

Producing a Generation of Character: Transforming Responsibility, Discipline, and Society Through Tapak Suci in Primary Schools

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of Tapak Suci, an extracurricular martial arts program, in shaping the character of students at MI Muhammadiyah 4 Kandat. The primary focus of the research is on how Tapak Suci contributes to the development of responsibility, discipline, and social character among students, addressing the growing concern over character education in schools. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research employed in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to collect data from the head of the school, Tapak Suci trainers, and students. The findings reveal that Tapak Suci activities promote responsibility through punctuality and adherence to training rules, discipline through structured routines, and social character through collaborative exercises. These findings highlight the potential of physical activities, particularly those with a moral and religious foundation, in fostering well-rounded character development in students. The study suggests that Tapak Suci can serve as a model for other schools aiming to integrate character education into extracurricular programs. The results also open avenues for future research on the long-term impact of martial arts-based character education across various educational contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Student character is an important foundation in forming superior human resources (Dewi & Alam, 2020; Ercantan & Eyupoglu, 2022; Banmairuroy et al., 2022). A decline in the quality of Indonesian students' character, especially in the value of responsibility and discipline (Hidayati et al., 2020; Gamage et al., 2021; Zulela et al., 2022). This phenomenon impacts students' low ability to meet learning targets, adapt in teams (Whillans et al., 2021; Niemi, 2021; Zhai & Wibowo, 2023), and face global challenges. Character education cannot rely solely on a cognitive approach through classroom learning (Maftuh, 2023; Kharisma, 2024; Holili et al., 2024).

A more applicable and contextual method is needed to instill character values in students' lives (Budiman et al., 2021; Damayanti et al., 2023; Hermawan & Asnawi, 2023). In the theory of character education (Kristjánsson, 2021; McGrath et al., 2022; Berkowitz et al., 2020), character formation requires a structured environment and consistent habituation to build individual morality and integrity (Phelps & Brown, 2023; Zaini, 2023; Basri et al., 2024). Therefore, this research focuses on Tapak Suci's extracurricular activities as an effective medium to integrate learning the values.

The initial observations show that students at MI Muhammadiyah 4 Kandat face challenges in implementing the values of responsibility and discipline. Many students arrive late to school, do not wear their uniforms properly, and tend to be less concerned about the cleanliness of the environment. This phenomenon not only hinders the learning process but also contradicts the vision of education to produce a generation with integrity. In addition, formal learning activities are not practical enough to instill character values in depth, so a more innovative approach is needed. Tapak Suci, as a martial arts activity that instills moral and religious values, is a potential alternative to answer this problem. However, the effectiveness of this activity in building student character still requires further study to provide deeper insights.

The research of Dindorf et al. (2024) highlights the importance of character education through habituating the values of responsibility and discipline, showing that collaboration-based activities can improve students' ability to manage tasks and obey rules. However, this research is limited to the context of formal learning in the classroom. Muzaki & Ali. (2024) found that Tapak Suci activities effectively build the character of social responsibility, primarily through group exercises that instill the value of cooperation. This research does not review the discipline aspect, which is one of the important focuses in character education. Meanwhile, Martín-Rodríguez et al. (2024) show that physical approaches such as martial arts can build values of empathy and solidarity, but have not touched on the role of these activities in strengthening individual responsibility. This research seeks to fill the void by integrating an in-depth analysis of responsibility, discipline, and social character through Tapak Suci activities.

Although many studies have discussed the importance of character education, no one has comprehensively examined the influence of Tapak Suci activities in building responsibility, discipline, and cooperation simultaneously. Most previous studies have focused on only one aspect of character without looking at the interactive relationship between these values. In addition, research linking martial arts activities to a holistic approach based on religion and habituation is minimal. This research fills this gap by exploring the impact of the Tapak Suci program as a whole and providing a theoretical and practical foundation for the development of character education in Indonesia.

This research presents novelty by integrating a religious physical activity-based approach to shape students' character holistically. Tapak Suci, as a self-defense program based on Islamic values, is used to strengthen students' responsibility, discipline, and social character. Another novelty offered is the model of implementing activities that focus on individual development and strengthen social relationships between students through group cooperation and habituation of moral values. This perspective makes a new contribution to the literature on character education, especially in the context of religion-based education.

This study aims to analyze how Tapak Suci activities can strengthen the character of responsibility, discipline, and cooperation of students in MI Muhammadiyah 4 Kandat. This goal is important to answer the needs of character education relevant to global challenges and current social realities. This research will create an effective habituation model to build character values that can be implemented in other schools. In addition, the results of this research are expected to significantly contribute to developing a more applicable and contextual character education policy in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type of research. This approach was chosen because it allows an in-depth exploration of a complex phenomenon, namely the influence of Tapak Suci activities on forming the character of responsibility, discipline, and social skills of students in MI Muhammadiyah 4 Kandat. The case study was chosen because this research focuses on the specific context of a single school, which provides an opportunity to deeply understand the interaction between Tapak Suci activities and student character outcomes. Compared to the quantitative approach, the qualitative approach is more relevant to explore the meaning, experience, and processes that occur in this activity, so that the data produced is richer and more contextual (Renjith et al., 2021; Wainstein et al., 2023; Jones, 2023). Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation.

The research location was MI Muhammadiyah 4 Kandat, Kediri, East Java, which was chosen because of the Tapak Suci program, a mandatory part of the school curriculum. The research respondents consisted of 10 people, including the head of the madrasah, two Tapak Suci trainers, and seven students who participated in the activity regularly. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on their involvement in Tapak Suci activities. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore the experiences, views, and impact of activities on students' characters, while observations were used to record students' behavior during exercises. Documentation in activity schedules, training modules, and attendance data is also collected to support the primary data. The following is a table of resource persons' coding:

Table 1. Resource Person Code

Resource Person Code	Role/Position	Number of Respondents
KN1	Head of Madrasah	1
KN2	Sacred Site Trainer	2
KN3	Students Participating in Tapak Suci	5

The data analysis technique uses interactive models from Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (Ruwanika & Massyn, 2024; Sanches et al., 2022; Nuwere et al., 2022). The analysis begins with data reduction, filtering, and compiling relevant data based on research objectives, such as interview transcripts, observation notes, and supporting documents. The reduced data is then presented as descriptive narratives, tables, or diagrams to facilitate the identification of key patterns and themes. The final stage is conclusion drawing and verification, where the data that has been analyzed is tested for validity through triangulation of methods and sources. This technique was chosen because it provides a systematic structure for analyzing complex qualitative data while ensuring that the analysis results can be scientifically accounted for.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Character education is one of the main focuses in creating a superior generation with good morals, integrity, and social skills. At MI Muhammadiyah 4 Kandat, strengthening students' character is directed through a holistic approach that integrates the values of responsibility, discipline, and cooperation in extracurricular activities. One of the flagship programs implemented is Tapak Suci, a pencak silat activity that trains physical skills and shapes students' character. This research aims to identify how Tapak Suci activities can contribute to developing these character values through habituation and implementing structured activities.

Strengthening the Character of Responsibility Through the Holy Site

The study results show that the strengthening of the character of responsibility in MI Muhammadiyah 4 Kandat students is carried out through habituation in extracurricular activities of Tapak Suci. Students are trained to arrive on time, bring complete attire, and follow the entire series of exercises orderly. The consistent implementation of rules, such as giving sanctions in the form of push-ups for students who are late or do not wear full uniforms, is an important part of forming a sense of responsibility. In addition, students are taught to be responsible for personal and group tasks during practice, such as keeping the practice site clean and assisting friends in completing movements. The character of student responsibility at MI Muhammadiyah 4 Kandat is instilled through the implementation of routine activities of Tapak Suci.

In an interview with the Head of the Madrasah, he stated, "Through Tapak Suci activities, students are trained to take responsibility for themselves, such as being present on time, bringing complete attributes, and obeying the rules during training. This has become a habit that carries over to daily life." (Interview, KN1, 2024). Coach of Tapak Suci added, "We always instill responsibility through applying punishment if students do not carry out their duties. For example, students who arrive late must do push-ups as a consequence." (Interview, KN2, 2024). This is reinforced by one student who said, "I learned to be responsible by never forgetting to bring a full uniform, because otherwise there will be sanctions from the coach." (Interview, KN3, 2024).

The results of the interviews showed that the character of student responsibility was built through habituation to consistent rules in Tapak Suci activities. Students are trained to understand the importance of personal responsibility, such as showing up on time, wearing appropriate attire, and following all the rules during practice. Implementing educational sanctions, such as light physical punishment for students who violate, serves as a reminder and direct learning regarding the consequences of their actions. This approach creates an understanding that responsibility is not only important in the context of extracurricular activities but also in everyday life. This shows that consistent habits effectively instill the value of responsibility in students from an early age.

Observations during the activity showed that almost all students complied with the rule, although some minor violations were found, such as the delay of the coach. However, this phenomenon does not reduce the program's effectiveness in building student responsibility. The interpretation of this data shows that responsibility is trained through habituation and consistent application of rules. In the context of the theory of character education by Dindorf et al. (2024), strengthening responsibility requires a process of habituation that is repeated until it becomes part of students' daily habits.

Strengthening Discipline Character Through Routine and Practice

Strengthening the character of discipline in MI Muhammadiyah 4 Kandat students is carried out through a structured routine of Tapak Suci activities. Students are trained to show up on time, wear full uniforms, and participate in activities regularly. The activity began with a joint prayer that taught the importance of respecting time and spiritual values, followed by a warm-up session and core exercises. It ended with a closing in the form of a prayer and respect for the coach. To ensure discipline, coaches apply educational sanctions, such as push-ups, to students who violate the rules, such as arriving late or not wearing full attributes. Through this habit, students gradually internalize the values of discipline, which become part of their daily lifestyle. This routine has proven effective in building a consistent disciplinary character among students.

Discipline is one of the main characteristics emphasized in the Holy Site. The Head of Madrasah revealed, "This activity is routinely carried out every week, with a clear schedule. Students who follow the Sacred Site become more organized in their daily lives." (Interview, KN3, 2024). One coach explained, "We started the training with a prayer together and respect for the coach. This gives meaning that discipline starts from small things, such as respecting time and others." (Interview, KN2, 2024).

The interview activities showed that the character of student discipline was formed through the implementation of organized activities with a clear routine schedule. Habits such as starting the practice with prayer and reverence create an understanding that discipline starts with small things, such as appreciating time and others. This routine not only trains students to obey the rules of the activity, but also brings regularity into aspects of their lives more broadly. This emphasizes that implementing a consistent schedule and habituation of fundamental discipline values is a practical step in shaping students' character.

The results of observations support this statement. Students were seen attending on time and following the exercises orderly. Warm-up sessions, core exercises, and closings are carried out in a structured manner when implementing the exercise. This data indicates that discipline is not only applied in the implementation of activities, but also through the structure of activities that support the formation of positive habits.

The Influence of Sacred Site Activities on Social Character

The Tapak Suci activity at MI Muhammadiyah 4 Kandat positively influences the formation of students' social character. Through exercises involving cooperation, such as pair sparring and group exercises, students are taught to respect each other, help each other, and care for their friends during practice. Coaches consistently instill moral values, such as upholding selflessness and respecting others in practice and daily life.

In addition to responsibility and discipline, Tapak Suci also contributes to developing students' social character. The Head of Madrasah said, "Through this activity, students are taught to cooperate with their friends. For example, when doing exercises in pairs or groups." (Interview, KN1, 2024). One of the students also said, "I learned not to be selfish, because when sparring, we have to take care of our friends so that they do not get hurt." (Interview, KN3, 2024).

The interview results showed that Tapak Suci activities significantly develop students' social character through cooperation and concern for others. Through pair or group exercises, students are taught to support and care for each other, especially in contexts that require caution, such as sparring. This habit sharpens empathy and reduces selfishness, so students are more sensitive to the needs and safety of others. This shows that Tapak Suci activities strengthen individual skills and form harmonious social relationships among students. This is also reinforced by observation activities showing that students support each other in every training session, especially when following specific movements is difficult (Muzaki & Ali, 2024). They show an attitude of helping each other, which is part of social responsibility. In Al-Ghazali's theory, good social character results from self-control and the intention to always benefit others. These results show that Tapak Suci shapes individual character and builds empathy and group cooperation.

The results of this study show that Tapak Suci is effective in shaping the responsibility, discipline, and social character of students in MI Muhammadiyah 4 Kandat. In relation to the theory of character education, the program integrates the core values necessary to face the challenges of the era of globalization. This is attached in Table 2.

Table 2. Research Findings

Activity Components	Formed Character	Observation Results
Opening with prayer	Discipline and responsibility	Students attend on time and pray together.
Structured training	Discipline and order	The activity ran according to the schedule with clear steps.
Sparring in groups	Cooperation and responsibility	Students support each other in pair exercises.

These findings imply that similar programs can be adopted in other schools with some adjustments. However, challenges such as the consistency of coaches and facility support need to be considered for the program's sustainability. This research contributes significantly to the literature on character education in Indonesia, especially in religion-based schools. This result can be a model for curriculum development that integrates character values in extracurricular activities, in the spirit of the Independent Curriculum and P5.

Practically, the results of this study contribute to schools, especially those under the auspices of Muhammadiyah, in adopting Tapak Suci activities as an effective strategy to strengthen the character of responsibility, discipline, and social skills of students. This program can be used as a model in developing character-based extracurricular activities that can create positive habits in students through habituation and consistent application of rules. Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on character education by showing that structured physical activity-based approaches, such as Tapak Suci, can be an effective medium for building core character values. This reinforces the theory of character education by Lickona and Al-Ghazali, who emphasized the importance of habituation and self-control as the foundation for forming students' morals and integrity.

Discussion

This research explores how the extracurricular activities of Tapak Suci at MI Muhammadiyah 4 Kandat can contribute to the formation of students' character, especially in the aspects of responsibility, discipline, and social skills. Based on key findings, this study answers the research question by showing that through Tapak Suci activities, students develop physical skills and reinforce character values that are very important for their personal and social development. These findings support the theory of character education that underscores the importance of habituation and a structured environment in shaping students' character.

In theory, this study's results align with the ideas put forward by Lickona et al. (2020), who emphasize that effective character education requires reinforcement through consistent habits and a supportive environment. These findings suggest that structured routines in the Holy Land, such as the obligation to be present on time, wear full attire, and follow existing regulations, strengthen the character of student responsibility. The application of light punishments, such as push-ups for students who are late, is one of the mechanisms to internalize these values. This aligns with the findings by Berkowitz et al. (2020), who stated that habituation-based approaches are key to successful character building.

However, these findings also offer significant differences compared to previous studies. Research by Muzaki & Ali (2024) and Martín-Rodríguez et al. (2024) highlights the role of physical activity in the formation of social character and empathy, but does not explicitly incorporate aspects of discipline and responsibility that are also the primary focus of this study. In this context, this research expands our understanding by suggesting that activities that integrate physical and social aspects, such as Tapak Suci, can build a more holistic character, encompassing discipline, responsibility, and cooperation. Therefore, this research reinforces existing thinking and offers new insights into the relationship between physical activity and moral character formation.

This research provides new insights related to the problems faced in character education, namely, how to integrate character values with physical-based extracurricular activities. As mentioned by Dewi and Alam (2020), effective character education requires a holistic approach, one that not only relies on cognitive learning in the classroom but also practices that build positive habits in daily life. The findings of this study show that Tapak Suci can be an effective model for integrating these values, especially in the context of faith-based education.

In addition, this research also makes a significant contribution to the development of character education policies in schools. By emphasizing the importance of extracurricular activities that not only develop physical skills but also build students' moral and social character, the results of this study can serve as a basis for other schools, especially those based on religion, to adopt similar models. Tapak Suci can be used as a model for the development of extracurricular activities that build positive habits of students, with a focus on responsibility, discipline, and cooperation, which are important values in character education.

CONCLUSION

This research raises the importance of developing students' character through the extracurricular activities of Tapak Suci at MI Muhammadiyah 4 Kandat. The primary focus of the research is to identify how these activities can shape students' responsible, disciplinary, and social characters. The study results show that through a structured routine and consistent habituation, Tapak Suci has strengthened these values in students' personal and social contexts. This activity develops physical skills and builds positive habits that affect students' daily lives. These findings offer important insights for character education in faith-based schools, suggesting that physical-based activities can effectively build moral and social values. For further research, it is necessary to continue the study of the long-term impact of this physical-based extracurricular activity on the development of students' character in various educational contexts.

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