide access to quality education for all learners. Moreover, during adolescence, which is an important transition phase, education must be able to develop academic aspects as well as character, social, and personality as a whole (Sahin, 2018).

Extracurricular activities structured outside of core subjects can result in less free play time for children, which is important for the development of their cognitive functions and social and

emotional well-being (Ren et al., 2021). In this context, how children and adolescents manage their out-of-school time is a crucial aspect that directly affects their learning and overall development. Studies in Western countries emphasize that a balance between structured activities, such as extracurricular activities, and free leisure time is essential for maintaining mental health, enhancing creativity, and fostering a sense of responsibility and self-regulation (Ren et al., 2020). These studies highlight the importance of maintaining a balance between structured activities and free time to ensure children's healthy and holistic development, so schools and parents need to design children's activity schedules wisely by considering their need for rest and free play as an integral part of the ongoing educational process.

Based on the above explanation, extracurricular activities are an important component of the education curriculum that not only support academic achievement but also play a significant role in developing students' character values. Through various non-formal activities at school, students have the opportunity to build values such as responsibility, cooperation, discipline, and leadership. However, scientific studies that specifically explore the relationship between extracurricular activities and students' character education are still limited, especially those that also consider internal and external school factors that may affect their effectiveness. Therefore, this study aims to examine in depth the relationship between students' involvement in extracurricular activities and their character formation and to identify the various supporting and inhibiting factors, both from within the school environment and outside, that may strengthen or weaken the contribution of these activities to character education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Basic Concepts of Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are collaborative activities that are organized, take place outside of formal learning hours, and are organized by schools or educational communities with the aim of developing students' social skills, interests, and overall potential (Gilman et al., 2004). According to Bartkus et al., (2012), extracurricular activities that take place outside of mandatory academic responsibilities and do not provide direct academic value, but still play an important role in students' education and personal development. They also emphasize the difference between "extracurricular" and "co-curricular", where extracurriculars are voluntary and outside the official curriculum, while co-curriculars are usually integrated with the formal learning process.

In the context of modern education, extracurricular activities have a very strategic role because they not only provide educational value but also combine elements of fun recreation with the learning process. Through these activities, students are encouraged to hone their creativity, build teamwork, and develop personal initiative, all of which are important complements to academic learning that can often feel monotonous. When designed according to learners' interests and developmental stages, extracurricular activities not only enrich the learning experience but also strengthen social integration among students. Furthermore, they help students understand and internalize cultural and moral values in a more concrete and applicable way in everyday life, thus contributing to the formation of a complete and balanced character (Lazar, 2018).

Extracurricular activities are voluntary, structured, and can cover a variety of areas both academic and non-academic such as sports, arts, religion, school publications, performing arts, academic clubs, and other skills not only serving as a means of entertainment or leisure, but also an important opportunity for students to gain valuable learning experiences. Within the school environment, extracurricular activities are designed to provide space for students to channel their interests and talents and strengthen character values such as discipline, responsibility, and social cooperation (Hidayat & Mumtazah, 2021). Through engagement in these activities, students are in dynamic social situations, which can significantly stimulate their cognitive development. Moreover, the activities encourage reflective practices that allow students to evaluate and understand their experiences more deeply, thus strengthening their critical thinking and decision-making abilities. Thus, active participation in extracurricular activities positively contributes to students' overall character building, social skills, and academic competence (Hammoda, 2025).

Extracurricular activities are not only a means to channel students' interests and talents, but also an important medium in shaping character through contextual learning experiences that are not obtained in classroom learning. For example, drum band activities are able to shape the character of discipline through regular practice, group rules, and consistent coaching. In this context, the role of the coach or trainer is crucial to guide students to reflect these values in their daily lives (Hidayat & Mumtazah, 2021). With the right approach, non-academic activities such as extracurricular activities become a fun learning experience as well as a means of internalizing character values.

Contextual learning is proven to be very effective in instilling positive character in students because this approach links the subject matter with real-life situations, thus creating a more meaningful and relevant learning experience for students (Azizah et al., 2024). Through providing a context that is close to the everyday world, students not only understand the concepts theoretically, but are also able to internalize the values taught through direct application in real activities. In addition, extracurricular activities such as scouts are an important vehicle for character building because they systematically instill life values such as responsibility, solidarity, and independence (Wiratomo et al., 2023). For example, through scouting activities, students learn to work together in groups, take initiatives, and play an active role in various challenges, so that the positive characters taught are not only understood intellectually, but also applied in real life in daily behavior. Thus, the combination of contextual learning and extracurricular activities contributes significantly to the overall character development of students.

Character Education

Character education is an approach in education that aims to shape students' personalities as a whole, including the development of moral, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects. This process includes the cultivation of noble values that are reflected in the social behavior and spiritual attitudes of students, which become important provisions in dealing with the dynamics of daily life, both in the school environment, family, and society. In public schools, the implementation of character education generally refers to government policies and regulations, such as the "Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter (PPK)" program, which emphasizes the development of the values of nationalism, integrity, independence, mutual cooperation, and religiosity in learning activities. Meanwhile, in the context of Islamic education, the character education approach focuses more on the formation of akhlakul karimah or Islamic moral values. This approach not only emphasizes spiritual and ethical aspects in students' daily lives but also integrates religious values with national education policies to foster and strengthen the personality of a Muslim as a whole *(syumuliyah)* (Susilo et al., 2022).

Character education essentially aims to form students who are not only intellectually superior but also have high moral qualities. This goal goes beyond the development of traits such as perseverance and resilience, emphasizing the importance of a holistic and integrated approach. The approach includes the internalization of fundamental values such as respect for human rights, democratic principles, the rule of law, individual freedom, and mutual respect and tolerance (Curren, 2017). Therefore, character education is a holistic process that instills ethical values in students through structured learning experiences in the context of formal education, so as to form a complete and responsible personality.

The Indonesian government has firmly established a policy related to the cultivation of character values in the formal education system through the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No 20 of 2018 is the regulation explains that the implementation of "Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter (PPK)" program is an integral part of the learning process that aims to instill the main values derived from Pancasila. These values include religious aspects as a spiritual foundation, honesty as a moral foundation, curiosity to encourage the spirit of learning and critical thinking, discipline as a responsible attitude, and tolerance that reflects respect for differences. In addition, PPK also integrates other noble values contained in the five precepts of Pancasila, such as gotong royong, social justice, and deliberation (Auliyairrahmah et al., 2021). The implementation of these values aims to form students who are not only academically intelligent but also have strong character, integrity, and are ready to face global challenges as citizens with Pancasila personality.

In a study conducted by Riadi (2018), 18 main values were identified as pillars in strengthening the implementation of character education in the formal education environment. These values reflect the moral, social, and national dimensions that must be systematically instilled in students. Among them are: 1) Religiosity; 2) Honesty; 3) Tolerance among individuals; 4) Discipline; 5) Persistence; 6) Creativity; 7) Independent; 8) Democratic; 9) Curiosity; 10) Nationalism attitude; 11) Nationalism attitude; 12) Appreciative; 13) Communicative; 14) Peace-loving; 15) Interest in reading; 16) Care for the environment; 17) Social empathy; 18) Responsibility. All of these values become the strategic basis in building a generation with strong character that is ready to face the challenges of the times wisely and with dignity.

METHODS

This research was conducted using a systematic literature review approach, which is a method designed to identify, review, and thoroughly analyze the findings of various previous studies in a particular field of study. This method aims to compile a comprehensive synthesis based on previously published data and results, so as to provide a more complete, valid, and accountable picture of the topic under review (Snyder, 2019). This research is a literature review that examines the relationship between extracurricular activities and character education, as well as the factors that influence student participation. Data sources were obtained from research journals and proceedings published between 2020 and 2023, with the main databases including ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and Scopus, as well as various other relevant scientific sources that support the scope of the study. To complement the search for data from the main databases, researchers also utilized the Google search engine to identify additional relevant sources to enrich the references of journal articles that had been previously collected. In the search process, keywords such as "extracurricular activities", "character education", as well as a combination of both, were used to obtain results that best fit the topic of the review. Next, the researchers screened and selected articles in a systematic and organized manner, then extracted important information from each selected article to be analyzed in depth, compiled, and summarized as the evidence base in a systematic review, using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA), as shown in Figure 1.
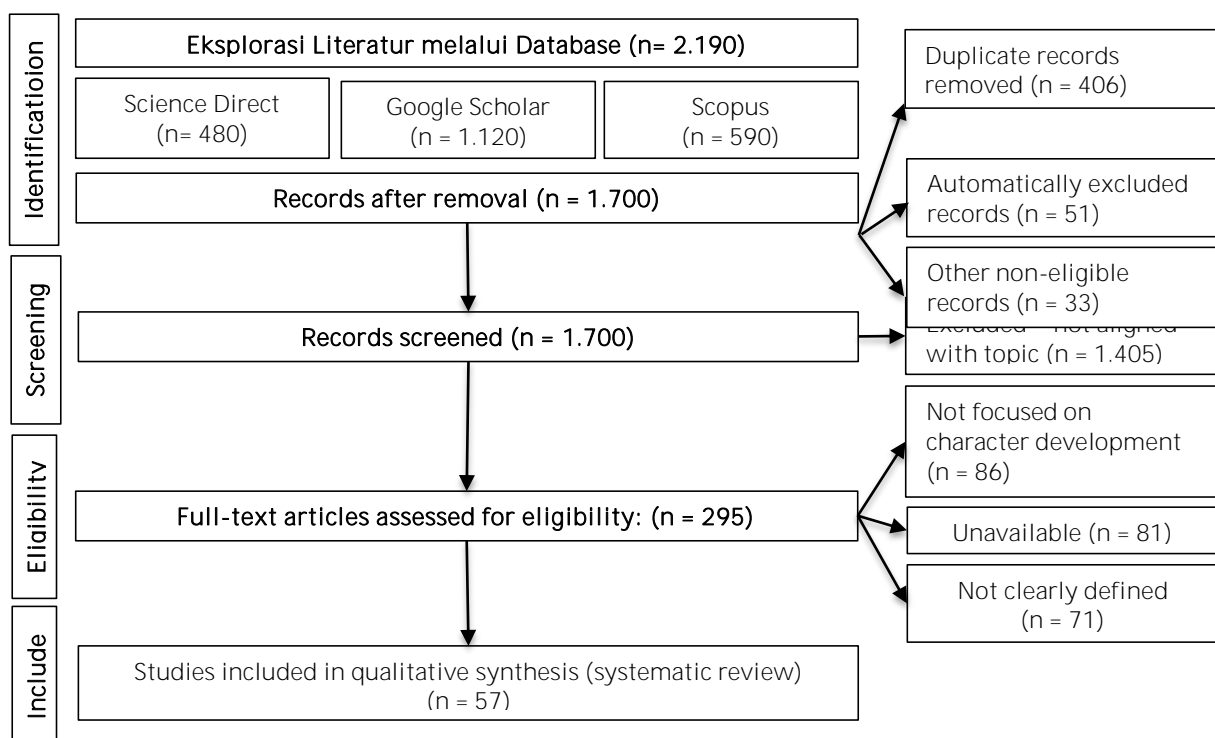

Figure 1. PRISMA Diagram for Study Selection Process

RESULT

Based on the initial findings identified in this study (n = 57), definitions and basic concepts of the content analysis process have been formulated, which serve as the basis for interpreting the data. The analysis process began with the use of a pre-conceived analytical framework as a reference for initial coding of the data collected. Subsequently, through a process of in-depth analysis, axial coding emerged that allowed the identification of relationships between categories and more complex subcategories. From this analysis, three main categories were found to be the focus of the study, namely extracurricular activities, learners' character, and the various determinants that influence the relationship between the two. This whole process is visualized systematically in the content analysis framework presented in Table 1, which serves to illustrate the structure of thinking in this study and strengthen the validity of the findings obtained.

Table 1. Analytical Framework for Content Analysis

Category	Aspect	Analytical Focus
Extracurricular Activities	Curriculum Linkage	How non-academic activities are structured within formal education
	Character Contribution	Impact on student discipline, teamwork, leadership, etc.
Education for character formation	Curriculum Implementation	Inclusion of moral/ethical lessons in daily learning
	Environmental Influence	School culture, peer interaction, and teacher modeling
Factors that Influence	Internal Factors	School vision, teacher roles, and availability of supporting resources
	External Factors	Family background, cultural expectations, and community involvement

This research applied a descriptive and deductive coding analysis approach to explore and identify key themes that emerged from the various articles analyzed. Through this process, data obtained from the literature were systematically classified based on pre-defined categories, allowing the researcher to group findings that share similar characteristics. This strategy not only makes it easier to organize the information thematically but also provides a structured framework for interpreting and presenting the findings in a more in-depth and focused manner.

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are activities that are carried out outside the main school curriculum and are voluntary (Berger et al., 2020). These activities are not required by formal education standards. According to Rezaei & Mahmoudi (2023), participation in extracurricular activities plays an important role in improving various essential work skills, such as communication skills, time management, teamwork, leadership, and technical skills. In addition, Mishra and Aithal (2023) emphasized that these activities outside of formal learning also support the formation of self-confidence, the development of positive attitudes, and practical knowledge and skills that are difficult to obtain only through the classroom learning process. Extracurricular activities are an integral part of the school curriculum that not only complement but also function as a continuation of classroom learning (Sahin, 2018). Extracurricular programs are designed to complement formal learning by providing space for students to develop skills, values, and practical experiences that are not fully acquired in the classroom. These activities enrich education by linking theory and practice directly according to the needs of each institution.

Curriculum Linkage

The integration of extracurricular activities into formal education has received increasing attention as it has been shown to provide significant benefits for student development. In this regard, schools are not only required to provide a wide selection of extracurricular activities but also to ensure that student engagement is active, meaningful, and of high quality. The focus is no longer just on the number of activities participated in, but on how deeply students engage and

develop through these experiences (Almalki et al., 2017). Extracurricular activities are no longer seen as an additional activity, but have developed into an important part of the global education landscape. Their development has even formed an education industry in its own right, which has a real impact on the formal education system. It challenges the boundaries of traditional education by bringing new approaches that are more flexible, participatory, and oriented towards the holistic development of students. Many pedagogical theories and practices from extracurricular activities are now being adopted into formal learning, signaling a closer integration between the two (Romi & Schmida, 2009). This development shows that education no longer takes place only in the classroom, but also through a variety of meaningful experiences gained outside of class hours, enriching students' overall learning process.

Character Contribution

Extracurricular activities have a relationship in supporting student character education, because they are able to instill positive values through direct experience and active participation. Various studies have shown that involvement in these activities significantly contributes to the formation of religious character, strengthening personality, developing good social attitudes, and increasing competitiveness and a spirit of healthy competition (Zurqoni et al., 2018). Furthermore, extracurricular activities designed with reference to the school's cultural and religious values can also be an effective means of implementing school environment-based character education (Hayati et al., 2022). Through various forms of activities such as educational tours, theater, scouts, sports, and religious activities, students not only gain enjoyable learning experiences but also develop important values such as creativity, communication, responsibility, nationalism, social justice, and religious character (Bredemeier & Shields, 2019; Hidayat et al., 2019; Leung et al., 2019; Yulianti et al., 2020). All of these activities thoroughly strengthen students' moral, social, intellectual, and spiritual aspects in the context of character education.

Education for character formation

Character is the pattern and characteristics inherent in a person as a result of a complex formation process through continuous interaction with the family, educational, social, and cultural environments, which consistently shape individual attitudes, values, and behavior in everyday life (Yulianti et al., 2020). Character education has become a major focus in overall student development efforts in recent years, given its crucial role in shaping positive personalities and attitudes. Various studies have shown that character education not only improves religiosity values but also strengthens personality, improves social attitudes, and fosters a healthy competitive attitude among students (Zurqoni et al., 2018). One effective model in implementing character education is the model used in pesantren, which adopts a multidisciplinary approach by integrating religious, social, and academic aspects harmoniously. This approach is able to produce maximum character development because it not only emphasizes theoretical learning but also real practice in students' daily lives (Baharun, 2017). Good character is reflected in a person's ability to understand the values of goodness, have the inner drive to choose the right, and realize it in real action, all of which are formed through positive habits of thought, sensitivity of conscience, and consistency of behavior.

Curriculum Implementation

Schools play an important role in shaping students' character. As a formal environment where students spend most of their time, schools are not only a place to gain knowledge, but also an arena for the formation of moral, ethical, and social values. Through interactions with teachers, peers, and various activities designed in the curriculum and extracurricular activities, students learn about responsibility, honesty, cooperation, discipline, and other positive values (Rindrayani, 2020). This process certainly does not happen instantly, but requires time, consistent effort, and a comprehensive approach. Effective character education in the curriculum demands a balanced and holistic approach, which not only emphasizes individual moral development but also includes broader character building, including values such as responsibility, empathy, and integrity. In addition, citizenship teaching should be integrated to equip students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions as active and responsible citizens. Thus, the curriculum should be designed in such a way as to foster social and ethical awareness and encourage active participation in the life

of the community and the state, as asserted by Althof and Berkowitz (2006).

Environmental Influence

The school environment plays a very important role in shaping students' character because it is where students interact intensely with various parties and experience the process of internalizing values consistently. A healthy and positive school culture, which includes the value system, beliefs, and norms shared by all school members, has a major influence on shaping the behavior and learning experiences of students and staff. Such a culture creates an atmosphere that supports the formation of strong character and integrity. According Wang (2023), a good school culture will create learning conditions that encourage optimal student character development. One effective strategy in integrating character education into school life is through a school culture-based approach. This can be realized, as explained by Hayati et al., (2022), by the implementation of religious values in school life, the creation of a religious school climate, the implementation of extracurricular activities that are loaded with spiritual and moral values, and the strengthening of collaborative relationships between schools and communities as part of a sustainable character education ecosystem.

Factors that Influence

The effectiveness of extracurricular activities in shaping student character does not occur automatically, but is influenced by various interrelated factors. For this reason, it is important to understand the main factors that influence the success of extracurricular activities as a vehicle for student character development. In general, the factors that influence the effectiveness of extracurricular activities in shaping student character can be categorized into two main groups, namely internal factors and external factors, including the following:

Internal Factors

Regarding internal factors, one crucial aspect is the quality of planning and management of activities by the school. Systematic management, from structured program formulation, clear division of roles, periodic evaluation, to consistency in implementation, can create an environment that supports the growth of positive character values such as discipline, responsibility, and the ability to work together (Solehah et al., 2022). In doing so, the success of extracurricular activities is also greatly influenced by a conducive school atmosphere, including role models provided by teachers, healthy social interactions between students, and a learning climate that encourages moral and social development (Rahayu & Dong, 2023). It is also important to note that the role of the students themselves cannot be ignored. The level of enthusiasm, interest, and motivation of students to be actively involved in each activity is an important key in internalizing the character values built through extracurricular activities (Sosiden & Viraek, 2021). Thus, the synergy between effective management, a supportive environment, and active student involvement is the main foundation in making extracurricular activities an optimal vehicle for character development.

External Factors

External factors also play a very significant role in determining the success of extracurricular activities as a medium for student character building. One of the most influential external factors is support from parents. When parents show attention, provide moral encouragement, and actively support their children's involvement in various school activities, this can increase students' motivation, self-confidence, and responsibility for the roles they play in extracurricular activities (Rahayu & Dong, 2023). Besides family support, the availability of adequate supporting facilities is also an important aspect. Facilities such as a proper activity room, equipment that is suitable for the type of activity, and the presence of competent coaches or trainers greatly determine the smoothness and quality of the extracurricular program implementation (Solehah et al., 2022). However, it cannot be denied that there are other external obstacles, such as a busy schedule of student activities outside of school or time constraints, which often become a barrier for students to participate optimally in extracurricular activities. These obstacles, if not anticipated properly, can reduce the effectiveness of activities in instilling the expected character values (Zarkasyi et al., 2020). The active involvement of various parties, accompanied by support from a conducive

external environment, is needed so that extracurricular activities can make a maximum contribution to student character development. With a strong synergy between schools, parents, and the community, these activities will be more effective in instilling positive values and shaping students' overall personalities.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of extracurricular activity programs is an integral part of the school's responsibility in shaping students who not only excel academically but also have strong character and morals. Extracurricular activities provide space for students to develop their interests, talents, social skills, as well as leadership and teamwork values that cannot always be honed in formal classroom learning. According to Birhan et al., (2021), these programs play an important role in preparing children to face various life challenges, both in academic and social contexts. Overall, the successful implementation of extracurricular activities is largely determined by the active role and strategic management of schools (Aturida et al., 2021). Starting from curriculum design based on needs analysis to program organization and evaluation, each stage must be adjusted to the vision and mission of the institution. Regular evaluation is key to ensuring the effectiveness and continuous development of extracurricular programs to support the achievement of holistic educational goals. This is the background of the emergence of various academic organizations or clubs in schools, as a place for students to develop their interests, talents, and intellectual abilities outside formal learning hours.

Specialized extracurricular activities give students the freedom to choose activities that suit their interests and talents, creating a more inclusive and enjoyable learning environment. This freedom encourages students to be more active and committed in the activities they enjoy, which in turn enriches the learning experience holistically. Besides developing non-academic skills such as leadership, teamwork, and communication, these activities also play a role in strengthening students' cognitive abilities. Research by Rasyidi et al., (2020) shows that although it does not always have a direct impact on academic grades, involvement in extracurricular activities can increase learning motivation. This motivation is an important factor in encouraging students to study harder, which indirectly has a positive impact on their academic performance, especially in subjects that demand logic and perseverance, such as mathematics.

Every student has different potential, which is not always visible from academic results alone. Therefore, schools need to give equal attention to students' interests and talents, both in academic and non-academic areas. Not all students excel in formal subjects; some have exceptional skills in sports, arts, or other skills that can be a pathway to future success. Research results show that good interpersonal communication, both from teachers and parents, is very influential in supporting the maximum development of students' talents (Hasugian et al., 2020). The education system should not only focus on academics, but also make room for different forms of intelligence as described in the theory of multiple intelligences (Barraza-López, 2015). Through an inclusive learning environment that supports a diversity of potentials, schools can foster students' all-around development and help them achieve their best.

Noble values can be effectively internalized through various extracurricular activities, especially in the field of sports. These activities are not only physical training, but also a means of character building, such as fostering a sense of social justice, self-esteem, self-confidence, civic spirit, intellectual ability, spirit of teamwork, and increasing student involvement in school life (Behtoui, 2019; Bredemeier & Shields, 2019; Leung et al., 2019; Ma et al., 2021; Ren & Zhang, 2020; Sahin, 2018; Umeh et al., 2020; Yuksel, 2019). Not only limited to sports, other extracurricular activities such as academic, art, and religious clubs also have an important role in shaping students' moral values and character. Through these activities, students can learn values such as tenacity, perseverance, friendliness, and the ability to face challenges and solve complex problems (Kallio & Heimonen, 2019; Shaffer, 2019; Susilowati, 2024). Extracurricular activities are not just a complement to formal learning, but serve as an important component of character education that equips students with social skills, positive attitudes, and emotional abilities that are essential for success in both academics and community life.

CONCLUSION

Extracurricular activities are a very important part of the educational experience as they not only complement academic learning but also play a major role in supporting students' overall personal, social, and character development. Through these activities, students have the opportunity to build their social identity, feel a sense of belonging, and increase their attachment to the school environment, which in turn strengthens the emotional and social bonds within the learning community. Character education itself has been a major foundation in the learning process since the beginning of human civilization, and extracurricular activities are recognized as one of the effective strategies in implementing character values in the school environment. This study aims to explore the close relationship between students' participation in extracurricular activities and their character building, as well as to identify various factors that support and hinder the effectiveness of these activities. The findings show that involvement in extracurricular activities significantly contributes to the inculcation of positive values, enriching practical experiences, and active participation of students in various activities. However, the success of these activities depends heavily on internal factors such as quality planning and management, a supportive school atmosphere, and the level of involvement of the students themselves. On the other hand, external factors such as support from parents, availability of adequate facilities, and constraints related to schedules and time also affect the effectiveness of extracurricular activities as an optimal vehicle for character education. Noble values can be internalized effectively through various extracurricular activities in schools. These activities not only serve as a means of developing students' interests and talents, but also become an important medium in character building. Through active participation in various extracurricular activities, students can foster a sense of social justice, self-esteem, self-confidence, and a strong civic spirit. In addition, these activities also help hone intellectual abilities, build a spirit of teamwork, and increase student engagement in the overall life of the school. Thus, extracurricular activities are not just a complement to formal learning, but also serve as a crucial component in character education. These activities equip students with social skills, positive attitudes, and emotional capabilities that are critical to support their success, both in academic contexts and in social interactions in the community. Through a supportive environment and diverse activities, students are encouraged to develop as a whole, becoming individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also emotionally and socially mature.

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