



Dance Extracurricular Activities for Early Childhood Creative Character

Salma Audina Zahrani¹, Sofa Muthohar², Nilal Muna Fatmawati³, Andrew Laurence Yona⁴

Early Childhood Islamic Education, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, Walisongo State Islamic University, Semarang, Indonesia^{1,2,3}

Jalan Walisongo No.3-5, Tambakaji, Kecamatan Ngaliyan, Kota Semarang, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia
Special Education Teacher, Chemba District Council, Dodoma, Tanzania⁴

E-mail: 23031060029@student.walisongo.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of extracurricular dance activities in shaping the creative character of early childhood. Dancing not only helps develop gross and fine motor skills but also encourages children's imagination, innovation, emotional expression, and social skills. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation during the dance learning process. The results of the study show that extracurricular dance activities enable children to freely and individually express diverse dance movements. Children's creativity is reflected through improvisational movements, and the success of these activities in enhancing creativity also contributes to children's social and emotional development, including increased confidence. In addition, dance learning strengthens important social and emotional traits such as cooperation, empathy, and self-control. Therefore, this study recommends integrating dance movement activities into the early childhood education curriculum as an effective and enjoyable medium for developing creative character.



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INTRODUCTION

According to Inswide (2021), character etymologically refers to virtuous traits, while conceptually, it refers to continuous efforts to develop those traits in oneself and towards others. Character education. According to Shofa (2017), in the journal "Character Education for Early Childhood," character education is a planned and directed effort to develop a person's intelligence, special potential, and emotional aspects, with the aim of shaping individuals with good character. This process is achieved through teaching, training, guidance, habituation, direction, advice, and various other methods (Hasanah, 2016).

Creative character refers to a child's ability to generate new ideas, find creative solutions, and view problems flexibly from multiple perspectives (Nurjanah et al., 2024). In early childhood, it is demonstrated not only through the end product but also in processes such as exploration, imagination, curiosity, and the courage to try new things. This character trait is vital for a child's growth, particularly in divergent thinking, problem-solving, and unique self-expression appropriate to their developmental stage.



In this process, creativity plays a crucial role, allowing children to freely express their ideas and feelings. Creativity is the ability to view and think about ideas from different perspectives and to generate unique, innovative ideas. It enables children to experience the joy of creating something new. During this process, children utilize and transform their ideas to produce meaningful works (Sakti & Sit, 2024). Additionally, creativity helps children freely articulate their feelings and ideas without being constrained by rigid rules. A concrete example is when children participate in dance activities and create their own movements, using their imagination and diverse ways of thinking to produce unique movements that reflect their ideas.

In the 21st century, early childhood education emphasizes 4C skills (Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, Communication). Among these, creativity needs to be actively stimulated in children. Therefore, teachers should facilitate stimulation through both instructional methods and activities (Azizah & Wardhani, 2022). One activity that can stimulate creativity in early childhood is dancing. Movement-based activities, particularly dancing, can help children freely express their imagination, ideas, and feelings, which aligns with the 21st-century demands for nurturing creativity and communication skills (Wulandari, 2017).

Developing creative character significantly impact on early childhood growth. Children with this trait tend to be more self-confident, express their emotions effectively, and demonstrate flexible social skills. Furthermore, creativity enhances cognitive abilities, such as critical and innovative thinking, which are essential for tackling future challenges. Therefore, fostering creative character should be encouraged from an early age through activities suited to the child's characteristics.

In practice, developing creative character in young children still faces various challenges. Recent studies indicate that early childhood education settings often fail to provide adequate space for children to explore, limiting the development of creativity. Learning that fails to give children the opportunity to be active and explore can hinder the development of their creativity (Isnaini et al., 2024). Furthermore, teachers tend to dominate learning activities, leaving children with fewer opportunities to develop ideas independently (Nasution & Harahap, 2024). The lack of varied activities that stimulate creativity also poses a barrier to the optimal development of children's potential, necessitating more innovative, child-centered learning strategies (Sundari & Choiriyah, 2022). Other research demonstrates that a learning environment encouraging freedom of expression significantly influences creativity, while overly rigid teaching methods can restrict children's imaginative skills (Mikaresti et al., 2024). Consequently, innovative approaches to learning activities are essential to facilitate children's natural and comprehensive development of creativity.

One way to address this issue is to engage children in extracurricular activities, activities outside the formal curriculum, either inside or outside of school. These activities aim to develop children's skills and channel their talents and interests (Karunia et al., 2022). A common extracurricular activity in early childhood education is dancing. This activity is suitable for early childhood development. Through dancing, children can channel their natural need to move, thus supporting their motor skill development. This is because movement is a dominant activity in early childhood. Dancing is an art form rooted in human body movement, where the body is the main tool and body movement acts as a medium of expression. The two form an inseparable unity, making dance an effective means of supporting children's physical growth and character building.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between artistic activities, including dance, and creative development in young children. Research by Wulandari et al. (2023) indicates that artistic activities, such as movement and song, can enhance children's expressive abilities and imagination. Similarly, research by Hidayati et al. (2024) reveals that dance activities enhance creativity and motor skills in young children. Neela's research demonstrates that children involved in dance activities showed notable improvement in kinesthetic intelligence, such as body coordination, movement imitation, spatial awareness, and movement creativity, which are associated with early childhood creative development (Septiyani Endang Yunitasari & Lelly Lenny, 2025). Moreover, research on children's creativity has established it as a character trait that does not impact only dance. This study aims to implement extracurricular dance activities to foster creativity in early childhood. Children's creativity is not limited to their ability to dance; it also extends to their performances. Dance activities provide opportunities for movement exploration, self-expression, and enhancing creativity (Wulandari,



2017). However, many early childhood education institutions have yet to fully harness the potential of dance extracurricular activities to encourage creativity.

Most studies still focus on classroom learning activities and have not specifically examined the role of extracurricular dance activities in comprehensively shaping children's creative character. Furthermore, previous research often emphasizes final outcomes rather than exploring the dynamics of the learning process itself and how these dynamics affect children's development (Sari et al., 2023). Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on analyzing how the implementation of extracurricular dance activities shapes the creative character of young children through an in-depth qualitative approach, emphasizing the process, learning experiences, and interactions that occur during the activities.

Children aged 4-6 years are in their golden age, during which their motor, social-emotional, moral, cognitive, and aesthetic skills develop rapidly. Implementing activities that support these areas is very important. In this period, children demonstrate improved body coordination, more complex thinking skills, and begin to understand social and moral values in their surroundings. Furthermore, they start learning to express feelings, interact with peers, and develop creativity and imagination through various activities. Therefore, well-designed, comprehensive activities are crucial to support this development. Learning activities should be engaging, interactive, and appropriate to their developmental stage, thereby stimulating their full potential. The role of educators and the environment is a key factor in providing optimal stimulation through educational games, art, and physical activities, while nurturing positive values, laying a strong foundation for future development.

Dancing is a meaningful activity to develop motor skills, self-expression, and social skills in early childhood. It involves various body movements linked to kinesthetic intelligence, which is an individual's ability to use their body to express ideas, feelings, and skills. In addition, dancing enhances self-confidence, an important aspect of children's social and emotional development (Yunitasari & Lenny, 2025). It builds awareness of their bodies and makes them more comfortable expressing themselves in front of others, fostering essential self-confidence (Humaida et al., 2022).

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using a case study design. This approach was selected to allow for an in-depth understanding of how dance extracurricular activities shape young children's creative character within a real, natural, and unmanipulated context. The case study enables focused attention on a specific setting, PGRI 62 Kindergarten in Semarang, facilitating a detailed examination of the phenomenon. Through this approach, the researcher can explore various aspects of the activities, including interactions between children and teachers, children's responses to dance lessons, and the progression of their creative skills. Furthermore, the qualitative approach provides flexibility to adapt the data collection process to field conditions, ensuring richer, more in-depth, and more meaningful data.

The data collected in this study are qualitative, focusing on the process and outcomes of dance extracurricular activities, as well as the development of creative character in young children. The primary data include children's participation in dance sessions, such as their engagement with movements, rhythm-following abilities, confidence in performing, and the ability to create or modify movements. In addition, the data encompasses social patterns, such as children's interactions with peers and teachers, along with their emotional responses during the activities. The researcher also gathered information from class teachers and dance instructors regarding activity planning, the learning strategies employed, and assessments of the children's progress. Supplementary data, including documentation, photographs, field notes, and the children's creative works, were collected to reinforce and complement the primary data, thereby providing a more complete and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The data collection methods used in this study included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted both directly and participatively, using an observation sheet designed around indicators of children's creative character. These indicators include self-confidence (such as the courage to perform in front of peers), movement creativity (the ability to explore and create movements), active participation (involvement in activities), and social interaction (cooperation and communication skills). Interviews were semi-structured, guided by protocols that



allowed the researcher to explore information in depth while maintaining the focus of the study. These interviews involved class teachers and dance instructors to obtain information regarding activity planning, teaching methods, challenges faced, and children's development whilst participating in the activities. Documentation served as a complementary data source, capturing photographs, videos of activities, field notes, and children's work, which could reinforce the results of observations and interviews. The research instruments included observation sheets, interview guidelines, and documentation formats, systematically organized according to the research indicators.

This study employed thematic coding as the data analysis method. The analysis process was carried out systematically and step-by-step, beginning with data reduction, which involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying the raw field data to align with the research focus. Followed by coding, performed by assigning codes to the data to identify key aspects related to the development of children's creative character. Subsequently, the coded data were grouped into categories or themes, such as self-confidence, physical creativity, motor skills, and children's participation. Afterward, the data were presented in a systematic and structured narrative description, thereby facilitating the researcher's ability to identify data patterns and relationships. The final stage was drawing conclusions through a comprehensive interpretation of the data to address the research objective: to determine the role of extracurricular dance activities in shaping the creative character of young children.

The research process in this study was conducted systematically, from planning through reporting the research findings. The first stage, planning, involved identifying the problem, determining the research focus, drafting the proposal, and developing the research instruments. The second stage was conducting the research, which included data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation. At this stage, the researcher was directly involved in the activities to obtain accurate and in-depth data. The third stage involved data analysis, including data reduction, coding, thematic grouping, and presenting data descriptively. The fourth stage is drawing conclusions based on the analyzed data. The final stage was the systematic drafting of the research report following scientific writing principles. This research flow is presented as a diagram or flowchart that illustrates the sequence of the research process from the initial stage to the end, making it easier for readers to understand the research steps.

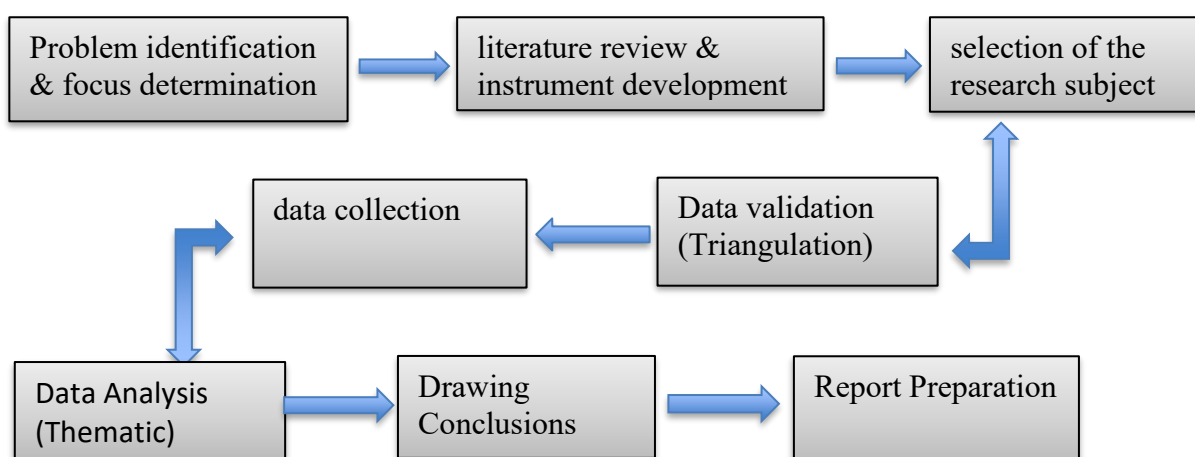


Figure 1. Research Flowchart

The research process in this study began with identifying the problem and defining the focus on developing creative character in early childhood through extracurricular dance activities. This was followed by reviewing relevant literature and developing research instruments, including observation sheets, interview guidelines, and documentation. Research subjects were selected through purposive sampling, including children in Group B, teachers, and dance instructors. The next stage involved data collection via observation, interviews, and documentation. The validity of the data was ensured through



source, method, and temporal triangulation. The data were then analyzed using thematic coding, which included data reduction, coding, theme grouping, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The final stage was the systematic preparation of a research report in the form of a scientific article.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation Of Extracurricular Dance Activities In Early Childhood Education Institutions to Shape The Creative Character Of Young Children

The dance extracurricular at school offers a fun and relaxed environment. It is designed so that children can learn through play without feeling overwhelmed. Classes are held weekly, every Wednesday, lasting about 60 minutes. In practice, the dance instructors are experienced external professionals, especially when the children prepare for school events or specific activities. The dances taught are simple, traditional children's dances with easy-to-follow, regional movements. Occasionally, a modern twist is added to make the sessions more engaging and to maintain children's interest.

Dance as an extracurricular activity is an effective means of fostering children's creative character. It allows children to explore various forms of movement based on their imagination and ideas. Even when the movements are not intended for a formal performance, the opportunity to express themselves through free movement showcases their creative thinking and ability to generate new ideas. The instructor's role in supporting this freedom is crucial, as it encourages children to experiment, explore movement variations, and showcase their personal style. Thus, dance as an extracurricular activity serves not only as a platform for the arts but also as a medium for fostering creativity, self-confidence, and self-expression in young children.

Based on the observations, most children demonstrated high enthusiasm and active involvement throughout the activity. While they were able to follow the instructor's movements, some initially faced difficulties coordinating body movements with the rhythm. However, with ongoing guidance and practice, they gradually improved their movement accuracy and confidence. Several development indicators were observed during the activity. Children progressively gained confidence, demonstrating more courage to perform in front of their peers without hesitation. In terms of creativity, they began exploring and demonstrating variations in movement, though they still used simple forms. Furthermore, improvements were also observed in motor coordination, body balance, and responsiveness to musical rhythm.

Regarding character development, dance activities have been proven to help boost children's self-confidence, especially when they perform publicly. These activities also promote social skills as children learn to cooperate and support peers during both rehearsals and performances. This aligns with Risqiana and Rahmadani (2025), who state that dance education for young children stimulates motor skills, imagination, and divergent thinking—the foundation of creativity. Additionally, these activities instill discipline, such as following the instructor's guidance and respecting peers. In early childhood education, extracurricular activities, including dance, play a crucial role in instilling character values such as cooperation, responsibility, and mutual assistance through real-life experiences.

Creative Character Values Formed Through Extracurricular Dance Activities In Early Childhood

The dance extracurricular activity at PGRI 62 Purwoyoso Nursery School significantly nurtures creative character traits among young children. Through this activity, children not only learn to imitate dance movements but also develop creative thinking skills and positive behavior. The key values promoted include self-confidence, the courage to express oneself, cooperation, responsibility, discipline, and an appreciation for the arts. Children participating in the dance activities demonstrate notable behavioral improvements, such as increased confidence performing in front of their peers, the ability to express ideas spontaneously, and the courage to try new dance movements. They learned to value process over result, understanding that every movement requires practice, patience, and attentive listening to the teacher's instructions. This experience fosters resilience and discipline within the children.

Interviews with teachers and dance instructors revealed that the dance activity was intentionally designed not only to train physical and motor skills but also to stimulate children's creativity and



emotional expression. Teachers reported that initially passive or shy children gradually became more active and willing to participate in group performances. Supporting these findings, documentation including photographs, field notes, and children's activity records confirmed a progressive change in children's participation, confidence, and expressive skills throughout the extracurricular dance program. To strengthen the findings, data were analyzed using thematic coding, which identified several key themes related to children's development, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Thematic Coding of Research Findings

Code	Theme	Indicators	Description
C1	Self-confidence	Courage to perform, reduced hesitation	Children became more confident in performing in front of peers
C2	Creativity	Movement variation, self-expression	Children began to explore and modify movements
C4	Participation	Engagement, enthusiasm	Children are actively engaged in all stages of the activity

The findings were further supported by interview data with informants, including classroom teachers (CT) and dance instructors (DI). The interview excerpts are presented as follows.

“Initially, some children were shy and reluctant to join, but they gradually became more confident and even volunteered to perform.” (CT)

“Through dance, children can express themselves freely. I can see that they start to create their own movements.” (DI)

“This activity helps children not only physically but also emotionally, especially in building their confidence.” (CT)

The findings of this study indicate that extracurricular dance activities play a significant role in developing children's creative character, especially in areas identified through thematic coding: self-confidence (C1), creativity (C2), motor development (C3), and participation (C4). The theme of self-confidence (C1) shows that children gradually developed the courage to perform in front of others without hesitation. This finding is consistent with Suyadi (2018), who emphasizes that character development involves emotional and social aspects that can be stimulated through expressive activities such as dance. Furthermore, the creativity theme (C2) indicates that children were able to explore and modify movements inspired by their imagination, supporting the idea that creative activities promote divergent thinking and free expression. The motor development aspect (C3) was reflected in improved coordination, balance, and rhythm. Dance combines physical and cognitive processes, allowing children to develop body awareness and movement control simultaneously.

According to Suyadi (2018), creativity in young children results from a habituation process that involves a balanced interplay of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor elements. Creativity is not merely the ability to create something new, but also the courage to express oneself, to solve problems uniquely, and to be open to new experiences. This view is reinforced by Mayesky (2014), who states that the arts, including dance, play a vital role in stimulating the aesthetic development, self-confidence, and divergent thinking skills in young children. Dancing also carries significant social value; children learn cooperation, adjusting their tempo and positioning, and respecting peers' roles in a performance. These values support the development of empathy, tolerance, and a sense of community. Hurlock (1997) explains that group activities involving self-expression, such as dancing, help children understand social roles and develop positive emotional connections with their environment. As such, dancing serves as an effective means of instilling creative character values through direct experience. Children become more creative in their thinking and movement as they develop positive qualities through habit and discipline. In addition to individual growth, dancing also fosters collaboration and positive social interaction. Through rehearsals and performances, children learn to collaborate, value their peers' efforts, and



develop empathy (Rahayu & Dong, 2023).

Supporting And Inhibiting Factors In The Formation Of Creative Character In Early Childhood Through Extracurricular Dance Activities

Supporting factors encompass various aspects that enable activities to proceed smoothly. A supportive school environment is a key factor, with a welcoming, friendly learning environment that helps children feel safe to explore and express themselves without fear of making mistakes. According to Vygotsky (1978), in the Sociocultural Learning Theory, children's creativity develops through social interaction and an environment that encourages active participation. A supportive environment provides children with space to experiment and build self-confidence. The role of teachers and instructors is also crucial; teachers act as facilitators, providing guidance, examples, and positive reinforcement to encourage children to try new movements. Teachers who are patient, appreciative, and receptive to children's ideas can create an inspiring learning atmosphere. Children who are encouraged to be creative in dance, whether individually or in groups, will be more willing to try new things and perform without fear of making mistakes (Lubis et al., 2025). According to Sri Andayani (2021), a sense of psychological safety and freedom is vital for fostering creativity, providing the courage that lays a foundation for sustained creativity. A supportive learning environment and mentors who offer positive appreciation also significantly influence the success of enhancing children's creativity through dance. When children feel valued and supported for their creative efforts, they are motivated to pursue new ideas (Lusty et al., 2023). Additionally, parental support helps to bolster children's enthusiasm, particularly when preparing costumes and providing moral encouragement during public performances. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's (1994) Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes that children's development is influenced by interactions between the family, school, and community environments. Furthermore, school facilities, such as spacious practice rooms and basic supporting equipment, serve as technical factors that facilitate the smooth running of activities. Adequate facilities allow children to dance freely and enhance the comfort of the learning experience.

However, there are some limiting factors to consider. One such factor is the limited time available for the activity, as dance sessions are held only once a week. This short duration prevents the full development of character-building, meaning that children's creative growth is not continuously monitored. Through regular dance practice and creative expression, children gradually learn to think outside the box and express themselves more openly (Prabawati & Nurharini, 2025). Furthermore, differences in children's individual abilities present a distinct challenge. Some children tend to be shy or lack self-confidence, requiring a specialized approach from the teacher. Other issues include limited resources, such as a shortage of musical instruments or costumes, as well as a reliance on external instructors who are not always available. According to Rakhmawati (2019), the continuity of extracurricular activities is a key factor in fostering children's character; irregular activities can lead to less stable character development. Therefore, to optimize the development of children's creative character through dance activities, synergy among teachers, parents, and the school is required. Continuous support from all parties will strengthen the effectiveness of the activities, whilst obstacles can be minimized through adequate planning and communication between educators and families.

Attachment

Participating in modern dance activities involves individuals, especially children, in structured and creative movement sessions that focus on self-expression, rhythm, and body coordination. These activities encourage participants to experiment with different movements, follow musical cues, and express their emotions freely using their bodies. In early childhood education, modern dance not only supports physical development such as balance, flexibility, and motor skills, but also enhances creativity, confidence, and social skills. Children learn to collaborate with peers, follow instructions, and gradually build the courage to perform publicly. Therefore, participating in modern dance activities serves as a valuable medium for holistic development, combining physical, emotional, and creative growth in an enjoyable and meaningful way.



Figure 2. Taking Part In Modern Dance Activities

CONCLUSION

Research indicates that extracurricular dance activities play a role in shaping the creative character of early childhood through a planned, focused, and continuous implementation process. Conducted regularly in a joyful setting, these activities offer children opportunities to express themselves, explore movement, and spontaneously generate creative ideas. They have been proven to foster various creative character values, as well as self-confidence, teamwork, discipline, and responsibility in following each stage of training. Children also tend to improvise and modify movements, demonstrating their divergent thinking and self-expression skills. The success of shaping creative character is inseparable from a conducive school environment, the guidance and motivation from teachers and instructors, and parental involvement that strengthen children's enthusiasm to participate. Despite challenges such as limited practice time, differences in children's individual abilities, and limited availability of outside instructors, these issues do not diminish the activity's benefits. Overall, dancing has been proven to be a relevant and effective educational tool in developing creativity and positive character in early childhood. Therefore, extracurricular dancing activities should be maintained and developed as part of efforts to strengthen character and optimize the potential of early childhood in the educational environment.

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