



## Hidden Curriculum in Student Character Formation through Activities in Elementary School: A Case Study

Sukarni<sup>1</sup>(✉)

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Doktor Nugroho  
Magetan, Indonesia

✉Correspondence Author:  
[sukarni@udn.ac.id](mailto:sukarni@udn.ac.id)

### Abstract

This study aims to explore the role of hidden curriculum in the development of character education in elementary schools. The method used was a qualitative approach with a case study design, involving 28 grade V students and 5 teachers from one of the elementary schools in Bojonegoro. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with students and teachers to explore their understanding of the influence of activities outside of formal learning on character building. The results of the study show that social, cultural, sports, and extracurricular activities carried out in schools have an important role in instilling values such as discipline, cooperation, responsibility, and respect. The findings also reveal that teachers play a central role in managing hidden curriculum through their attitudes and interactions with students. This study concludes that hidden curriculum contributes significantly to the formation of student character, and it is important for schools to plan these activities systematically to support character education. Theoretically, this research highlights the importance of integrating hidden curriculum into character education frameworks, while practically offering insights for educators to design and optimize school activities that foster character development.

### Keywords

Character Development; Character Education; Elementary School; Extracurricular Activities; Hidden Curriculum

## INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia has long been the backbone of the development of quality human resources. As part of efforts to produce an intelligent young generation, elementary schools have a crucial role in shaping the foundations of children's knowledge, skills, and character (Sapdi, 2023). The national education system that applies in Indonesia, especially at the basic education level, not only emphasizes mastery of academic materials, but also

on character development as an equally important aspect. This character education aims to form students who not only excel intellectually, but also have good moral qualities, are able to be ethical, responsible, and play an active role in society (Onde et al., 2020).

The formal curriculum in primary schools, which includes compulsory subjects such as mathematics, Indonesian, social sciences, and others, is the main basis for achieving educational goals. However, it is not only the material taught in class that plays a role in character formation, but also various elements that are not explicitly listed in the written curriculum. One aspect that is often forgotten, but has a great influence on the process of forming students' character, is the hidden curriculum (Kärner & Schneider, 2024). This curriculum includes values, norms, and behaviors that are taught indirectly through social interactions, school policies, teacher behavior, and routines and cultures that develop in schools (Nahardani et al., 2021).

Character education through a hidden curriculum does not only occur in formal situations in the classroom, but more often in social contexts involving interpersonal relationships and extracurricular activities outside of class hours (Salamor & Ritiau, 2021). In this case, the hidden curriculum influences the formation of students' attitudes towards values such as discipline, cooperation, respect, and empathy. Although these values are not explicitly taught in the subject, they are instilled through students' direct experience in daily life at school (Salamor & Ritiau, 2021). Activities such as flag ceremonies, sports activities, celebrations of holidays, and interactions between students and teachers or classmates exert a significant influence on character formation (Satibi et al., 2024).

Some previous studies have highlighted the important role of hidden curricula in character education, although the findings have not yet fully covered all existing dimensions and contexts, especially at the elementary school level. For example, research conducted by (Sabanil et al., 2022) shows that social and cultural activities, as well as interactions between teachers and students, have a major contribution to the development of students' character. However, the research focused more on the secondary school environment and emphasized the extracurricular aspects of activities without taking into account the influence of social and cultural activities inside and outside the classroom. Other research has also revealed that hidden curricula have a more profound impact than those taught in formal curricula, but less discuss how they can be systematically applied in

character education at the elementary school level (Kärner & Schneider, 2024; Nahardani et al., 2021; Nur Fuad et al., 2024).

The gap in this research lies in the lack of focus on the systematic implementation of hidden curriculum at the primary school level, as well as the lack of attention to how social, cultural, and extracurricular activities can be integrated in a planned manner in supporting character education (Kian et al., 2020; Sabanil et al., 2022; Satibi et al., 2024). This research fills this gap with a holistic approach, where hidden curriculum is not only seen as a naturally occurring phenomenon, but also as an element that can be planned and maximized to support character education more effectively in elementary schools. Through interviews with students and observations of various activities that occur in schools, this study aims to analyze how activities that are not listed in the formal curriculum can contribute significantly to the formation of students' character.

This research offers novelty by introducing a more holistic approach to understanding the hidden curriculum, not only as a naturally occurring phenomenon, but also as an aspect that can be planned and maximized to support character education. The focus of this research is to explore how the various activities in elementary schools, which are not listed in the formal curriculum, can be utilized as effective character education tools. This research will also examine the impact of hidden curriculum on student character development through interviews with students and observation of activities that take place in schools.

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the role of hidden curriculum in character education in primary schools in Indonesia. Specifically, this study aims to explore the types of activities that contribute to the hidden curriculum, as well as how students view these activities. This research also aims to provide recommendations that can be used by educators and policymakers to optimize the management of hidden curriculum in order to develop more effective student character.

## **METHOD**

### **Research design**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the role of the hidden curriculum in the development of character education in primary schools in Bojonegoro. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows the researcher to

investigate deeply into the phenomena occurring in the field, especially regarding how hidden curriculum activities influence the formation of student character. The case study design is used to provide a holistic understanding of how the hidden curriculum contributes to character education in elementary schools.

This study involves 28 grade V students from one elementary school in Bojonegoro, selected through purposive sampling techniques. The school was chosen based on the diversity of activities offered outside formal school hours, such as social, cultural, and extracurricular activities, which support the implementation of the hidden curriculum. The students selected actively participate in these activities, making them significant for understanding how the hidden curriculum influences their character development. In addition to the students, the study also involves 5 teachers who are directly involved in activities supporting character education through the hidden curriculum. These teachers were chosen based on their roles in designing and implementing extracurricular activities aimed at character building in students.

#### Data Collection Procedures

The data in this study was collected through in-depth interviews with students and teachers. In-depth interviews were chosen because they provided an opportunity for researchers to gain richer and more in-depth information about students' and teachers' views on the influence of hidden curriculum activities on character formation. Interviews were conducted with 28 grade V students selected based on their active participation in social, cultural, and extracurricular activities at the school. The duration of the interview ranges from 30 to 45 minutes, providing ample time for participants to express their experiences in depth. The interview guide used was semi-structured, where the main questions were prepared, but still allowed the researcher to dig deeper into the responses that emerged. Interviews with students focus on their experiences in activities such as flag ceremonies, holiday celebrations, and extracurricular activities, while interviews with teachers focus on their perceptions of the role of hidden curriculum in character education and how they manage those activities.

### Data Validation

For the validity and credibility of the data, this study uses two main validation techniques: source triangulation and member checking. Source triangulation is done by collecting data from two different sources, i.e. students and teachers, which allows comparison and cross-examination between the perspectives of the two groups. The member checking technique is used to validate the results of interviews with participants. After the interview transcription is complete, some participants (both students and teachers) are given the opportunity to review their transcriptions to ensure the accuracy and accuracy of the representation of the views.

### Data Analysis

The data obtained from the interviews were then analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The first stage in this analysis is familiarization with the data, where the researcher reads the interview transcript thoroughly to understand the context and find key patterns. After that, the researcher performs the initial coding by marking segments of text relevant to key topics such as discipline, cooperation, responsibility, and respect. These codes are used to group responses related to the influence of hidden curriculum on student character formation. The next stage is the identification of themes that emerge from the data, which includes a variety of activities that students and teachers consider important in shaping character. Once the themes are identified, the researcher conducts a refinement process to ensure that the themes accurately reflect the data. Next, researchers compared students' and teachers' answers to see if there were similarities or differences in perceptions regarding the influence of hidden curriculum, which helped in identifying the relationship between activities outside of formal learning and student character formation.

### Data Interpretation

The thematic analysis results will be used to interpret the role of the hidden curriculum in shaping student character in the context of elementary schools. By analyzing the data, this study seeks to identify the relationships between non-formal activities and the development of character values in students. Additionally, it aims to provide insights into how schools can optimize the management of hidden curriculum activities to support more effective character education.

## RESULT

This research aims to explore how hidden curriculum plays a role in the development of character education in elementary schools. Based on in-depth interviews with 28 grade V students and 5 teachers in one of the elementary schools in Bojonegoro, several main themes were found related to the influence of hidden curriculum on the formation of students' character. The results of this study are divided into several sub-chapters that include the main findings of the interview data that have been analyzed.

### Social and Cultural Activities as a Form of Teaching Character Values

Social and cultural activities carried out outside of formal learning at school have a very significant role in shaping the character of students. Activities such as celebrations of holidays, flag ceremonies, and other social activities are considered effective means of instilling values such as discipline, respect, and responsibility. Students who are actively involved in these activities show a better understanding of character values that are not only taught in the classroom, but also practiced in daily life at school.

"During the flag ceremony, we are always taught to respect each other, especially to teachers and friends. We were also taught not to be late, because it was already a school rule. That is a lesson for us, especially in learning discipline." (Student, 11 years old)

The above quote shows that flag ceremony activities are not just a weekly ritual, but a means to instill the values of discipline and respect for authority in schools. These values, although not explicitly taught in the subject, are applied in the routine activities that are part of the hidden curriculum. The teaching of these values such as discipline and respect is important to shape students' character outside of the academic context and strengthen their discipline in daily life.

"In social activities such as social services and holiday celebrations, we not only learn about these activities, but also about working together and caring for others. That's important, because we are taught to be more concerned about the environment." (Student, 11 years old)

Celebrations of holidays and other social activities not only teach students about traditions, but also serve as a means to teach social values such as cooperation and care for others. By engaging in these activities, students can experience firsthand the importance of

contributing to society and developing a sense of empathy, which is an important part of character education.

### The Influence of Extracurricular Activities in Character Building

Extracurricular activities in schools, such as sports, scouting, and the arts, also have a big role in supporting student character development. These activities not only teach physical or artistic skills, but also involve important aspects of character, such as teamwork, perseverance, and self-control. Students who participate in extracurricular activities tend to show improvements in the ability to work together and be more responsible.

"In scouting, we are taught to work together, especially when doing activities together such as camping or social projects. We have to help each other so that all the work is done properly. It made us learn to care for our friends and take responsibility for the tasks we were given." (Student, 11 years old)

Scouting activities provide an opportunity for students to hone their cooperative skills, which is an important aspect of their character development. Through group assignments such as social projects and camps, students learn to work together, overcome challenges, and develop responsibility for their tasks. These skills will continue to be carried by students in their lives, both in school and outside of school.

"While playing football, I learned a lot about discipline and cooperation. If we can't be disciplined, our team will lose. In addition, I also learned not to give up easily and keep trying despite difficult circumstances." (Student, 11 years old)

Sports activities, such as ball games, provide hands-on lessons about the importance of discipline and perseverance. Students are taught that failure is not the end, but an opportunity to try harder and learn from mistakes. In addition, sports also teach them about the importance of cooperation in achieving common goals, which is very important in their social life outside of school.

### The Role of Teachers in Managing the Hidden Curriculum

Teachers play a very important role in conveying character values through hidden curriculum. Through their attitudes, behaviors, and interactions with students, teachers

become models that directly influence students in internalizing these values. Teachers who are consistent in showing attitudes that prioritize values such as honesty, responsibility, and mutual respect, provide a strong example for students to emulate.

"As a teacher, I always try to show an attitude of respect and care for students.

I hope students can replicate that in their interactions. In addition, I also often emphasize the importance of responsibility, both in the classroom and outside the classroom." (Teacher, 43 years old)

The role of teachers is vital in managing and facilitating hidden curriculum. By being a good role model, teachers not only teach academic knowledge, but also shape students' character through their daily actions. The emphasis on responsibility delivered by teachers helps students understand how important it is to take responsibility for their actions, both in academic and social contexts.

"Our task is not only to teach subject matter, but also to provide a good example for students. We must be a tangible example of the values we teach, such as honesty and respect. It was a very important part of the hidden curriculum." (Teacher, 41 years old)

Teachers also have a responsibility to be role models in instilling character values. By being a good example, teachers show students that values such as honesty and respect are not only to be taught, but also to be practiced in daily life. This makes these values easier for students to internalize.

### Celebration of Big Days in Character Building

The celebration of school holidays, such as Independence Day, Kartini Day, and National Education Day, has a significant impact on instilling a sense of nationalism, patriotism, and respect for the nation's history. Activities carried out in commemoration of these big days provide an opportunity for students to learn about national values and the importance of appreciating the struggles of heroes.

"As we commemorate Independence Day, we learn about the struggles of heroes and how important it is to appreciate the independence we have achieved. We are also taught to maintain the unity and unity of the nation." (Student, 11 years old)

Celebrations of big days such as Independence Day provide an opportunity for students to learn about history and the importance of appreciating independence and the struggle of heroes. It also teaches them about important national values, such as unity and unity, that shape the character of their nationalism. This experience is invaluable in teaching students to be good and responsible citizens.

"Celebrations of holidays like Kartini Day teach us about the importance of respecting women, respecting everyone's rights, and maintaining equality.

That's a very important value for us." (Student, 11 years old)

Kartini Day celebrations at schools provide an opportunity for students to learn about gender equality and respect the rights of each individual. It is part of a hidden curriculum that instills the values of equality and respect for all people, which are essential in the formation of students' social character.

The results of this study show that hidden curriculum plays a very important role in the development of students' character education in elementary school. Social and cultural activities, extracurriculars, and celebrations of holidays held in schools contribute significantly to shaping the character of students. In addition, teachers also play an important role as a model in internalizing character values. Overall, students show positive understanding and feel that the activities they participate in at school help them become better personalities.

## DISCUSSION

Character education is one of the main goals of the education system in Indonesia (Aryati et al., 2020; Maulani et al., 2022). In addition to developing students' academic abilities, schools are also expected to shape students' character which includes moral, ethical, and social responsibility values (Irpan & Sain, 2024; Maisyaroh et al., 2023). In this case, the hidden curriculum plays an important role in supporting these goals. Although the hidden curriculum is not recorded in official documents or syllabus, its influence on the formation of students' character is enormous. Activities that exist outside of formal learning in schools, such as social, cultural, sports, and daily interactions between students and teachers, are part of a hidden curriculum that helps instill character values in students (Ahmadin, 2023; Patiño et al., 2023; Siswanto, 2020)

In general, the hidden curriculum consists of values, attitudes, norms, and behaviors that are taught indirectly to students through various activities that are not listed in the formal curriculum (Puspita Sari et al., 2023). Activities such as flag ceremonies, celebrations of holidays, and other extracurricular activities have a huge influence on the development of students' character. For example, the flag ceremony activities that are routinely carried out in schools teach the values of discipline, respect for authority, and a sense of nationalism. Although there is no subject matter that explicitly teaches these values, the activity provides a hands-on experience for students to internalize these values in their daily lives (Afdhal et al., 2024). This finding is significant because it highlights that certain values, like respect for authority and discipline, are best learned through practice and routine, rather than through direct instruction. The continuous exposure to such practices creates a deeper understanding and internalization of these values, showing that hidden curriculum activities serve as essential tools for character development.

One of the main findings of this study is that social and cultural activities in schools play a very important role in the teaching of character. Social activities such as social services, holiday celebrations, or mutual cooperation activities teach students to work together, care for the surrounding environment, and be responsible for the tasks given (Salamor & Ritiau, 2021). In these activities, students not only learn about the activities technically, but also gain a deeper understanding of the importance of social values, such as empathy, honesty, and mutual respect. For example, in the celebration of Independence Day, students are taught to appreciate the struggles of heroes and understand the importance of independence and national unity. Activities like this are an effective medium to instill important national values in the formation of students' character (Sabanil et al., 2022). The importance of these activities lies in their ability to teach values through real-world examples and shared experiences. Through participation in these activities, students can connect abstract concepts like empathy and respect to tangible experiences that shape their understanding of these values. This process allows students to better internalize these lessons and see their relevance to daily life.

In addition to social and cultural activities, extracurricular activities also make a great contribution to the development of students' character. Extracurriculars such as sports, scouting, and the arts not only teach specific skills, but also involve important aspects of a student's character, such as perseverance, responsibility, and self-control (Puspita Sari et

al., 2023). For example, in sports activities, students learn about discipline, teamwork, and how to deal with defeat sportsmanship. Likewise, in scouting activities, students are taught to work together in groups, develop a sense of responsibility for their duties, and become individuals who care about others. These experiences teach students to not only focus on the results, but also on the processes and values that can be taken away during the journey (Ulum & Riswadi, 2023). The involvement in these activities goes beyond learning technical skills; they also help build critical personal traits like resilience and responsibility. These extracurricular settings provide a natural environment for students to develop these traits through practice and by being held accountable in non-academic settings. This shows that such activities complement formal lessons by offering spaces for character development that may not be achieved through academics alone.

The role of teachers in managing and facilitating hidden curriculum is no less important. Teachers are very influential models in students' lives, both in the classroom and outside the classroom (Khaerunnisa & Muqowim, 2020). Through their attitudes, behaviors, and interactions with students, teachers provide direct examples of character values that must be applied in daily life (Prihatmojo & Badawi, 2020). Teachers who are consistent in demonstrating values such as honesty, discipline, and respect, help students to internalize those values. For example, teachers who always show up on time, show patience and wisdom in solving problems, and respect students' opinions, will be a real example that students can imitate. In this case, the teacher not only functions as a teacher, but also as a moral guide who has a great influence on the formation of students' character (Dewi et al., 2021). The findings reveal that teachers play a central role in shaping character values by exemplifying the behaviors they wish to instill in students. The consistency and authenticity of teachers' actions become pivotal in translating hidden curriculum into concrete values, as students are highly influenced by their teachers' everyday behavior.

Overall, this study shows that hidden curriculum has a very important role in character education in elementary schools. Social, cultural, sports, and extracurricular activities carried out outside of formal learning have a great impact on shaping students' character values. Teachers also act as models who influence students' character development through their attitudes and behaviors. For this reason, it is important for schools to plan and manage the activities included in the hidden curriculum in a more systematic manner and integrated with the goals of character education. Thus, schools can

create an environment that supports the overall development of students' character, both through formal curriculum and hidden curriculum.

## CONCLUSION

This research shows that the hidden curriculum plays a crucial role in shaping students' character in elementary schools. Despite not being officially recorded in curriculum documents, activities outside formal learning, such as social, cultural, sports, and extracurricular activities, significantly contribute to instilling character values like discipline, cooperation, responsibility, and respect. Teachers are pivotal in managing and implementing the hidden curriculum through their attitudes, behaviors, and interactions with students. Consequently, the hidden curriculum is an integral component of character education, shaping individuals who are not only academically proficient but also morally responsible. The implications of these findings suggest that schools must systematically plan and manage activities within the hidden curriculum, integrating them with the goals of character education. It is essential for schools to recognize that character education occurs not just through formal subjects but also through daily activities. Educators should focus on extracurricular and social activities, ensuring that each one fosters holistic character development. Teachers must also serve as exemplary role models by embodying the values they aim to instill in students. However, this study has limitations, including its reliance on a case study from a single school, which may not be representative of all schools. Future research could expand this study by exploring the role of hidden curriculum in diverse educational settings and examining the long-term impacts of hidden curriculum activities on students' character development.

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