

Character Education through *Tapak Suci*: A Qualitative Case Study in Indonesian Senior High School

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ABSTRACT

Character education is an increasingly prominent aim of contemporary schooling, yet the processes by which culturally and religiously grounded extracurricular programs shape student character remain under-examined in non-Western contexts. This qualitative case study examines how participation in Tapak Suci, a Muhammadiyah martial arts extracurricular activity, contributes to character formation at a private senior high school in Yogyakarta. Information was collected from 12 students, 4 coaches, and 2 school administrators via 18 semi-structured interviews, 40 hours of participant observation, and document analysis conducted between March and May 2025. Analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model with systematic thematic coding and triangulation across sources. Findings indicate that Tapak Suci supports the development of religious commitment, discipline, punctuality, responsibility, mutual respect, and self-control. These outcomes were sustained through regular training routines, explicit moral instruction, coach role-modelling, and organizational rituals that integrate practice with moral discourse. The study clarifies mechanisms by which extracurricular practice translates into enduring character dispositions and discusses limits to transferability given the single-site design. Implications include the value of aligning extracurricular structure with explicit character objectives and of training coaches as intentional character educators. This research contributes empirical evidence from an understudied cultural context and offers actionable recommendations for educators seeking to harness extracurriculars for character education.

Keywords: character education, extracurricular activities, tapak suci, martial arts education, qualitative case study, Indonesian secondary school.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Greenberg's Report,¹ also supported research by Martinez and Najafov and other researchers,² Education systems have increasingly emphasized that schools are responsible not only for students' academic achievement but also for their social,³ emotional,⁴ and moral development.⁵ This shift reflects growing recognition that non-cognitive competencies—such as self-regulation, responsibility, resilience, and social connectedness—are fundamental to students' well-being and long-term life outcomes.⁶ International assessments and policy-oriented research have consistently shown that these competencies are strongly associated with academic success, mental health, and civic engagement, positioning character education and social-emotional learning as core components of contemporary schooling.⁷

Extracurricular activities have received growing scholarly attention as influential learning environments beyond the formal curriculum within this broader educational agenda.⁸ Organized extracurricular activities provide structured, supervised, and voluntary contexts in which students repeatedly engage in social interaction, goal-directed practice, and adult-guided learning.⁹ Longitudinal evidence demonstrates that participation in extracurricular activities is positively associated with school belonging and indirectly linked to lower levels of depressed mood among adolescents, particularly for students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.¹⁰ These findings support the compensation

¹ Mark T. Greenberg, "Evidence for Social and Emotional Learning in Schools," March 2023, <https://doi.org/10.54300/928.269>.

² Joseph A. Durlak and Roger P. Weissberg, "Promoting Social and Emotional Development Is an Essential Part of Students' Education," *Human Development* 54, no. 1 (2011): 1–3, <https://doi.org/10.1159/000324337>; Maria Eugenia Martinez and Valeria Gomez, "The Importance of Social-Emotional Learning in Schools," *Acta Pedagogica Asiatica* 3, no. 2 (July 29, 2024): 101–12, <https://doi.org/10.53623/apga.v3i2.468>; Rahil Najafov, "Socio-Psychological Determinants of Value Development in Students: A Meta-Analytical Review of Negative Behaviors and the Educational-Social Dynamic," *Revista Mexicana de Investigación e Intervención Educativa* 4, no. 3 (August 29, 2025): 275–89, <https://doi.org/10.62697/rmiie.v4i3.243>.

³ Mona Alzahrani, Manal Alharbi, and Amani Alodwani, "The Effect of Social-Emotional Competence on Children Academic Achievement and Behavioral Development," *International Education Studies* 12, no. 12 (November 29, 2019): 141, <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v12n12p141>.

⁴ Sy Van Pham, "The Influence of Social and Emotional Learning on Academic Performance, Emotional Well-Being, and Implementation Strategies: A Literature Review," *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 9, no. 12 (December 17, 2024): 381–91, <https://doi.org/10.36348/sjhss.2024.v09i12.001>.

⁵ Greenberg, "Evidence for Social and Emotional Learning in Schools."

⁶ Mohammad Nakhostin-Khayyat et al., "The Relationship between Self-Regulation, Cognitive Flexibility, and Resilience among Students: A Structural Equation Modeling," *BMC Psychology* 12, no. 1 (June 7, 2024): 337, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-024-01843-1>; Lisa G. Smithers et al., "A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Effects of Early Life Non-Cognitive Skills on Academic, Psychosocial, Cognitive and Health Outcomes," *Nature Human Behaviour* 2, no. 11 (November 5, 2018): 867–80, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-018-0461-x>; Hee Jung Min et al., "Building Resilience and Social-Emotional Competencies in Elementary School Students through a Short-Term Intervention Program Based on the SEE Learning Curriculum," *Behavioral Sciences* 14, no. 6 (May 29, 2024): 458, <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14060458>.

⁷ OECD, *Nurturing Social and Emotional Learning Across the Globe* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1787/32b647d0-en>.

⁸ Iqra Javed and Amit Kumar Srivastava, "An Analysis of Role of Extracurricular Activities (ECA) in Higher Education," *Revista Review Index Journal of Multidisciplinary* 4, no. 1 (March 31, 2024): 66–73, <https://doi.org/10.31305/rrijm2024.v04.n01.008>.

⁹ Scott Graupensperger, Jordan Sutcliffe, and Stewart A. Vella, "Prospective Associations between Sport Participation and Indices of Mental Health across Adolescence," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 50, no. 7 (July 10, 2021): 1450–63, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-021-01416-0>.

¹⁰ Alexander W. O'Donnell et al., "Extracurricular Activity Participation, School Belonging, and Depressed Mood: A Test of the Compensation Hypothesis during Adolescence," *Applied Developmental Science* 28, no. 4 (October 15, 2024): 596–611, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2023.2260745>.

hypothesis, suggesting that extracurricular activities may buffer psychosocial risks and contribute to more equitable developmental outcomes.

The developmental significance of extracurricular participation becomes even more salient during periods of social disruption. Examining adolescent experiences during major disruptions, such as Fuadiy et al found during the COVID-19 pandemic,¹¹ Jones et al., Samji et al., and Graupensperger et al. found that continued involvement in sports and extracurricular activities was associated with more favorable mental health outcomes, including reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression.¹² Their findings suggest that structured extracurricular contexts can function as stabilizing environments that promote psychological resilience when regular schooling routines and peer interactions are disrupted.

Beyond general extracurricular participation, scholars have increasingly focused on activity types that intentionally integrate physical practice with moral and psychological development. Martial arts-based extracurricular programs are of particular interest because they combine disciplined training routines, mastery-oriented learning, and explicit value instruction.¹³ Empirical research supports the developmental potential of such programs. Using a randomized controlled trial, Moore et al. demonstrated that participation in a structured martial arts intervention significantly enhanced secondary school students' academic, social, and emotional self-efficacy.¹⁴ Their findings indicate that mastery experiences, instructor feedback, and progressive skill development serve as key mechanisms linking martial arts practice to positive psychological outcomes.

Broader examinations of martial arts practice suggest consistent psychological and social benefits.¹⁵ Synthesizing evidence across diverse contexts, Vertonghen and Ikhwan et al reported that sustained martial arts practice is associated with improved emotional regulation, self-control, confidence, and social competence.¹⁶ Importantly, their analysis highlights that such benefits are contingent upon program structure, instructional quality, and the integration of reflective and moral components into physical training. This perspective aligns with qualitative scholarship, which emphasizes that extracurricular benefits are not automatic but are shaped by adult facilitation and institutional intentionality.

¹¹ Moch. Rizal Fuadiy et al., "Mapping the Digital Transformation of Education in Indonesia from 2012 to Early 2025: A Bibliometric Analysis of Scopus-Indexed Publications," *Journal of Educational Research and Practice* 3, no. 2 (July 26, 2025): 276, <https://doi.org/10.70376/jerp.v3i2.390>.

¹² Elizabeth A. K. Jones, Amal K. Mitra, and Azad R. Bhuiyan, "Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health in Adolescents: A Systematic Review," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 5 (March 3, 2021): 2470, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18052470>; Hasina Samji et al., "Review: Mental Health Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children and Youth – a Systematic Review," *Child and Adolescent Mental Health* 27, no. 2 (May 28, 2022): 173–89, <https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12501>; Graupensperger, Sutcliffe, and Vella, "Prospective Associations between Sport Participation and Indices of Mental Health across Adolescence."

¹³ Tania Pinto-Escalona et al., "Individual Responsiveness to a School-based Karate Intervention: An Ancillary Analysis of a Randomized Controlled Trial," *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports* 32, no. 8 (August 23, 2022): 1249–57, <https://doi.org/10.1111/sms.14167>.

¹⁴ Brian Moore, Dean Dudley, and Stuart Woodcock, "The Effects of a Martial Arts-Based Intervention on Secondary School Students' Self-Efficacy: A Randomised Controlled Trial," *Philosophies* 8, no. 3 (May 10, 2023): 43, <https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies8030043>.

¹⁵ Dan Sullivan et al., "Older Persons Participation in Hard Martial Arts: Opportunities to Improve Psychological Well-Being? A Scoping Review," *International Journal of Exercise Science* 17, no. 5 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.70252/CVDF5194>.

¹⁶ Jikkemien Vertonghen and Marc Theeboom, "The Social-Psychological Outcomes of Martial Arts Practise Among Youth: A Review.," *Journal of Sports Science & Medicine* 9, no. 4 (2010): 528–37, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24149778>.

Despite the growing international literature on extracurricular activities and martial arts-based interventions, several gaps remain. First, much of the existing evidence is derived from Western or secular educational contexts, leaving culturally and religiously grounded programs underrepresented. Second, while quantitative studies have established associations between participation and outcomes, fewer qualitative studies have examined the everyday processes through which character values are cultivated within extracurricular settings. Third, limited attention has been paid to how organizational routines, coach–student interactions, and institutional norms jointly contribute to character formation in secondary education environments.¹⁷

To address these gaps, the present study examines *Tapak Suci*, a Muhammadiyah-based martial arts extracurricular program implemented at an Indonesian senior high school. Drawing on social learning and character education perspectives, this qualitative case study explores how character values are cultivated through training routines, moral instruction, coach role-modelling, and organizational practices embedded in the *Tapak Suci* program. The guiding research question is: How does participation in *Tapak Suci* extracurricular activities contribute to students' character formation in an Indonesian secondary school context? By providing in-depth empirical insights from an underrepresented cultural and religious setting, this study seeks to contribute to international discussions on extracurricular-based character education and to inform educators and school leaders seeking to design intentional, value-oriented extracurricular programs.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore how character values are cultivated through participation in *Tapak Suci* extracurricular activities within a specific school context. A qualitative case study was selected because it allows for in-depth examination of social processes, interactions, and meanings as they occur in real-life educational settings, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined.¹⁸ This design is well-suited for investigating character formation, which involves complex, context-dependent processes that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measures alone.¹⁹

The study was conducted at a private Muhammadiyah senior high school located in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The school integrates formal academic instruction with religious and character education as part of its institutional mission. *Tapak Suci*, a Muhammadiyah-affiliated martial arts program, is offered as an extracurricular activity and is designed not only to develop physical skills but also to instill moral, religious, and disciplinary values. Training sessions are held regularly after school hours and are supervised by certified coaches

¹⁷ Moore, Dudley, and Woodcock, "The Effects of a Martial Arts-Based Intervention on Secondary School Students' Self-Efficacy: A Randomised Controlled Trial."

¹⁸ R K Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (New York: SAGE Publications, 2017), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=uX1ZDwAAQBAJ>.

¹⁹ John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (London: Sage publications, 2016).

who also serve as moral role models for students. The school was selected purposively for its active, well-established implementation of *Tapak Suci*, making it an information-rich case for examining extracurricular-based character education.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure direct involvement and sustained engagement in the *Tapak Suci* program, consistent with qualitative research principles that prioritize depth over representativeness.²⁰ The informan consisted of 12 students who were active members of *Tapak Suci*, four *Tapak Suci* coaches, and two school administrators responsible for extracurricular coordination and student development. Student participants were drawn from Grades 10 and 11 and were eligible if they had participated in *Tapak Suci* for at least one academic year. Coaches were included based on their instructional role and a minimum of two years of experience in guiding the program. This sampling strategy enabled triangulation of perspectives across different stakeholder groups.

Data were collected over three months using multiple qualitative techniques, namely semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis.²¹ The use of multiple methods was intended to enhance the depth of understanding and strengthen the credibility of findings through triangulation.²² Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants to capture their experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of character development within the *Tapak Suci* program. A total of 18 interviews were conducted, with each lasting 30-60 minutes. Interview questions focused on participants' motivations for joining the program, experiences during training, perceived character changes, and the role of coaches and organizational practices in shaping values. All interviews were conducted in Indonesian, audio-recorded with participants' consent, and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Relevant excerpts were later translated into English for reporting purposes.

Participant observation was conducted during 20 *Tapak Suci* training sessions, totaling approximately 40 hours. The researcher observed training routines, disciplinary practices, coach–student interactions, moral instruction, and collective rituals embedded in the sessions. Field notes were recorded systematically after each observation, with attention to recurring behaviors, interactions, and symbolic practices related to character formation. Observation enabled the researcher to examine how stated values were enacted in practice, complementing interview data.²³

Document analysis was conducted to contextualize and corroborate data obtained from interviews and observations. Documents included extracurricular program guidelines, training schedules, codes of conduct, and school policy documents related to character education. These materials provided insight into the formal expectations and institutional

²⁰ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice* (New York: SAGE Publications, 2014), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=-CM9BQAAQBAJ>.

²¹ M B Miles, A M Huberman, and J Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (SAGE Publications, 2013), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=p0wXBAAAQBAJ>.

²² Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Act*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315134543>.

²³ Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*.

framing of *Tapak Suci* as a character-building activity, thereby supporting triangulation across data sources.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which involves iterative processes of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.²⁴ First, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were read repeatedly to achieve familiarity with the data. Second, open coding was applied to identify meaningful units related to character values, learning processes, and interaction patterns. Third, codes were grouped into categories and refined into broader themes through constant comparison across data sources. Data were displayed in the form of thematic matrices to examine relationships among themes and support analytic transparency. Throughout the analysis, interpretations were continuously revisited and refined to ensure coherence and consistency with the data.

Several strategies were employed To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, in line with the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability proposed by Lincoln and Guba.²⁵ Methodological triangulation was achieved by integrating data from interviews, observations, and documents. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected participants to confirm the accuracy of representations. An audit trail documenting analytic decisions and coding development was maintained to enhance dependability. Reflexive notes were also kept to acknowledge and manage potential researcher bias throughout the research process.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the school administration prior to data collection. Written informed consent was secured from all adult participants, and parental consent was obtained for student participants. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in all transcripts and reports, and identifying information was removed from the data. These procedures align with the British Educational Research Association's widely accepted ethical standards for educational research.²⁶

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the findings derived from semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and document analysis related to the implementation of *Tapak Suci* extracurricular activities. Analysis of the data yielded five interrelated themes describing how character values were manifested and reinforced through students' participation in the program. An overview of the identified themes and corresponding character values is presented in Table 1.

²⁴ Matthew B Miles, A Michael Huberman, and Johny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, Sage Publications, 2018.

²⁵ Yvonna S. Lincoln, Egon G. Guba, and Joseph J. Pilotta, "Naturalistic Inquiry," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 9, no. 4 (January 1985): 438–39, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(85\)90062-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(85)90062-8).

²⁶ British Educational Research Association, "Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research" (London: British Educational Research Association, 2018), www.bera.ac.uk.

1. Religious Commitment and Moral Awareness

Participants consistently reported that *Tapak Suci* activities emphasized religious values as a foundational component of training. Students described the regular incorporation of prayer, moral reminders, and reflection on ethical behavior before and after practice sessions. One student stated, “Every training starts with prayer, and the coach reminds us that our actions reflect our faith” (S3). Coaches similarly emphasized that moral conduct was inseparable from physical training and guided instructional and disciplinary practices.

Table 1. Overview of identified themes and character values in *Tapak Suci* extracurricular activities

Theme Label	Core Character Values
Religious Commitment and Moral Awareness	Religiosity, moral consciousness, ethical reflection
Discipline and Self-Regulation	Punctuality, rule adherence, and behavioral control
Responsibility and Leadership	Accountability, initiative, and leadership roles
Respect, Solidarity, and Social Interaction	Mutual respect, cooperation, and group solidarity
Self-Control and Emotional Regulation	Emotional regulation, patience, and composure

Observational data supported these accounts. Training sessions routinely began with collective prayer and concluded with brief moral messages delivered by coaches. Field notes documented repeated references to sincerity, humility, and respect during instructional moments. Institutional documents further reinforced this emphasis by explicitly stating that *Tapak Suci* aims to develop students’ moral character alongside physical skills. Evidence for this theme was identified across interviews, observations, and documents, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Data sources supporting each theme

Theme	Student Interviews	Coach Interviews	Administrator Interviews	Observations	Documents
Religious Commitment and Moral Awareness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Discipline and Self-Regulation	✓	✓	–	✓	✓
Responsibility and Leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Respect, Solidarity, and Social Interaction	✓	✓	–	✓	✓
Self-Control and Emotional Regulation	✓	✓	–	✓	✓

2. Discipline and Self-Regulation

Discipline emerged as a prominent theme across interviews and observations. Students reported learning to manage time, follow structured routines, and adhere to clearly defined rules during training sessions. Several students emphasized that punctuality and compliance with training protocols were enforced consistently. One participant explained, “If we come late or do not follow instructions, we are reminded that discipline is part of our character” (S7).

Observations indicated that training sessions followed a fixed sequence of activities, including attendance checks, warm-up routines, skill drills, and closing procedures. Coaches monitored student behavior closely and addressed deviations immediately. Supporting documents, such as training guidelines and codes of conduct, explicitly list discipline and obedience as core values of the *Tapak Suci* program.

3. Responsibility and Leadership

Data indicated that participation in *Tapak Suci* offered students opportunities to assume responsibility and leadership roles. Senior students were frequently assigned tasks such as organizing equipment, leading warm-up exercises, and assisting coaches during training sessions. One student remarked, *“When I became a senior member, I was trusted to guide juniors, so I had to be more responsible”* (S10).

Coaches confirmed that leadership responsibilities were intentionally distributed among senior participants. Observations showed senior students coordinating training activities, correcting peers’ movements, and ensuring that sessions proceeded according to established routines. Administrative documents described these practices as part of leadership development within the extracurricular program.

4. Respect, Solidarity, and Social Interaction

Participants described *Tapak Suci* as fostering respectful interactions and a sense of solidarity among members. Students reported being taught to respect coaches, peers, and hierarchical roles within the group. One student stated, *“We are taught to respect everyone, whether they are older or younger, stronger or weaker”* (S5).

Observational data revealed frequent use of respectful gestures, including formal greetings and salutes, during training sessions. Cooperative behavior was evident during paired exercises and group drills, where students supported one another’s learning. Coaches consistently emphasized mutual respect and teamwork, and organizational documents highlighted solidarity and brotherhood as key values of the program.

5. Self-Control and Emotional Regulation

Self-control and emotional regulation were also identified as recurring themes in the data. Students reported that training helped them manage emotions such as anger, frustration, and anxiety. One participant explained, *“During training, we learn to control our emotions, even when exercises are difficult or when we lose in sparring”* (S8).

Observations corroborated these accounts, as students were instructed to remain calm during physically demanding or competitive activities. Coaches frequently reminded students to regulate their emotions and to respond appropriately to challenges encountered during training. Training materials explicitly referenced self-control as an essential attribute of *Tapak Suci* practitioners.

Table 3 summarizes the types of empirical evidence used to support each identified theme in the Results section. The table indicates whether the theme is illustrated through interview excerpts, observational field notes, or institutional documents. It provides brief examples of the kinds of practices or statements associated with each theme. The examples

represent recurring patterns observed across multiple data sources and participants. Full quotations and detailed descriptions of observations are presented in the corresponding Results subsections.

Table 3. Illustrative evidence for each theme

Theme	Type of Evidence	Evidence
Religious Commitment and Moral Awareness	Interview, Observation	Opening and closing prayers; moral reminders by coaches
Discipline and Self-Regulation	Interview, Document	Enforcement of punctuality; written codes of conduct
Responsibility and Leadership	Interview, Observation	Senior students leading warm-ups and assisting juniors
Respect, Solidarity, and Social Interaction	Observation	Formal greetings, cooperative drills, and peer support
Self-Control and Emotional Regulation	Interview, Observation	Managing emotions during sparring and demanding drills

Table 4 presents the number of participants in each group, who are students, coaches, and administrators, who explicitly referred to each theme during interviews. The frequencies reflect how often themes were mentioned across participant groups and are intended to provide descriptive transparency regarding the distribution of themes in the interview data. The counts do not indicate intensity or relative importance of themes, but rather the presence of explicit references within participant responses.

Table 4. Frequency of theme mentions across participant groups

Theme	Students (<i>n</i> = 12)	Coaches (<i>n</i> = 4)	Administrators (<i>n</i> = 2)
Religious Commitment and Moral Awareness	10	4	2
Discipline and Self-Regulation	11	4	1
Responsibility and Leadership	8	4	2
Respect, Solidarity, and Social Interaction	9	3	1
Self-Control and Emotional Regulation	7	3	1

Across interviews, observations, and documents, *Tapak Suci's* extracurricular activities were associated with observable practices related to religious commitment, discipline, responsibility, respect, and self-control. These themes were embedded in training routines, coach–student interactions, and organizational structures, and were consistently referenced by students, coaches, and administrators.

Discussion

This study examined how participation in *Tapak Suci* extracurricular activities contributes to students' character formation within an Indonesian senior high school. Synthesizing results from interviews, observations, and documents, the findings indicate that character development in *Tapak Suci* is embedded in routine practices, interpersonal interactions, and organizational structures rather than in isolated instructional moments. The five themes identified, religious commitment and moral awareness, discipline and self-

regulation, responsibility and leadership, respect and solidarity, and self-control and emotional regulation, collectively illustrate how character values are enacted and reinforced through sustained participation in a structured extracurricular environment.

The findings on religious commitment and moral awareness suggest that character formation in *Tapak Suci* is closely linked to the integration of ritualized practices and explicit moral framing into training routines.²⁷ Regular prayer, moral reminders, and ethical reflection embedded in sessions create continuity between physical practice and moral discourse, as proposed by Safi'i *et al.*²⁸ This pattern resonates with the OECD's report on international discussions of social–emotional learning, which emphasizes repeated, contextually meaningful practice as a foundation for internalizing values and dispositions.²⁹ Rather than treating character education as an abstract or supplementary objective, *Tapak Suci* operationalizes moral learning through routine activities that are consistently enacted and institutionally endorsed.

The prominence of discipline and self-regulation in the findings reflects how structured extracurricular contexts can foster behavioral regulation through consistent expectations and reinforcement. Students' accounts of punctuality, adherence to rules, and routine compliance align with research demonstrating that extracurricular participation supports self-regulatory capacities by providing predictable structures and adult-guided norms.³⁰ In this sense, discipline in *Tapak Suci* appears not merely as external control but as a habituated practice cultivated through repetition, monitoring, and moral justification within the training environment.

Opportunities for responsibility and leadership—particularly among senior students—highlight the role of distributed agency in extracurricular-based character formation. Assigning organizational and instructional roles to experienced participants appears to situate responsibility as an enacted practice rather than a stated value. This finding parallels international evidence indicating that extracurricular settings can function as preparatory spaces for civic and leadership development when youth are entrusted with meaningful roles and responsibilities.³¹ The structured delegation observed in *Tapak Suci* suggests that leadership development is embedded in everyday practice rather than confined to formal leadership programs.

The emphasis on respect, solidarity, and social interaction underscores the interpersonal dimension of character formation. Ritualized greetings, hierarchical acknowledgment, and cooperative drills point to social learning processes in which values are

²⁷ Afiful Ikhwan *et al.*, “Strengthening Student Character Through Tapak Suci Extracurricular Activities,” *Kharisma: Jurnal Administrasi Dan Manajemen Pendidikan* 4, no. 1 (July 1, 2025): 73–85, <https://doi.org/10.59373/kharisma.v4i1.70>; Lalu Iwan Eko Jakandar *et al.*, “Integration of Religious Values in Character Education,” *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education* 9, no. 1 (March 20, 2025): 124–41, <https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v9i1.107>.

²⁸ Moch Safi'i, Romelah, and Dina Mardiana, “Producing a Generation of Character: Transforming Responsibility, Discipline, and Society Through Tapak Suci in Primary Schools,” *Educazione: Journal of Education and Learning* 2, no. 1 (October 19, 2024): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.61987/educazione.v2i1.538>.

²⁹ OECD, *Nurturing Social and Emotional Learning Across the Globe*.

³⁰ O'Donnell *et al.*, “Extracurricular Activity Participation, School Belonging, and Depressed Mood: A Test of the Compensation Hypothesis during Adolescence.”

³¹ O'Donnell *et al.*

modeled, observed, and reproduced through interaction. This aligns with social learning perspectives that emphasize the role of role-modelling and guided participation in value internalization.³² Coaches' consistent reinforcement of respectful conduct further supports the notion that adult facilitators play a central role in shaping the moral climate of extracurricular activities, a point echoed in broader qualitative research on mentorship and role-modelling in educational settings.

Findings related to self-control and emotional regulation highlight the psychological dimensions of martial arts-based extracurricular activities. Students' reported experiences of managing frustration, anger, and competitive pressure align with experimental and intervention-based evidence demonstrating that martial arts training can enhance emotional regulation and self-efficacy when programs are intentionally structured.³³ The emphasis on calmness and composure observed in training sessions is consistent with broader syntheses indicating that sustained martial arts practice supports emotional and social competencies through disciplined physical engagement and reflective practice.³⁴

This study makes several contributions to the international literature on character education and extracurricular activities. Empirically, it provides qualitative evidence from a religiously grounded, non-Western educational context that remains underrepresented in existing research. Theoretically, the findings clarify the mechanisms by which character formation occurs in extracurricular settings, highlighting the interplay among routine practice, moral framing, role-modelling, and organizational structure.³⁵ Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of integrating interviews, observations, and documents to capture the enacted dimensions of character education beyond self-reported outcomes.³⁶

The findings carry practical implications for educators and school leaders seeking to strengthen character education through extracurricular programs. First, the integration of explicit moral framing within routine activities suggests that character education is most effective when values are embedded in daily practice rather than treated as separate instructional content.³⁷ Second, the distribution of leadership roles among students highlights the importance of designing extracurricular structures that provide opportunities for

³² Qurrotul Ainiyah, Dita Dzata Mirrota, and Ma'rifatul Khasanah, "Religious Moderation: A Model for Internalizing Inclusive Islamic Values in Student Education," *Urwatul Wutsqo: Jurnal Studi Kependidikan Dan Keislaman* 14, no. 1 (April 6, 2025): 86–101, <https://doi.org/10.54437/urwatulwutsqo.v14i1.2031>.

³³ Moore, Dudley, and Woodcock, "The Effects of a Martial Arts-Based Intervention on Secondary School Students' Self-Efficacy: A Randomised Controlled Trial."

³⁴ Anna Harwood-Gross et al., "The Effect of Martial Arts Training on Cognitive and Psychological Functions in At-Risk Youths," *Frontiers in Pediatrics* 9 (October 22, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fped.2021.707047>; Jorge Carlos Lafuente, Marta Zubiaur, and Carlos Gutiérrez-García, "Effects of Martial Arts and Combat Sports Training on Anger and Aggression: A Systematic Review," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 58 (May 2021): 101611, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2021.101611>.

³⁵ Gene Healey et al., "'Martial Arts Crossed Over Into the Rest of My Life': A Qualitative Exploration of Australian Practitioners' Experiences of Martial Arts and Combat Sports on Wellbeing," *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 35, no. 1 (January 10, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.70035>; Young-Taek Oh, Min-Ah Ryu, and Jun-Phil Uhm, "The Role of Intramural Combat Martial Arts in Enhancing Well-Being among International Students: A Combined Theoretical Approach," *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 16 (April 11, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2025.1582731>.

³⁶ Aningsih Aningsih et al., "How Is the Education Character Implemented? The Case Study in Indonesian Elementary School," *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 12, no. 1 (January 3, 2022): 371, <https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2022-0029>.

³⁷ Mursal Aziz, Dedi Sahputra Napitupulu, and Dari Ayu Lestari, "Implementation of the Character Education Curriculum in Cultivating Students' Morality at Raudhatul Athfal At Taufiq Salam Labuhanbatu Utara," *Indonesian Journal of Education Research (IJoER)* 6, no. 3 (June 13, 2025): 312–20, <https://doi.org/10.37251/ijoer.v6i3.1710>.

responsibility and agency.³⁸ Third, the central role of coaches underscores the need for targeted training that equips extracurricular facilitators to function as intentional character educators, not solely as technical instructors.³⁹

Several limitations should be acknowledged. As a single-site qualitative case study, the findings are context-specific and not intended for statistical generalization. The sample size, while appropriate for in-depth qualitative inquiry, limits the breadth of perspectives represented. The religious and organizational context of *Tapak Suci* may shape character formation processes in ways that differ from secular or non-martial arts extracurricular settings. Future research could address these limitations by conducting comparative studies across different extracurricular programs, employing mixed-methods or longitudinal designs, and examining how character outcomes evolve over time and across institutional contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how participation in *Tapak Suci* extracurricular activities contributes to character formation among students in an Indonesian senior high school. Drawing on qualitative evidence from interviews, observations, and institutional documents, the findings indicate that character development in *Tapak Suci* is embedded in structured routines, moral framing, interpersonal interactions, and organizational practices. Rather than emerging from isolated instructional moments, character values were enacted and reinforced through sustained participation in a coherent extracurricular environment.

The study makes several contributions to the literature on character education and extracurricular learning. Empirically, it provides in-depth qualitative evidence from a religiously grounded, non-Western educational context that remains underrepresented in international research. The findings theoretically clarify mechanisms of character formation by demonstrating how routine practice, role-modelling by coaches, and distributed responsibility among students interact to support the internalization of values. The study highlights the importance of designing extracurricular programs with explicit character objectives, consistent structures, and trained facilitators who function as intentional character educators.

These findings suggest that extracurricular activities can serve as purposeful pedagogical spaces for character education when they are systematically organized and value-oriented. As schools continue to seek holistic approaches to student development, greater attention to the design and implementation of extracurricular programs may enhance their contribution to character education across diverse educational contexts.

³⁸ Syahria Anggita Sakti, Suwardi Endraswara, and Arif Rohman, "Integrating Local Cultural Values into Early Childhood Education to Promote Character Building," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 23, no. 7 (July 30, 2024): 84–101, <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.23.7.5>.

³⁹ Tiara Ramadhani et al., "The Role Of Character Education In Forming Ethical And Responsible Students," *IJGIE (International Journal of Graduate of Islamic Education)* 5, no. 2 (September 2, 2024): 110–24, <https://doi.org/10.37567/ijgie.v5i2.3064>.

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