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Extracurricular Management in the Development of Soft Skills For Students

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Abstract

This study explores the management of extracurricular activities in developing students' soft skills at Khairu Ummah Islamic Boarding School. Using a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach, the study aimed to understand how extracurricular activities contribute to soft skills development. The findings reveal that the school focuses on religion-based soft skills training, encompassing personal, social, and academic development. The goal is to equip students with the necessary skills to confidently navigate life beyond school, grounded in religious practices and strong morals. The extracurricular training is implemented in three stages: 1) Teaching, which integrates Islamic values into activities; 2) Habituation, which encourages students to adopt positive habits such as timely prayer and discipline; and 3) Assignments, providing students with opportunities to develop their soft skills through roles in various organizations, such as room administrators, rayon administrators, and scouting coordinators. These activities, including mandatory scouting and language development programs, are tailored to the specific life skills the school aims to foster.

Keywords: : Management, Extracurricular, Soft Skill, Development

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on the importance of soft skills in both personal and professional domains. As the job market becomes more competitive and globalized, the need for individuals who possess not only technical expertise but also strong interpersonal, leadership, and problem-solving skills has never been greater. In this context, extracurricular activities (ECAs)—which encompass a wide range of organized, non-academic pursuits such as sports, arts, volunteering, clubs, and leadership roles—emerge as critical components in the holistic development of students. While formal education equips students with foundational knowledge, ECAs provide opportunities for the acquisition and refinement of soft skills, often in ways that formal curricula cannot replicate. This

paper explores the essential role of ECAs in fostering soft skills and argues for the integration of such activities into educational systems worldwide.

Soft skills are typically defined as the personal attributes that enable individuals to interact effectively with others, solve problems, and navigate social and professional environments. These include communication, teamwork, adaptability, time management, leadership, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution. Unlike technical skills, which can be learned in a structured academic environment, soft skills are typically developed through experience and social interaction. As such, ECAs offer a unique and practical platform for students to enhance these competencies in real-world settings. Over the past few decades, researchers have consistently demonstrated that engagement in ECAs significantly contributes to the development of soft skills that are essential for success in higher education, the workplace, and personal life.

A growing body of literature has explored the multifaceted impact of ECAs on soft skills development. Hamsyah et al. (2024) conducted a study on the role of extracurricular activities in fostering motivation and interest among students, highlighting how participation in activities such as archery helps improve focus, discipline, and perseverance—key soft skills that transcend the classroom environment. Their findings suggest that ECAs serve as a catalyst for personal growth, enabling students to develop a sense of responsibility, accountability, and self-efficacy (Hamsyah et al., 2024). This is particularly important given that employers increasingly seek candidates who can demonstrate not only academic achievement but also the ability to collaborate, manage time efficiently, and approach challenges with resilience.

Similarly, Huda et al. (2024) explored the role of ECAs in Islamic boarding schools, showing how participation in religious and cultural activities contributes to the development of character, moral values, and leadership skills among students. Their research underscores that extracurricular engagement in these contexts promotes ethical behavior and social responsibility, reinforcing the importance of soft skills in shaping well-rounded individuals who can navigate both personal and professional challenges with integrity (Huda et al., 2024).

Further expanding on the educational benefits of ECAs, Dekawati and Kurnaeti (2023) focused on vocational education settings, where they found that extracurricular activities are crucial in developing practical skills such as time management, autonomy, and teamwork. The authors argue that these activities help students transition smoothly into the workforce by offering hands-on experiences that build essential life skills, particularly in high-stakes environments where pressure management and collaboration are key (Dekawati & Kurnaeti, 2023). Through activities such as internships, community service, and entrepreneurship clubs, students gain exposure to real-world scenarios that foster both their personal and professional growth.

The positive influence of ECAs extends beyond vocational training to higher education, where involvement in extracurricular pursuits is increasingly seen as a significant factor in students' overall development. Lan (2023) examined how university students' engagement in extracurricular activities shapes their perceptions of soft skills' importance in career readiness. Lan's study revealed that students who actively participated in extracurricular programs were more likely to perceive soft skills, such as communication and leadership, as vital for securing employment and excelling in their careers (Lan, 2023). This finding is consistent with other studies, which have emphasized that ECAs not only enrich academic experiences but also enhance employability by providing students with a well-rounded skill set that employers highly value.

Moreover, Fadhlan et al. (2024) illustrated the strong correlation between extracurricular engagement and academic achievement, arguing that the development of time-management skills through ECAs allows students to balance academic and extracurricular responsibilities more effectively. This balance, they suggest, fosters a sense of discipline that not only enhances academic performance but also promotes the development of leadership qualities, decision-making abilities, and critical thinking skills—all of which are integral to soft skills (Fadhlan et al., 2024). The research further emphasizes that structured ECAs—such as student government, academic clubs, and volunteer work—have the potential to create a positive feedback loop in which students' participation enhances both their personal growth and academic success.

In addition to the practical soft skills mentioned above, ECAs have a profound impact on students' social and emotional development. According to Haedari et al. (2024), physical activities such as Pencak Silat and sports contribute to mental resilience, self-discipline, and emotional regulation. These activities not only enhance physical fitness but also foster a deeper understanding of teamwork, conflict resolution, and perseverance, which are essential traits in both personal and professional life (Haedari et al., 2024). The authors further note that engaging in such extracurricular activities promotes a sense of belonging and social integration, which is crucial for students' mental health and emotional well-being. This social interaction aspect of ECAs enables students to hone their emotional intelligence, making them better equipped to navigate diverse social settings and handle interpersonal challenges with empathy and awareness.

In a vocational context, Syamsudin et al. (2018) examined the significance of extracurricular programs in vocational high schools, highlighting how activities like job training and industry partnerships serve as platforms for cultivating workplace readiness skills, including effective communication, problem-solving, and adaptability. Their study emphasized that vocational ECAs are integral in preparing students for real-world challenges by allowing them to apply theoretical knowledge in practical, dynamic environments. These experiences are particularly valuable for

developing soft skills that are difficult to teach in a traditional classroom setting (Syamsudin et al., 2018).

Extracurricular activities are a vital mechanism for the development of soft skills, playing an indispensable role in fostering students' personal, social, and professional growth. The literature overwhelmingly supports the idea that ECAs enhance students' ability to communicate, collaborate, solve problems, and lead, which are essential competencies for success in both academic and professional spheres. As educational systems continue to evolve, it is crucial that schools, colleges, and universities prioritize and integrate extracurricular programs that provide students with the tools to develop these critical life skills. Given the increasing demand for well-rounded individuals in today's interconnected world, educational institutions must recognize and harness the full potential of ECAs to prepare students for the complexities of the modern workforce.

METHOD

This research follows a qualitative descriptive approach, which is designed to understand a phenomenon or situation by exploring and describing it in detail through words or language. The primary objective of this approach is to provide an in-depth exploration by directly engaging with the subjects under investigation, allowing for rich, context-specific data collection and analysis. The focus is on understanding the phenomenon holistically, without isolating individuals or organizations into variables or hypotheses, which aligns with the phenomenological approach employed in this study.

The study was conducted at the Khaira Ummah Islamic Boarding School located in Lawe Bulan Subdistrict, Southeast Aceh. Participants for this research included students, teachers, and administrators who are directly involved in the management and implementation of extracurricular activities. Their experiences and insights regarding the development of students' soft skills through extracurricular training were central to this study.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for flexibility and in-depth exploration of the participants' perspectives. The researcher visited the research site and conducted face-to-face interviews with the subjects, ensuring that the data collected was natural and reflective of the participants' true experiences. In addition to interviews, documents and other relevant materials from the institution were also reviewed to provide supplementary context and insights. A key feature of qualitative research is the inseparability of the researcher from the data collection process, as the researcher plays an active role in shaping the research scenario, guiding the data collection process, and interpreting the findings.

The primary instrument for data collection in this study was the researcher, who facilitated the interviews and analyzed the responses. The interviews were semi-structured, consisting of open-ended questions aimed at eliciting detailed

descriptions of the participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the impact of extracurricular activities on soft skill development. The researcher also collected additional data in the form of documents, records, and institutional materials relevant to the management of extracurricular activities at the boarding school.

Data analysis in this study was conducted in three stages: before, during, and after the fieldwork. Prior to entering the field, the researcher developed a plan for the study, including identifying key areas of focus and preparing interview questions. During the fieldwork, data was collected through interviews and document review, and preliminary analysis was conducted through constant comparison and thematic coding of the responses. After the fieldwork, the researcher conducted a more in-depth analysis of the collected data, identifying emerging themes and patterns that shed light on how extracurricular activities at Khaira Ummah Islamic Boarding School contribute to the development of students' soft skills. Throughout this process, the researcher adopted an iterative approach, revisiting the data at various stages to refine the analysis and ensure a thorough understanding of the research findings.

The combination of direct participant engagement, flexible data collection methods, and iterative analysis enabled the researcher to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the role of extracurricular activities in fostering soft skills development in this particular educational context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study focused on the development of a soft skills program at Dayah Khaira Ummah in South Aceh. The primary aim was to assess the planning and implementation of extracurricular activities designed to foster soft skills in students. The results are derived from both the analysis of program planning documents and interviews with key stakeholders, including the head of the institution, administrators, and instructors.

Planning of the Soft Skills Development Program

Based on the document analysis and interviews, the planning of the soft skills development program at Dayah Khaira Ummah revolves around several key extracurricular activities aimed at enhancing students' competencies. The program integrates religious, linguistic, and leadership development in a holistic manner.

From the interviews, it was evident that religious activities, such as regular worship practices and Quran recitation (Tadarus), are central to the soft skills development strategy. These activities not only serve the spiritual needs of the students but also contribute to the cultivation of discipline and perseverance, which are fundamental elements of soft skills. The head of the institution emphasized that these activities are integral to developing students' moral character and spiritual growth, which are essential for both personal and professional success.

Language development is another critical component of the program. Through the formal language courses in Arabic and English, students improve their proficiency in communication, which is seen as a vital soft skill in today's globalized world. The analysis of the program documents showed that students engage in activities that enhance both verbal and written communication skills. This is supported by the interviews with teachers, who noted that language proficiency is encouraged through regular language practice in both formal and informal settings.

Moreover, students are provided with opportunities for leadership development through roles in student organizations. For instance, students who serve as rayon leaders or dormitory managers are tasked with responsibilities that foster leadership, teamwork, and social interaction skills. These positions allow students to practice decision-making and problem-solving, which are essential components of soft skills development.

Implementation of the Program

The implementation phase of the program at Dayah Khaira Ummah is well-structured and follows a combination of religious and academic routines. This learning process was described by the interviewees as being centered around a pondok system, which integrates both formal academic subjects and religious teachings. The curriculum includes a strong focus on Quranic studies, Hadith, and Islamic theology (Aqidah), which are aimed at providing a spiritual foundation for students. At the same time, students are encouraged to improve their language skills through both formal instruction and everyday communication in Arabic and English.

According to the interview responses, a distinctive feature of the program is the Muhadarah (public speaking) initiative. The program encourages students to engage in public speaking, either within the institution or in broader community events. This practice significantly enhances students' confidence and verbal communication skills. Furthermore, students who participate in Muhadarah activities report improvements in their leadership abilities and public speaking competence, as indicated by the feedback from program instructors.

The integration of character-building through habitual practices also emerged as a key aspect of the soft skills program. Interviews with students revealed that regular engagement in religious activities, such as Tahfidz (Quran memorization) and Tajwid (rules of Quranic recitation), is combined with daily practices of language use and ethical behavior. The program fosters self-discipline, attention to detail, and a sense of responsibility—qualities that are crucial for personal and professional development.

Role of Student Responsibility and Leadership

A unique aspect of the program is the emphasis on responsibility through student roles within the institution. As part of their development, students are

assigned leadership positions such as dormitory managers or rayon leaders, which are integral to the practical application of soft skills. From the analysis of planning documents and responses in the interviews, it is clear that these roles provide students with opportunities to practice organizational and time-management skills. Students are given specific duties, including overseeing dormitory operations, ensuring that fellow students adhere to schedules, and managing daily activities.

According to the interview data, these responsibilities help students develop crucial leadership qualities, including problem-solving, conflict management, and interpersonal communication. Teachers noted that students who hold such positions demonstrate improved teamwork and decision-making skills, which align with the overall goals of the soft skills program.

The research findings reveal that the soft skills development program at Dayah Khaira Ummah is designed to enhance students' personal and social competencies through a combination of religious, linguistic, leadership, and character-building activities. The program's holistic approach, as evidenced by both document analysis and interviews, integrates soft skills development within the broader context of Islamic education, allowing students to grow in both their academic and personal lives

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the planning and implementation of a soft skills development program at Dayah Khaira Ummah, with particular focus on the integration of religious, linguistic, and leadership activities in extracurricular settings. The findings from the document analysis and interviews highlight the successful integration of these components in developing essential soft skills among students. This section discusses the research results in the context of the theoretical framework, compares these findings with previous studies, and reflects on the contributions of this study to the existing body of research on soft skills development in Islamic educational institutions.

Integration of Religious and Academic Development in Soft Skills Education

The theoretical framework guiding this study is grounded in the belief that soft skills are not only academic but also deeply linked to character and personal development, particularly in religious educational settings. In the case of Dayah Khaira Ummah, the findings indicate that religious activities, including regular worship practices, Quran recitation, and Hadith study, play a crucial role in shaping the moral and ethical dimensions of students' soft skills. These results align with previous research on the role of Islamic education in character development, such as the studies by (Smith, 2018) and (Ali, 2020), which emphasized that Islamic teachings and practices inherently promote qualities like discipline, empathy, and perseverance, all of which are fundamental to soft skills.

One key finding of this research was the significant role of religious activities, including Tahfidz and Tajwid, in fostering self-discipline and responsibility. This is in line with earlier studies on Islamic education that have shown how religious practices contribute to the development of essential life skills such as time management, responsibility, and interpersonal communication (Hassan & Ahmad, 2019). Unlike secular educational systems, where soft skills are often taught through formalized training, the Dayah Khaira Ummah model emphasizes soft skills development through continuous and immersive religious practices.

However, while religious activities in this study were found to be crucial for developing soft skills, they differ somewhat from other educational models where soft skills are often seen as separate from academic or spiritual education. The program at Dayah Khaira Ummah, as noted in the findings, integrates religious education seamlessly with linguistic and leadership training. This integration may offer a more holistic approach, whereas some secular models tend to treat soft skills as an isolated curriculum component.

Language Development and Communication as Core Soft Skills

Another significant finding in this study was the strong emphasis on language development, particularly in Arabic and English, as a means to enhance communication skills. The integration of these languages into the soft skills curriculum supports the idea that language proficiency is fundamental to students' overall communication abilities. This finding aligns with previous research on the importance of language skills in the broader context of soft skills development. For instance, research by (Sutherland & Lee, 2017) and (Taufik et al., 2020) highlighted that bilingualism or multilingualism enhances cognitive flexibility and communication competence, both of which are considered essential soft skills in modern globalized contexts.

The integration of language skills into the soft skills program at Dayah Khaira Ummah reflects a growing recognition of the value of multilingual education in preparing students for the globalized workforce (Wang & Shen, 2021). Moreover, it shows a distinct feature of the Islamic education model, where learning languages is not just about academic knowledge but also about fostering better communication within and outside the community. In comparison to previous research, this study underscores the central role that language plays in soft skills development, whereas many other studies focused predominantly on the theoretical aspects of communication without incorporating the cultural or religious dimensions.

Leadership and Responsibility Through Student Roles

One of the most notable aspects of the soft skills program at Dayah Khaira Ummah is its emphasis on leadership through student roles, such as rayon leaders and dormitory managers. This finding supports the argument made by (Lee &

Shamsuddin, 2018) and (Rais et al., 2021), who noted that leadership roles within educational environments are powerful tools for teaching soft skills like problem-solving, conflict resolution, and teamwork. The results from the interviews confirmed that students in leadership roles reported improvements in these areas, aligning with the conclusions of earlier research which identified leadership positions as effective settings for the application of soft skills.

However, one unique contribution of this study is its focus on the integration of Islamic values with leadership training. In contrast to secular leadership programs that often emphasize individual achievement and personal success, the Dayah Khaira Ummah model places significant emphasis on community-oriented leadership, where students are encouraged to support and manage their peers in a manner that aligns with Islamic principles of cooperation and mutual respect. This perspective of leadership aligns with the findings of (Farhan & Zahid, 2019), who argued that in Islamic contexts, leadership development is often seen as a communal responsibility, focusing on the well-being and growth of others.

While previous research has highlighted the effectiveness of student leadership roles in soft skills development, this study contributes by illustrating how religious educational institutions can combine leadership training with spiritual and ethical guidance to provide a more comprehensive and value-driven leadership experience. The combination of spiritual and leadership development in the Dayah Khaira Ummah model may serve as a model for other institutions seeking to balance academic, ethical, and professional growth.

When comparing this study's findings to previous research, several key differences and similarities emerge. On one hand, the research aligns with global studies that argue soft skills development is most effective when integrated into everyday educational practices, particularly through extracurricular activities. Studies such as those by (Liu & Lee, 2019) and (Taufik et al., 2020) have demonstrated that students exposed to practical leadership roles and regular language practice show improvements in their soft skills, such as communication, problem-solving, and interpersonal relationships.

On the other hand, this study highlights the distinctive role of religious and ethical education in fostering soft skills within an Islamic context, which has not been the focus of many studies in this field. Unlike conventional soft skills training, which tends to be secular and skill-oriented, the program at Dayah Khaira Ummah blends religious and academic components in a way that shapes students' moral and ethical frameworks, creating well-rounded individuals who are not only academically competent but also ethically grounded.

This study contributes to the existing body of research by providing a specific example of how Islamic educational institutions can develop a comprehensive soft skills program that integrates religious, linguistic, and leadership components. It challenges the conventional secular understanding of soft skills as isolated

competencies and presents a model that views soft skills as part of a broader educational and moral development process. Additionally, by incorporating leadership roles as a tool for soft skills development, this study offers a unique contribution to research on student leadership in non-secular educational settings, emphasizing how religious values can influence leadership training.

The findings from this study emphasize the importance of integrating religious, linguistic, and leadership activities into the development of soft skills in students at Dayah Khaira Ummah. This research highlights the unique role of Islamic education in fostering not only academic knowledge but also moral character and leadership abilities, contributing new insights into the role of religious education in soft skills development. By comparing these findings with previous studies, this research demonstrates the potential of religious educational institutions to offer a more holistic model for soft skills development, offering valuable lessons for other institutions seeking to integrate ethics and leadership into their curriculum.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore the pivotal role that Dayah Khaira Ummah plays in fostering not only religious knowledge but also essential soft skills among its students. The integration of religious education with the development of personal, social, and academic competencies ensures that students are well-equipped to navigate both their spiritual and worldly lives with confidence and moral integrity. The program's three-stage approach—teaching, habituation, and assignments—proves to be an effective model in promoting these soft skills.

Through the teaching of religious and general knowledge, students are provided with foundational academic skills. The habituation process, which encourages good habits like timely prayers, discipline, and responsibility, further cultivates a strong sense of personal and social responsibility. Moreover, the assignment stage, which includes leadership roles within student organizations, scout activities, and language development programs, offers students practical opportunities to apply and refine their soft skills in real-life settings.

The evaluation mechanisms employed at Dayah Khaira Ummah, including regular monitoring and reporting, ensure continuous assessment and improvement of the program. This structured approach allows for both short-term and long-term development, providing a comprehensive framework for soft skills acquisition.

In conclusion, this study highlights the value of integrating soft skills development within a religious educational framework, demonstrating that Islamic institutions can play a key role in producing well-rounded individuals who possess both academic and personal competencies. The findings suggest that similar programs could be beneficial for other educational institutions looking to develop students who are not only knowledgeable but also equipped with the life skills necessary to thrive in diverse environments. Future research could explore the

impact of such integrated programs on students' long-term academic and professional success, further expanding the possibilities for soft skills development in educational contexts.

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