

Sepak Takraw Sports Development Management in Improving Soft Skills and Student Achievement in Educational Units

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the management of sepak takraw development as an effective means of improving soft skills and student achievement in educational institutions in North Toraja Regency. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of analyzing and describing in depth how the planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating of sepak takraw development programs are managed to achieve these two objectives. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with school principals, physical education teachers, coaches, and student representatives; participant observation of training sessions and competitions; and document analysis related to curriculum development programs and extracurricular activities. The results show that effective sepak takraw development management focuses not only on technical training for achieving sporting achievements but also integrates values such as teamwork, discipline, leadership, and mental resilience into each training session. This integration has been shown to contribute significantly to improving students' soft skills, as measured by their interactions within the school and community. Furthermore, a well-managed program results in consistent improvements in sepak takraw achievement at the regional and national levels. In conclusion, sepak takraw development in North Toraja serves a dual function as an athletic development program and character building. Ongoing support from schools and local governments is needed to maintain this effective management model.

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1. INTRODUCTION

National education has a dual role: producing students who excel academically and possess life skills competencies (Darmawan et al., 2024). In this context, extracurricular sports activities, particularly sepak takraw, are often considered vital. North Toraja Regency, with its significant athletic potential, has made sepak takraw one of its leading sports at the school level. However, sports development programs often focus solely on achieving academic and physical achievements, neglecting the development of non-technical or soft skills (Insanistyo et al., 2025).

Soft skills, such as teamwork (collaboration), discipline, leadership, and resilience, are crucial for students' future success, surpassing mere academic or technical athletic abilities (Dell'Aquila et al., 2017; Sipii et al., 2024). Therefore, structured, holistic, and integrated sports development management is necessary (Schulenkorf, 2017; Girginov & Dowling, 2025). This management encompasses the planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation of training programs that not only hone kicking and striking techniques but also explicitly instill these character values.

Sports have become popular across society beyond physical wellness (Habyarimana et al., 2022; Arga, 2025). Sports improve dignity and self-esteem individually, in groups, in society, and nationwide (Syahputra et al., 2020; Brinkley et al., 2022). Sports are essential to human resource development and progress. However, sports success demands a complete grasp of coaching and management procedures that go beyond competition outcomes and medals (Badwi et al., 2025). Takraw has the potential to succeed in Indonesia and regionally. This sport involves agility, physical skill, and teamwork. An organized and durable local development program may improve student sepak takraw performance.

When implemented well, a sports system provides a solid foundation for success (Junaidi & Zahroh, 2022). Higher education institutions must collaborate to produce scientific solutions, highlighting that success is the consequence of ongoing training and early potential development (Rerung et al., 2025). Effective management is key to producing high-performing athletes (Kurnia et al., 2023).

Recent research has shown the importance of government sports agencies in athletic development. Sports management is an art and science that involves planning, organizing, controlling, directing, and supervising resources to meet performance goals (Varmus et al., 2021). The government's Youth and Sports Agency creates strategic plans, coordinates with relevant institutions, provides direction, and implements technical guidelines in the youth and sports sector (Sari & Festiawan, 2020).

Modern study emphasizes methodical athlete development. Sepaktakraw, an Asian game, pits two teams against each other on a rectangular court with a net. It demands technical skills with the feet, head, and other body parts rather than the hands, with a maximum of three ball touches (Hidayat et al., 2022). The sports regulatory body organizes events and selects top players from clubs and school extracurriculars (Padli et al., 2023).

The underlying problem in this research is the lack of in-depth study of a specific management model that successfully combines these two development goals—sports achievement and soft skills—through sepak takraw programs in the educational context of North Toraja. This study is important to provide practical guidance for schools and local governments in optimizing the potential of regional sports as an instrument for building student character.

Previous studies have tended to separate or partially discuss sports management for pure achievement and character/soft skill education programs. This research presents a novel approach by analyzing how the sepak takraw development management system is designed to simultaneously enhance both sports achievement and student soft skills.

This research focuses on the context of educational units in North Toraja Regency, where sepak takraw is a popular regional sport, but its development management has never been analyzed from this holistic perspective. This local context provides an in-depth understanding of challenges and best practices that may differ from other regions.

Therefore, using a qualitative approach, this study seeks to produce a conceptual model of successful management (consisting of planning, training curriculum, and evaluation methods) that causally links sepak takraw technical activities (e.g., defensive strategies) with soft skill development (e.g., decision-making and communication). This model represents a unique theoretical and practical contribution. Thus, this research is expected to fill the gap in the literature and provide a tested and effective model for managing sepak takraw sports programs as a strategic instrument for producing high-achieving students with superior character in North Toraja.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because it aims to gain a deep (holistic and comprehensive) understanding of the sepak takraw sports development process and how this process is internalized by actors in educational institutions, as well as its impact on improving soft skills and student achievement. Descriptive research will present a systematic and factual overview of management practices taking place at the research sites.

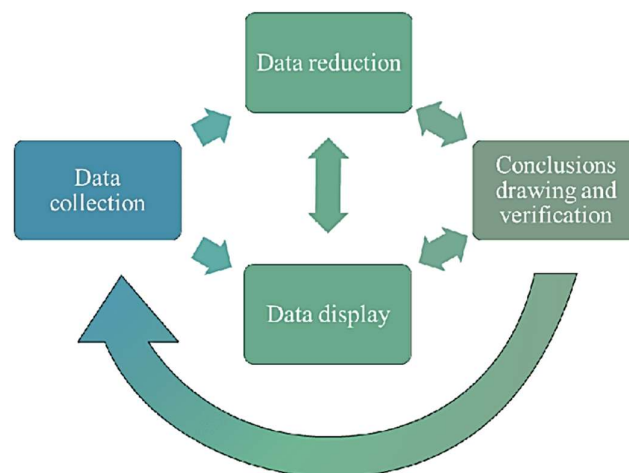


Figure 1. Qualitative with a Descriptive Approach Design

This research was conducted at educational institutions (junior high schools and/or senior high schools/vocational high schools) in North Toraja Regency that have sepak takraw extracurricular development programs deemed successful in achieving achievement and/or developing student soft skills. Subjects and Informants: The subject of the study was the sepak takraw development program, while key informants were selected through purposive sampling and snowball sampling. These informants included

the school principal, sports teacher/extracurricular coordinator, sepak takraw coaches, sepak takraw student athletes (active and high achieving), and parents (optional).

Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews: We conducted semi-structured interviews with all key informants. The interviews aimed to gather information regarding the four management functions (planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating) of the sepak takraw program, as well as how the program explicitly integrates soft skill development objectives (e.g., strategies for training leadership or teamwork). Participant Observation: Researchers conducted direct and intensive observations of sepak takraw training sessions, the competition atmosphere, and student interactions in the school environment. Observations focused on management practices, interaction patterns between coaches and students, and the manifestation of students' soft skills during the activities (e.g., discipline, communication during matches, and sportsmanship). Documentation Study: Collecting secondary data from official school documents. Furthermore, documentation and direct observation may be employed to enhance comprehension of the current situation and dynamics (Juhani et al., 2024; Asri et al., 2025). This technique was selected as the study seeks to comprehend the significance and nuanced experiences of the interviewees concerning the Youth and Sports Office's role in enhancing sepak takraw performance in North Toraja Regency.

Data analysis was conducted interactively and continuously from data collection to completion. The data analysis model used refers to the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three simultaneous activity flows: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, this study employed source triangulation and technique triangulation techniques. Through this rigorous qualitative methodology, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of an effective management model for integrating the development of high-achieving sports and the formation of student character will be obtained.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study presents in-depth findings regarding the implementation of sepak takraw sports development management in educational institutions in North Toraja Regency and its correlation to improved student achievement and soft skill development. The findings are organized based on four management functions: planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation.

Sepak Takraw Development Management

Planning

The sepak takraw development program's planning in North Toraja was found to have two integrated dimensions:

1. Achievement Dimension: Planning is oriented toward regional and national competition targets by developing a structured technical training program (serving, smashing, defense).
2. Soft Skill Dimension: Planning explicitly incorporates soft skill indicators (e.g., leadership, communication, and discipline) into weekly/monthly targets. For example, specific training sessions are designed to improve effective communication during rallies or foster leadership through rotating team captains.

Organizing

Organizing involves establishing structures and resources:

1. Team Structure: The school formed a core team consisting of licensed coaches and mentor teachers. The coaches served as both technical instructors and character mentors.
2. Resource Allocation: The organizing team successfully garnered support from the school committee and alumni for the procurement of facilities and infrastructure (fields, balls, and jerseys), demonstrating strong community collaboration.
3. Practice Schedule: The schedule was made flexible to avoid interfering with academic activities, which encouraged accountability and time management skills in students.

Implementation

Implementation was the core of the findings. The coaches used an integrated coaching method, in which technical and soft skills were taught simultaneously:

1. Instilling Discipline: The obligation to arrive on time and comply with match rules was internalized as a form of personal discipline, not just team rules.
2. Teamwork and Communication: Team tactical drills (formations and rolls) were emphasized as a means to improve teamwork and clear and assertive verbal communication on the field.
3. Leadership Development: Senior students are given the responsibility of leading warm-ups or drill sessions for junior students, which encourages ownership and practical leadership.
4. Resilience (Mental Toughness): Coaches provide mental and physical challenges to teach students how to bounce back from defeat, which contributes to mental toughness and a never-give-up spirit.

Evaluation (Controlling)

Program evaluation is conducted periodically and includes two aspects:

1. Achievement Evaluation: Through participation and achievements in tournaments (measurable output).
2. Soft Skills Evaluation: Using descriptive assessments from coaches and mentor teachers regarding changes in student behavior on and off the field (e.g., increased self-confidence, initiative to help friends, and respect for teachers). This evaluation demonstrates management's awareness of the importance of non-academic measures.

Student Soft Skill Improvement

Observation and interview results indicate significant improvements in four key soft skills, as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Observation and interview results

Soft Skills	Key Indicators (Qualitative Findings)
Teamwork	Improved passing accuracy, effective non-verbal communication during matches, and initiative in helping teammates in difficulty on the field and in class.
Discipline	Punctuality in practice, adherence to instructions, and more disciplined study (confirmed by the class teacher).
Leadership	Ability to make quick decisions under pressure (during matches) and initiative in leading study groups outside of the sporting context.
Mental Resilience	Students demonstrated a positive attitude after defeat and quickly recovered from technical errors, demonstrating high resilience.

Sepak Takraw Sports Achievement

This integrated management has proven effective in generating sustainable achievements for educational units in North Toraja. Documentation data confirms that following the implementation of integrated management, there has been:

1. Increased frequency of participation in competitions at the South Sulawesi provincial level.
2. Increased medal counts at the district/provincial level in the past two years.
3. Recognition of several students as outstanding athletes recruited to higher education levels or regional training centers.

A key finding of this study is that Holistic Sepak Takraw Development Management—which consciously integrates technical and soft skill objectives from the planning stage—is a key factor in the success of students in North Toraja Regency. This management model is effective because it transforms the training arena into a character laboratory, not simply a place to hone physical and technical skills.

Discussion

This discussion aims to interpret findings regarding sepak takraw sports development management in North Toraja Regency, link them to management and education theoretical frameworks, and highlight their contribution to the literature on soft skill development and student achievement.

The Importance of Holistic Management for Success and Soft Skills

Research findings that show that program planning explicitly includes soft skill indicators (such as discipline and leadership) align with the concept of integrated sports management. This model rejects the traditional view that sports focus solely on physical and technical outcomes (outputs). Instead, it emphasizes that the training process is the primary vehicle for character development. Practices in North Toraja, where coaches serve as character mentors, demonstrate the effectiveness of a transformational approach to sports leadership. Coaches not only provide instruction but also instill values. This

study supports the theory that skill transfer from the field to everyday life only occurs when these values are explicitly taught by Shields and Bredemeier (Jacobs & Wright, 2018; Bredemeier & Shields, 2019; Ponciano Núñez & Carter, 2025). In the context of sepak takraw, discipline in maintaining team formation on the field directly translates into discipline in classroom learning, a finding that reinforces the positive correlation between managed extracurricular activities and improved student non-academic outcomes.

Effectiveness of Implementing the Four Management Functions

Dual-purpose planning (achievement and soft skills) is the foundation of the program's success in North Toraja. The organization, which involved collaboration between schools, coaches, and alumni, demonstrated that external support (stakeholder engagement) is a vital key in school-based sports management by Chelladurai (Chelladurai & Miller, 2017; Butterbaugh, 2025). Limited school resources in the region can often be overcome through organized community networks, which in turn foster a sense of program ownership among students and the community.

The integrated coaching method implemented by the coaches is a practical novelty. For example, during tactical drills requiring quick communication and decision-making under pressure, students are trained to take the lead. This observation reinforces the literature stating that the most effective soft skill development occurs through real-life simulation experiences (Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory) (Almalag et al., 2022; Ghorbel et al., 2025). The resilience demonstrated by students after defeat demonstrates that evaluation management focused on learning from mistakes is more important than a sole focus on match results.

This research makes a significant contribution by presenting a qualitative sepak takraw development management model tested in the North Toraja context. This model challenges the notion that soft skills are a byproduct of sport. Instead, soft skills are objectives managed through management functions (planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating). These results can serve as a blueprint for other educational institutions in North Toraja or other regions with similar sporting potential to design extracurricular curricula that balance technical skills and character. Coaches need to receive training not only in sports techniques but also in character pedagogy and psychosocial mentoring to optimally fulfill their dual roles.

While this study provides in-depth insights through a qualitative approach, there are limitations in generalizing the results because it focuses on a specific case in North Toraja. Furthermore, the measurement of soft skill impact is largely based on observations and informant perceptions. Further research recommendations include conducting quantitative or mixed-methods research to measure the statistical correlation between participation in a well-managed sepak takraw program and psychometrically measured soft skill indices and students' Academic Achievement Index. Researchers should conduct comparative studies with educational institutions that offer different sports programs, such as basketball or badminton, to identify the unique characteristics of sepak takraw in developing specific soft skills.

Overall, these findings conclude that sepak takraw development management in North Toraja has transformed from a mere training program into a center for developing dual potential—producing both high-achieving athletes and students with superior character and life skills.

4. CONCLUSION

Research findings indicate that the sepak takraw development management implemented in North Toraja educational institutions has proven effective because it adopts a holistic approach that consciously integrates two primary goals: improving student athletic performance and developing soft skills. This success is supported by dualistic program planning, which includes technical training and explicitly targets character development. Program implementation demonstrates that soft skills (such as teamwork, discipline, leadership, and mental resilience) are not merely byproducts but rather products managed through the Integrated Coaching method. Coaches play a dual role as technical instructors and character mentors, transforming the training arena into a laboratory where students experience and internalize these values.

This structured and integrated management model successfully creates a positive correlation between character development and athletic performance. Improved discipline and teamwork directly contribute to improved game quality and result in sustained achievements at the regional and national levels for the educational institutions involved. The sustainability and quality of the program depend heavily on the organization of resources and collaborative support from the principal, teachers, coaches, alumni, and parent communities, ensuring the availability of facilities and infrastructure and ongoing motivation for students.

As a recommendation, schools are advised to adopt and standardize this integrated management model for other extracurricular sports. A standard operational guide detailing how to integrate soft skill indicators into daily training syllabi is needed. Local governments are advised to develop strategic policies that recognize and support school sports programs that focus on dual development (achievement and soft skills). Incentives should be linked not only to medals but also to indicators of student soft skill improvement. Quantitative research is recommended to test the extent statistically to which participation in a well-managed sepak takraw program correlates with improvements in students' academic achievement index scores or soft skill psychometric scores. Furthermore, further research could compare the effectiveness of this management model in team sports (such as sepak takraw) with individual sports to identify the specifics of the method in developing specific soft skills.

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