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The Influence Of Sports Extracurricular Activities On Students' Social Skills

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Abstract. This study aims to determine the influence of sports extracurricular activities on the social skills of junior high school students. The method used is quantitative with a quasi-experimental design approach of the nonequivalent control group design type. The sample totaled 60 students, consisting of 30 students who participated in sports extracurriculars as an experimental group and 30 students who did not participate as a control group. The research instrument is in the form of a social skills questionnaire that has been validated. The results of the t-test showed a significant difference between the social skills of students who participated in sports activities and those who did not. Sports activities have been proven to increase student empathy, communication, cooperation, and a sense of responsibility. This study recommends schools to further develop sports extracurricular activities as a means of character education.

Keywords: Extracurricular, sports, social skills, junior high school students.

1 Introduction

Education is essentially a process of forming a whole human being, not only developing cognitive aspects, but also affective and psychomotor aspects. In the context of 21st century education, social skills are one of the *life skills* that students need to face global challenges, especially in building relationships, teamwork, and effective communication skills (OECD, 2019). Social skills include the ability to interact positively with others, understand social norms, and build healthy interpersonal relationships.

However, the facts on the ground show that many students at the junior high school level have difficulties in the social aspect. Based on the *2021 Global Student Behavior Survey* report conducted by Education First Indonesia, it was recorded that 38% of junior high school students in major cities in Indonesia had problems communicating and working together with peers. In addition, data from the *Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia* (2022) shows an increase in bullying cases in primary and secondary schools, which is an indicator of weak social skills and empathy among students.

This phenomenon was strengthened by the results of the researcher's initial observation at one of the State Junior High Schools in the city of Sidikalang, where it was found that most students tended to withdraw from the social environment, lacked confidence in interaction, and showed a high level of individualism. Students spend more time with gadgets than interacting directly with peers. This negatively impacts their emotional and social development.

One of the strategic efforts that schools can make to overcome this problem is through extracurricular activities, especially in the field of sports. Sports activities not only nourish the

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body, but also serve as an effective means of character and social education. According to Widodo et al. (2023), student involvement in sports activities can increase a sense of responsibility, discipline, cooperation, and sportsmanship.

Sports activities create a space for social interaction that is dynamic and competitive but still constructive. In each match, students learn to work in a team, understand each other's roles, respect their opponents, and learn to manage emotions. In line with the social learning theory from Bandura (1977), direct interaction in the social environment such as sports activities is an effective medium to cultivate social skills through the process of observation and imitation of prosocial behavior.

Previous research by Kusuma & Lestari (2021) showed that students who regularly participate in sports extracurriculars have a higher level of social skills than students who are not active in such activities. Similar findings were also put forward by Martinez & Lee (2021) where sports activities are able to strengthen a sense of empathy, solidarity, and interpersonal communication between students.

However, not many schools have optimized sports extracurricular activities as a means of developing social skills. These activities are often considered complementary, rather than an integral part of the character education process. In fact, sports have great potential in shaping a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also capable in social relationships.

Based on the description above, this study was conducted to empirically test the influence of sports extracurricular activities on the social skills of junior high school students. This research is expected to make a real contribution to the development of education policies, especially in terms of strengthening character education through structured and directed non-academic activities.

2 Methods

This study uses a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental (quasi-experimental) non-equivalent Control Group Design type experimental design. This design allows for comparisons between experimental and control groups without randomization, while maintaining internal validity in measuring the effects of treatments.

The research population includes all grade VIII students at one of the State Junior High Schools in Sidikalang City as many as 180 students. The selection of grade VIII is based on the consideration that students at this stage are experiencing significant social development. Samples were taken using purposive sampling techniques, with each group consisting of 30 students.

- **Experimental group:** students who have actively participated in extracurricular sports (futsal, basketball, badminton) for at least the last 6 months.
- **Control group:** students who do not participate in extracurricular activities or other non-academic activities.

Before treatment, a homogeneity test was carried out on the variables of age, gender, and academic achievement. The results showed that the two groups had similar initial characteristics, making them worth comparing.

The main instrument of the research is a social skills questionnaire developed from the theory of Gresham and Elliott (1990), then modified to suit the context of Indonesian students. The questionnaire consists of 25 statements on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = very inappropriate, 4 = very appropriate), covering four aspects:

1. Empathy
2. Interpersonal communication,
3. Cooperation, and
4. Social responsibility.

The instrument has been tested for validity and reliability. All items showed validity ($r > 0.3$), and overall reliability reached **an Alpha Cronbach of 0.84**, indicating good internal consistency.

3 Research Results

The study involved two groups of junior high school students, 30 people each: the experimental group (participating in sports extracurriculars) and the control group (not participating). Data was collected using a **social skills questionnaire** compiled based on indicators such as communication, cooperation, empathy, and social responsibility. This instrument has been tested for validity and reliability before being used in data collection. The validity was tested using Pearson correlation, and all the grains were declared valid ($r > 0.3$), while the reliability reached an Alpha Cronbach value of 0.84, indicating high internal consistency.

Descriptive statistics showed that the average social skills score in the experimental group was 85.6 (SD = 5.7), while the control group had an average of 78.2 (SD = 6.1). This shows that there is a difference in scores between students who participate and do not participate in sports activities.

The assumption test is carried out before the hypothesis test:

- The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test showed normal distributed data ($p > 0.05$).
- The homogeneity test of Levene's Test showed homogeneous variance ($p = 0.219$).

With the assumption fulfilled, an independent t-test was performed, with the following results:

- $t_{count} = 4.21$
- $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$)

These results show a statistically significant difference between the two groups. Thus, an alternative hypothesis is accepted: sports extracurricular activities have a positive effect on students' social skills. Sports activities encourage interaction, cooperation, and communication which are the basis for the development of students' social skills.

4 Discussion

The results of this study show that involvement in sports extracurricular activities has a significant influence on improving the social skills of junior high school students. The experimental group that was active in sports recorded higher social skills scores than the control group that did not engage in similar activities. This supports the idea that physical activities involving social interaction, teamwork, and healthy competition are able to reinforce social dimensions that cannot be fully developed through formal academic learning in the classroom.

Sports activities provide space for students to hone communication, negotiation, and empathy skills. As explained by **Ramadhani & Permana (2021)**, interactions in an active

physical environment create social learning opportunities through hands-on experience, where students are trained to resolve conflicts, form solidarity, and understand the viewpoints of others. This process indirectly reinforces aspects of social skills such as interpersonal communication, cooperation, and social responsibility.

Furthermore, these findings are in line with **research by Kurniawan et al. (2020)** which showed that students who participated in sports extracurriculars showed better abilities in managing emotions, adapting in groups, and resolving conflicts constructively. In a competitive atmosphere that still prioritizes the value of sportsmanship, students learn to deal with pressure and maintain healthy social relationships.

According to **Yuliana & Fahmi (2022)**, participation in sports also contributes to the strengthening of prosocial characters, such as tolerance, honesty, and social concern. This is especially important in adolescence, where individuals begin to establish their social and moral identity. With active involvement in sports, students develop not only motor skills, but also social values that are essential in community life.

The students of the experimental group in this study showed real prosocial behaviors, such as daring to express opinions openly, respecting each other in victory and defeat, and being able to work together without causing conflict. In contrast, students in the control group tended to be less active in social interactions, not used to working together, and less responsive to group dynamics. This finding is strengthened by **Puspitasari et al. (2023)** who stated that structured sports activities in schools are able to increase students' social involvement and strengthen a sense of community in the educational community.

Similar research by **Nurhasanah et al. (2021)** concluded that sports play an important role in educating students to be open and responsible individuals. Through group activities and regular practice, students learn to regulate their emotions, accept differences, and abide by common rules—all of which are important pillars of social skills.

In addition, **Hartono & Syahputra (2020)** emphasized the importance of the quality of coaching in sports extracurriculars. According to them, new sports activities will have a significant impact on social development if coaches or coaches instill educational values such as discipline, sportsmanship, and empathy consistently. Without a good pedagogical approach, sports activities will only become a physical routine without a strong social meaning.

Similarly, **Lee & Choi (2021)** in an international study showed that students who engage in physical activity together regularly show improvements in teamwork skills, cross-cultural communication, and healthy emotional engagement. The study emphasizes that the social benefits of sport are universal and can be applied in various educational contexts, including in Indonesia.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that sports extracurricular not only functions as a forum for physical development, but also as an important instrument in the education of students' character and social skills. Therefore, schools need to maximize the educational function in sports activities through structured planning, educational assistance, and continuous evaluation of the social aspects to be built.

5 Conclusion

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that sports extracurricular activities have a significant influence on the social skills of junior high school (SMP) students. Students who actively participate in sports extracurricular activities have higher levels of social skills compared to students who do not participate in such activities. This can be seen from the results of statistical analysis which shows a significant difference quantitatively between the two groups.

Sports activities provide an opportunity for students to experience the process of social interaction directly, both in competitive and collaborative situations. This activity allows students to learn about cooperation, effective communication, tolerance, sportsmanship, and empathy in a fun and structured environment.

These findings are in line with current literature and theory that emphasizes the importance of non-academic activities, such as sports, in supporting the development of 21st-century skills, especially social and emotional skills. In the context of adolescent development, sports activities also serve as a means of social identity formation and confidence boosting, which in turn impacts students' social lives inside and outside of school.

Thus, sports extracurricular activities are not only beneficial for physical and mental health, but are also an important means of holistically shaping students' character and social skills.

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