



The Role of Physical Education in Developing Positive Character Traits in Elementary School Students

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ABSTRACT

positive character development among elementary school students, focusing on collaboration, discipline, responsibility, and respect. The research addresses a gap in understanding the broader impact of physical education beyond physical fitness, emphasizing its potential to shape students' social and moral values. The study was conducted at SD Negeri Mamajang 3 Makassar using a qualitative design, involving interviews with teachers and students, classroom observations, and data analysis. A total of 30 students participated in the study, representing diverse demographic backgrounds. The findings reveal that physical education significantly contributes to character development. Approximately 60% of students demonstrated a high level of collaboration, while 67% showed strong discipline in adhering to instructions and maintaining punctuality. Responsibility was evident in 40% of students who actively assumed leadership roles, and respect was the most dominant character, with 73% of students displaying respectful behavior toward peers. These results highlight the effectiveness of structured physical education programs in promoting positive character traits through teamwork-based and leadership-oriented activities. The study concludes that physical education is a critical tool for holistic student development, providing both physical and character-building benefits. However, the research is limited to a single school and primarily relies on qualitative methods, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research should explore longitudinal studies and include larger, more diverse samples to strengthen the validity and applicability of the results. Policymakers and educators are encouraged to integrate character-building strategies into physical education curricula to enhance student development comprehensively.

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INTRODUCTION

Physical education, sports, and health (PJOK) play a crucial role in shaping the character of students from an early age, particularly at the elementary school level. PJOK not only focuses on improving students' physical fitness and motor skills but also significantly contributes to the development of social, emotional, and character values. Through structured physical activities, students gain opportunities to learn essential values such as teamwork, communication, sportsmanship, discipline, and responsibility, which are fundamental in fostering resilient and well-rounded individuals (Iqbal et al., 2022). However, in practice, PJOK learning in schools tends to be conventional, emphasizing technical skills and physical competition, which limits its potential in cultivating positive character traits in students (Ali et al., 2020).

In line with the evolving educational paradigm, collaborative learning approaches have emerged as an alternative method that can be integrated into physical education to address these challenges. This approach positions students as active participants who work together to achieve common goals. Collaborative learning facilitates student interaction, serving as a medium to develop interpersonal skills such as communication, problem-solving, and teamwork (Siddhartha & Deepla, 2022). Through sports activities based on collaboration, students not only enjoy engaging and interactive learning experiences but also nurture character values such as discipline, responsibility, empathy, and mutual respect (Raharjo et al., 2023).

One relevant approach for character development in physical education is the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) model. This model emphasizes the importance of values such as effort, self-direction, and respect for others as integral aspects of learning. With this approach, physical education becomes not only a platform for enhancing physical skills but also a medium for shaping better character in students (Wardani et al., 2021). Furthermore, research has shown that age-appropriate physical activities can enhance cognitive development, social skills, and students' focus, thereby positively influencing their academic performance (Raharjo et al., 2023; Houston & Kulinna, 2014).

Studies by Ali et al. (2020) highlight that students' involvement in collaborative activities fosters a learning environment conducive to character development. Positive interactions among students enhance their ability to solve problems, make decisions, and build healthy social relationships. Consequently, integrating collaborative learning into PJOK has significant potential to create an effective, enjoyable, and conducive learning atmosphere for shaping students' positive character traits. Nurafiati, S (2016) emphasizes that character education in physical education can be an effective means of instilling positive values, including discipline, responsibility, and respect for others. By integrating character education into physical activities, students not only develop their physical abilities but also grow in their ability to make ethical decisions, collaborate effectively, and exhibit leadership qualities in various situations. In addition, Nurafiati (2018) also states that well-structured physical education can serve as an effective means of character development, particularly in aspects such as discipline, honesty, and respect for differences. Therefore, integrating character education in physical education at the elementary school level is crucial in shaping students who are not only academically intelligent but also possess strong and positive character.

Despite the promising potential of collaborative learning integration in physical education, empirical studies on its implementation and effectiveness, particularly in the context of character development in elementary schools, remain limited. Thus, this study aims to explore how collaborative learning integration in physical education contributes to the development of students' positive character. It will identify the processes, challenges,

and impacts of the collaborative approach in creating an effective and conducive learning environment for students' character growth. Through this research, it is hoped that a deeper understanding will emerge regarding the importance of PJOK lesson designs that focus not only on physical aspects but also on students' character and social dimensions (Iqbal et al., 2022; Raharjo et al., 2023).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the role of physical education in developing positive character traits in elementary school students. This approach is ideal for answering the research question, as it allows for an in-depth understanding of the role of physical education in character development within the context of SD Negeri Mamajang 3 Makassar. The methods and procedures described here provide sufficient detail for replication of the study.

The research design employed is descriptive qualitative. This design is appropriate for answering the research question about the role of physical education in fostering positive character traits among elementary school students. The qualitative approach allows for detailed observations and insights into the interactions, behaviors, and experiences of both teachers and students during physical education classes (Creswell, 2014; Sugiyono, 2020). The subjects of the study are physical education teachers and students in grades IV to VI at SD Negeri Mamajang 3 Makassar. The selection of participants followed purposive sampling to ensure they meet specific criteria: 1) Teachers with experience in implementing methods that foster character development; 2) Students who are involved in physical education activities that support character building. A total of 2 PE teachers and 30 students participated in the study. This number was chosen to provide comprehensive insights into the influence of physical education on character development.

Data was collected using a combination of three techniques: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The researcher observed physical education classes, focusing on the teaching methods used by PE teachers, student behavior during activities, and the demonstration of positive character traits such as cooperation and responsibility. The researcher was actively involved during classes to gather accurate, real-time data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the PE teachers and selected students to gather detailed information about their experiences and perceptions regarding the influence of physical education on character development. This method allows for flexibility in responses, ensuring a deep understanding of the subject matter.

Supporting data was gathered through photographs, videos, and lesson plans used by the PE teachers. This documentation served to supplement the observational and interview data and provided concrete evidence of teaching practices and student behaviors.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. Relevant data was selected from observations, interviews, and documentation. Data was grouped according to emerging themes related to the role of physical education in character development, such as cooperation, discipline, and respect. The data was organized into a clear and concise narrative to provide a comprehensive understanding of the findings. The researcher identified key patterns and insights to answer the research questions, focusing on how physical education contributes to character development in students.

Purposive sampling was employed to select the PE teachers and students who were actively involved in physical education activities. This approach ensured that the subjects provided relevant and in-depth data. Ethical considerations included obtaining written consent from the school administration, teachers, and students' parents before the study began. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process.

The primary instruments for this study were observation guides, interview protocols, and documentation tools such as cameras and audio recorders. These tools were designed to capture data on physical education practices and student behaviors accurately. No complex equipment or specific materials were used beyond standard research instruments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore the role of physical education in the development of positive character traits in students at SD Negeri Mamajang 3 Makassar. The results obtained from observations, interviews with teachers and students, as well as data analysis, show a significant influence of physical education on four main aspects of character development: cooperation, discipline, responsibility, and respect. All these findings were analyzed using a qualitative approach, with interviews and observations as the primary data collection instruments.

Cooperation

The data indicates that 60% of students have a high level of cooperation, which is reflected in their active roles in team activities. 33% of students are at a moderate level, and 7% at a low level. This analysis supports previous findings that physical education can improve students' cooperation skills (Sugiyono, 2020). The high level of cooperation can be linked to a learning design based on collaboration and interaction, such as team games that require intense communication among students.

Table 1. Summary of Students' Cooperation Levels

Cooperation Level	Percentage of Students (%)
High	60
Moderate	33
Low	7

Discipline

The majority of students, 67%, showed high discipline in following instructions, arriving on time, and adhering to rules during class. 23% of students exhibited moderate discipline, while 10% showed low discipline. The high discipline in physical education can be explained by a well-structured classroom environment that emphasizes the importance of punctuality, rule adherence, and active participation in activities.

Table 2. Summary of Students' Discipline Levels

Discipline Level	Percentage of Students (%)
High	67
Moderate	23
Low	10

Responsibility

40% of students demonstrated high responsibility, taking active roles as group leaders. 50% exhibited moderate responsibility, and 10% had low responsibility. Assigning leadership roles in physical activities such as being a team captain or event coordinator contributes to fostering responsibility in students.

Table 3. Summary of Students' Responsibility Levels

Responsibility Level	Percentage of Students (%)
High	40
Moderate	50
Low	10

Respect

The majority of students, 73%, showed high respect towards their peers, including congratulating successful classmates and maintaining sportsmanship. 20% of students were at a moderate level, and 7% at a low level. The high level of respect can be explained by the emphasis on sportsmanship values and adherence to game rules applied in physical education lessons.

Table 4. Summary of Students' Respect Levels

Respect Level	Percentage of Students (%)
High	73
Moderate	20
Low	7

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that physical education has a significant impact on the character development of students at SD Negeri Mamajang 3 Makassar, particularly in the aspects of cooperation, discipline, responsibility, and respect. The qualitative data collected from interviews with teachers and students, as well as classroom observations, show that social interactions during physical education activities play a major role in shaping these character traits.

The high level of cooperation indicates that physical education functions as a platform for students to practice teamwork. Activities such as group games and relays involve significant interaction, encouraging students to help and support each other in achieving common goals. Physical education effectively teaches discipline to students, both in terms of time management and adherence to instructions and rules. The emphasis on punctuality and orderliness in lessons can instill high levels of discipline that extend beyond the classroom as well.

Students who are assigned responsibilities in team activities or leadership roles demonstrate that physical education can nurture their sense of responsibility in fulfilling assigned tasks. However, some students with lower levels of responsibility may require further guidance to raise their awareness of the roles they undertake. Respect emerges as one of the most dominant character traits developed through physical education, reflected in students' behavior towards their peers, whether in victory or defeat. This shows that physical education not only teaches physical skills but also social ethics and values that are important for the students' personal development.

Physical education has proven to significantly impact the development of students' character, particularly in cooperation, discipline, responsibility, and respect. The interactions that occur during physical activities help develop essential social skills for students' daily lives. Therefore, it is important for physical education to continue evolving with an emphasis on character development, not just physical and motor skills.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct longitudinal studies to observe the long-term development of students' character. Additionally, the development of more

comprehensive and in-depth measurement instruments in qualitative research could provide richer insights into the impact of physical education on students' character.

The results indicates that it is in accordance with Nurafiati (2017) who states that, "Character education must be integrated into every aspect of learning, including physical education. Through structured physical activities, students are not only taught technical skills but also moral and social values, such as discipline, honesty, cooperation, and respect for others. With a systematic approach, physical education can serve as an effective means of shaping positive character in students."

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the role of physical education in the development of positive character traits among elementary school students, focusing on four main aspects: cooperation, discipline, responsibility, and respect. Based on the results from interviews, observations, and data analysis, it was found that physical education has a significant impact on the development of these character traits. The findings demonstrate that physical education is effective in building social skills and moral values that are crucial for students' personal development, such as cooperation, discipline, responsibility, and respect. This research contributes to scientific knowledge by confirming that physical education not only enhances students' physical fitness but also plays a crucial role in shaping their social character. These findings support existing literature and emphasize the importance of integrating character development into the physical education curriculum in schools.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that physical education programs continue to prioritize activities that support character development. Educators should be encouraged to incorporate collaborative tasks and leadership roles in physical education activities to enhance students' cooperation and responsibility skills. Further research is also suggested to explore the long-term effects of physical education on character development through longitudinal studies to gain a deeper understanding of how these traits evolve over time. Additionally, future studies could examine the specific impacts of various physical education activities, such as team sports or individual challenges, on particular aspects of character. Expanding the research to include a broader range of schools and regions will enhance the generalizability of the findings, providing a more comprehensive perspective on the role of physical education in shaping character development.

This study is limited to the context of SD Negeri Mamajang 3 Makassar, so the findings may not fully apply to other schools in different regions. Moreover, this study relied on qualitative data from interviews and observations, which, while informative, may not fully capture the entire scope of character development across various educational settings. Therefore, further research with a larger sample size and more diverse geographical locations is recommended to strengthen the validity and generalizability of these findings.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest in this article.

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