Strengthening Creative Character of Students in Cumo Pulai Art Studio

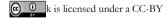**Lailal Badra**[*1] Masnur Alam[1], Hadi Candra[1]
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Abstract. This study explores the contribution of extracurricular art activities in strengthening students' creative character through the Cumo Pulai Art Studio at SMAN 4 Sungai Penuh, Jambi, Indonesia. Character education is a central mission of national education, emphasizing not only academic excellence but also moral, social, and creative capacities needed in the 21st century. Creativity, defined as originality, flexibility, elaboration, and problem-solving ability, is an essential competence; however, preliminary observations indicated that students in the art studio often lacked initiative, showed low motivation, and produced limited original works. This study aimed to examine the processes of strengthening creative character, the outcomes achieved, and the factors that support or hinder the implementation of the program. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews with students, teachers, and studio coaches, and document analysis. Participants were selected purposively from students actively engaged in the art studio. Data were analysed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that the Cumo Pulai Art Studio created a conducive learning environment where students enhanced originality through choreography and music composition, improved collaboration through group performance, and developed discipline and responsibility by following structured rehearsals. The program also fostered cultural preservation by encouraging students to value and reinterpret local traditions in creative ways. Despite these benefits, challenges such as limited facilities, lack of skilled instructors, and inconsistent student attendance were identified. The study concludes that extracurricular art education can significantly strengthen creative character and cultural appreciation, suggesting that integrating such programs into schools offers an effective strategy for holistic student development.

Keywords: Creative character; character education; extracurricular activities; art education; cultural preservation; Cumo Pulai Art Studio.

Introduction

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual, emotional, and moral capacities of individuals. Beyond the transfer of knowledge, education in the 21st century is increasingly expected to cultivate character, creativity, and the ability to respond to complex global challenges (Tican & Denïz, 2019). In Indonesia, the government has

emphasized character education as a fundamental goal of the national curriculum, aligning with the mandate of the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, which highlights the importance of developing students who are faithful, knowledgeable, creative, and responsible citizens (Kemendikbud, 2003). This vision reflects the urgency of preparing students not only as academically competent individuals but also as persons of character who can navigate the dynamics of a rapidly changing world.

Character education has been defined as the intentional effort to foster virtues such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, creativity, and social care in students (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004a; Lickona, 2009; Pattaro, 2016). Among these values, creativity is considered a principal component of character formation. Creativity is the ability to produce new and valuable ideas, solutions, or products by combining existing knowledge in novel ways (Munandar, 2021). Scholars argue that creativity is essential for self-actualization and problem-solving in contemporary societies (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). However, studies in Indonesia indicate that many students still demonstrate low levels of creativity, particularly in formal school settings that emphasize rote learning and examinations (Thomas, 2016a). This gap highlights the need for innovative approaches in education that integrate creativity and character building.

Extracurricular activities serve as one of the strategic avenues for fostering creativity and character development. According to Permendikbud No. 62 of 2014, extracurricular programs provide structured opportunities for students to explore their interests, talents, and character beyond the classroom. Arts-based extracurricular programs, such as dance, music, and visual arts, are particularly effective in nurturing creativity because they allow students to experiment, express emotions, and collaborate with peers (Eisner, 2003; Hardiyat et al., 2023). Through artistic engagement, students develop originality, flexibility, and elaboration—key dimensions of creative thinking—as well as discipline, responsibility, and teamwork (Sawyer, 2012; Sheridan et al., 2022).

In the Indonesian context, art education also plays a critical role in cultural preservation. Local art forms, such as traditional dance and music, embody values, wisdom, and identity that are vital for strengthening students' sense of cultural belonging (Supeni et al., 2019; Supeni & Harini, 2021a). At the same time, integrating cultural traditions into modern learning environments helps students reinterpret and innovate, bridging the past with contemporary creativity (Kartomi, 2012; Thomas, 2016b). Thus, art-based extracurricular activities simultaneously serve the dual function of character education and cultural sustainability.

The Cumo Pulai Art Studio at SMAN 4 Sungai Penuh exemplifies a compelling integration of character education and cultural learning, particularly through its focus on traditional dance and music. The studio's emphasis on practices such as *Tari Iyo-Iyo* and *Tari Rangguk*, alongside the use of traditional instruments like *serunai* and *gendang*, aligns with national initiatives to promote local culture and arts within educational frameworks. Such integration is particularly pivotal in the Jambi Province context, where educational systems face the dual challenge of maintaining academic rigor while fostering holistic development among students. This challenge has been noted in broader education discussions, particularly concerning the preservation of traditional arts within educational institutions,

which are increasingly confronted with declining interest in cultural practices due to modernization and digital influences (Souliotou, 2021; Miftah & Prasetyo, 2024; Zhao & Gaikwad, 2024).

Preliminary observations at the studio revealed specific challenges: students exhibited low initiative, limited participation, and minimal production of original works. These obstacles are symptomatic of a wider trend observed in arts education, where the engaging nature of traditional arts is often overshadowed by a focus on academic outputs and standardized testing. Literature suggests that fostering creativity through cultural education plays a crucial role in enhancing student engagement and initiative (Astari et al., 2023). These conditions resonate with broader national challenges in character education, where schools often struggle to balance academic achievement with holistic development(Susilo et al., 2022). However, achieving this requires systemic support, as institutions often struggle to balance academic demands with the need for creative expression, particularly in community contexts where such art forms are foundational to cultural identity.

The intersection of character education, creativity, and art extracurriculars has emerged as a critical area of research, revealing noteworthy outcomes across various educational contexts. Studies indicate that participation in art-related extracurricular activities can enhance students' creativity and character traits, effectively redefining the educational experience. Lutfiah and Hidayati (2023) underscore this relationship in their examination of *Barongan* extracurricular activities, highlighting how engagement in these programs can stimulate students' imagination and creativity through narrative contexts. This aligns well with findings by Supeni and Harini (2021), who identifies similar trends in creative dance programs, where such settings foster creativity and problem-solving skills among students. These studies demonstrate that art extracurriculars are effective in building students' creativity and character, yet each context brings unique challenges and opportunities.

Despite these contributions, research on art-based extracurricular programs in rural or smaller urban contexts, such as Sungai Penuh, remains limited. Most studies have focused on urban schools with greater access to resources and expert trainers. The Cumo Pulai Art Studio, with its cultural specificity and contextual challenges, offers an important case for examining how creativity and character can be fostered in diverse educational environments. Understanding its processes, outcomes, and challenges can provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and cultural practitioners aiming to strengthen character education through arts.

This study therefore seeks to investigate the role of the Cumo Pulai Art Studio in strengthening students' creative character at SMAN 4 Sungai Penuh. Specifically, it examines: (1) how the studio plans and implements learning activities to develop creative character, (2) how students experience and respond to these activities, and (3) what factors support and hinder the effectiveness of the program. By addressing these questions, the research contributes to both theoretical and practical discussions on integrating character education with arts and culture in Indonesian schools.

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore and understand the meaning of participants' experiences in their natural setting (Salmona et al., 2023). A descriptive design was applied to capture a detailed account of how the Cumo Pulai Art Studio at SMAN 4 Sungai Penuh contributes to strengthening students' creative character(Leavy, 2017). The study emphasized the processes of teaching and learning within the extracurricular program, the ways in which creativity and character were fostered, and the challenges encountered.

The participants consisted of students, teachers, and art coaches involved in the Cumo Pulai Art Studio. Students were the primary participants as they directly engaged in artistic activities such as traditional dance and music. Teachers and coaches were included to provide complementary perspectives on the planning, implementation, and outcomes of the program. School leaders, including the vice principal for student affairs, were also consulted to gain institutional insights.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique commonly employed in qualitative research to ensure that information-rich cases are included (Patton, 2014). The main criteria for student participants were: (1) active membership in the Cumo Pulai Art Studio for at least six months, and (2) willingness to participate in interviews and observations. Teachers, coaches, and students were selected based on their role as supervisors or facilitators of the extracurricular program. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.

The primary instruments used for data collection were Observation guides, to record students' behaviours, interactions, and creative expressions during rehearsals and performances. Semi-structured interview protocols, designed for students, teachers, and coaches, focusing on experiences, challenges, and perceptions related to creative character development. Documentation checklists, to analyse relevant school documents, lesson plans, attendance records, and photographs of activities. Triangulation across these instruments ensured the credibility of the data (Golafshani, 2003; Miles et al., 2014)

Data were analysed following Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes data reduction – organizing raw data into meaningful categories related to creative character, learning processes, and challenges. Data display – presenting data in matrices and thematic charts to visualize relationships. Conclusion drawing and verification – interpreting patterns, confirming findings through triangulation, and validating them against existing literature. This systematic process enabled the researcher to generate trustworthy conclusions about how extracurricular art activities contribute to strengthening students' creative character (Miles et al., 2014).

Results

The findings of this study are organized into five main categories: the planning of extracurricular activities, the implementation process, supporting factors, inhibiting factors,

and the outcomes of strengthening students' creative character. Data are presented through narrative descriptions, tables, and figures.

Planning of Extracurricular Activities

The planning of the Cumo Pulai Art Studio program was oriented toward both cultural preservation and creative character development. Teachers and art coaches outlined weekly activities focusing on traditional dances (*Iyo-Iyo* and *Rangguk*) and music (*serunai* and *gendang*). The objectives, activities, and strategies were designed to integrate discipline, teamwork, and cultural values.

Table 1. Planning of the Cumo Pulai Art Studio Program

Components	Descriptions
Objectives	Preserving local traditions; strengthening creativity and discipline
Activities	Traditional dance practice (*Iyo-Iyo, Rangguk*); traditional music training
Strategies	Group rehearsals guided by teachers and coaches
Frequency	Weekly, 2–3 sessions

The planning of the Cumo Pulai Art Studio program demonstrates a strategic effort to integrate cultural preservation with character formation among students. The objectives, which include preserving local traditions and enhancing creativity and discipline, clearly position the studio as more than a place for extracurricular activities; it is a medium of cultural education and value transmission. By engaging students in traditional dances such as *Iyo-Iyo* and *Rangguk* as well as music practices using *serunai* and *gendang*, the program not only safeguards regional cultural heritage but also fosters students' appreciation of their identity. The choice of strategies—group rehearsals under the guidance of teachers and art coaches—reflects an emphasis on collaboration and mentorship, which strengthens teamwork and discipline as core aspects of creative character. The weekly frequency of two to three sessions ensures continuity and routine, thereby building consistency in practice and reinforcing commitment. In this way, the program aligns cultural artistry with character education, nurturing students who are both creative and rooted in their cultural values.

Implementation of the Program

The implementation involved regular rehearsals where students engaged in learning dance choreography, practicing musical instruments, and preparing for performances. Observation revealed that three key aspects of creative character were strengthened: Originality: Students attempted variations in movements and explored new ways of combining traditional rhythms. However, originality was still limited, with many students relying heavily on instructors. Collaboration: Group rehearsals demanded synchronization and teamwork. Students reported learning responsibility for collective performance quality. Discipline and Responsibility: Attendance and punctuality were emphasized, with consistent students rewarded through recognition or leadership roles.

Table 2. Observation Results of Creative Character Development

Indicator	Evidence from Observation	Level of Achievement
Originality	Students modified movements and explored variations	Moderate
Collaboration	Students synchronized movements during group practices	High
Discipline	Students attended rehearsals regularly and responsibly	High
Cultural Pride	Students showed enthusiasm for preserving local traditions	High

The implementation of the Cumo Pulai Art Studio program effectively nurtured students' creative character through rehearsals in traditional dance and music. Four main indicators were strengthened: originality, which showed moderate progress as students explored variations but still depended on instructors; collaboration, which reached a high level through group synchronization and shared responsibility; discipline, which was reinforced by consistent attendance, punctuality, and recognition; and cultural pride, which was evident in students' enthusiasm for preserving local traditions. Overall, the program successfully fostered collaboration, discipline, and cultural identity, though greater autonomy and innovative strategies are still needed to enhance originality.

Planning of Extracurricular Activities

Several factors facilitated the development of creative character through the Cumo Pulai Art Studio: Cultural relevance: Students felt proud to engage with local traditions, which boosted their motivation. Mentorship: Teachers and coaches served as motivators and provided technical guidance. Institutional support: The school acknowledged students' achievements and gave recognition during cultural events.

Table 3. Supporting Factors

Supporting Factors	Description
Cultural relevance and motivation	Students proud of traditions; motivated to learn
Teacher and coach mentorship	Guidance in technical skills and character values
School support and recognition	Achievements celebrated in cultural events

The planning of extracurricular activities in the Cumo Pulai Art Studio reveals several supporting factors that significantly contributed to strengthening students' creative character. Cultural relevance played a central role, as students' pride in engaging with traditional arts fostered motivation and a deeper sense of identity. The presence of teachers and coaches as mentors provided not only technical guidance in dance and music but also moral direction that nurtured values such as discipline and responsibility. Furthermore, institutional support from the school, demonstrated through recognition of achievements during cultural events, reinforced students' confidence and encouraged sustained participation. Together, these factors created a holistic environment where cultural appreciation, guided mentorship, and institutional acknowledgment synergistically fostered creativity, collaboration, and character growth among students in the Cumo Pulai Art Studio.

Inhibiting Factors

Despite positive outcomes, challenges limited the program's effectiveness: Limited facilities and resources (instruments, costumes, and practice rooms were inadequate). Shortage of skilled instructors, restricting the diversity of cultural art forms taught. Irregular student attendance, as many students prioritized academic obligations.

Table 4. Supporting Factors

Inhibiting Factors	Description
Limited facilities and resources	Few instruments, inadequate costumes, limited practice space
Lack of skilled instructors	Limited expertise in teaching traditional arts
Inconsistent student participation	Absenteeism and academic priority issues

Although the Cumo Pulai Art Studio has shown positive contributions to developing students' creative character, several inhibiting factors constrained the program's overall effectiveness. Limited facilities and resources, such as insufficient instruments, inadequate costumes, and restricted practice space, hindered optimal performance and reduced opportunities for artistic exploration. The shortage of skilled instructors also narrowed the range of cultural art forms that could be taught, thereby limiting students' exposure and potential for innovation. Moreover, irregular attendance due to students' competing academic priorities weakened consistency in practice and reduced collaborative outcomes. These challenges indicate that while the program has strong potential, sustained investment in resources, instructor development, and attendance management is essential to maximize its role in strengthening students' creative character.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that extracurricular art activities at the Cumo Pulai Art Studio significantly contributed to the strengthening of students' creative character, particularly in the dimensions of collaboration, discipline, and cultural appreciation, while originality developed less optimally. These outcomes affirm earlier claims that art education not only enhances cognitive and creative skills but also cultivates moral and social values essential for holistic character development (Eisner, 2003; Hallam, 2010; Sheridan et al., 2022). The strong development of collaboration among students in this program reflects the argument by Sawyer (2012) that creativity is often a social process, emerging through interaction, negotiation, and co-construction of meaning. Group rehearsals required synchronization and mutual accountability, which are consistent with Burnard & Murphy (2013) and Abramo & Reynolds (2015) note that collaborative arts education provides learners with opportunities to practice cooperation, tolerance, and communication.

The reinforcement of discipline and responsibility observed in this study is also in line with character education theories, which emphasize the role of structured practice and habituation in building responsibility (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004b; Lickona, 2009). Students' adherence to rehearsal schedules, punctuality, and regular attendance highlight how extracurricular programs can function as arenas for character formation, supporting the findings of Thomas (2016a) and Lutfiah & Hidayati (2023), who demonstrated similar patterns in Indonesian schools. Furthermore, the program strengthened cultural appreciation, as students engaged with traditional dances and music that instilled pride and

identity. This echoes Rosalina's (2021) observation that traditional dance education reinforces cultural identity and aligns with UNESCO's (2015) assertion that cultural learning is integral to sustainable development. The outcomes also parallel Kartomi's (2012) arguments that schools serve as crucial sites for the preservation and revitalization of local culture.

However, originality, which is central to creative thinking, appeared underdeveloped. While students occasionally attempted new choreographies and musical variations, many remained hesitant to innovate, relying on instructors' examples. This finding resonates with Halimah et al. (2020) study, which noted that Indonesian students often struggle with risk-taking in creativity due to exam-oriented educational systems and fear of failure. Runco and Jaeger (2012) emphasized that originality flourishes in environments where mistakes are tolerated and risk-taking is encouraged, yet the lack of platforms for displaying innovation limited students' willingness to explore. Torrance's (2008) definition of creativity as originality, flexibility, and elaboration further underscores the gap between students' potential and actualized outcomes. Thus, the study suggests the need for structured opportunities—such as competitions, exhibitions, or public performances—that encourage students to take creative risks and develop their originality.

The inhibiting factors identified in this study—limited facilities, lack of skilled instructors, and inconsistent student participation—are consistent with systemic challenges documented in Indonesian education. Sutawi (2018) highlighted that resource shortages constrained creativity in dance extracurriculars, while Sari and Wahyudi (2022) found that insufficiently trained instructors weakened the effectiveness of music programs. These findings demonstrate that while extracurricular art activities hold immense potential for strengthening creative character, their success is contingent upon institutional and structural support. Without adequate resources, even the most motivated students and teachers may face significant barriers in sustaining creativity and cultural education.

Taken together, the results affirm that extracurricular art programs such as the Cumo Pulai Art Studio can serve dual functions: fostering students' creative character and preserving local cultural heritage. This supports the theoretical framework advanced by Muhajir et al. (2019) and OECD (2019), which positions creativity as a core competency for 21st-century learners, while also reflecting the broader educational mission in Indonesia as stated in the National Education Law (Kemendikbud, 2003). However, the findings also caution against if all aspects of creativity develop equally, as originality may require different pedagogical approaches and greater institutional support than collaboration or discipline. These insights contribute to the growing body of literature on art education, character development, and cultural preservation, while offering practical implications for schools, teachers, and policymakers in contexts like Sungai Penuh.

Conclusion

This study concludes that extracurricular art activities at the Cumo Pulai Art Studio of SMAN 4 Sungai Penuh play a vital role in strengthening students' creative character. The program effectively nurtured collaboration, discipline, responsibility, and cultural appreciation, demonstrating that character development can be achieved through culturally

grounded arts education. Students learned teamwork through rehearsals, discipline through consistent practice routines, and pride in their cultural heritage through engagement with traditional dances and music. These outcomes reinforce the notion that arts-based extracurriculars not only support holistic student development but also serve as a medium for cultural preservation within the school setting.

However, the study also highlights the challenges that remain, particularly in fostering originality, which developed less optimally due to students' hesitancy, limited facilities, and the shortage of skilled instructors. To address these challenges, schools need to provide platforms that encourage innovation, invest in resources, and strengthen partnerships with cultural practitioners. Future research should expand to other schools, compare rural and urban contexts, and investigate long-term impacts of such programs on students' creativity and cultural identity. Overall, this study underscores that extracurricular art programs, when supported by adequate resources and pedagogy, are powerful tools to cultivate creative character while sustaining local traditions for future generations.

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