



# Increasing moral values through sports: systematic literature review

Asep Ramdan Afriyandi<sup>1ABCD\*</sup>, Teguh Satria<sup>1BCDE</sup>, Cece Rakhmat<sup>1CDE</sup>, Carsiwan<sup>1ABC</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Program of Sport Education, School of Postgraduate Studies, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia

\*Author's correspondent: Asep Ramdan Afriyandi, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia, Email : [afriyandi@upi.edu](mailto:afriyandi@upi.edu)

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Info article	Abstract
<p><b>Filed in:</b> 2025-01-10 <b>Accepted:</b> 2025-05-31 <b>Published:</b> 2025-05-31</p> <p><b>Keyword:</b> <i>ethics, sports, philosophy, morals</i></p>	<p>This research aims to analyze the contribution of sport in improving individual moral values through a systematic literature review approach. This study evaluates various relevant literature to identify the relationship between participation in sports activities and the development of moral values, such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation and respect. Through systematic selection and analysis of data from journals, books and research reports, it was found that sport can be an effective medium in moral formation, especially through social interaction, healthy competition and application of game rules. Factors such as the role of the coach, the sporting environment and the type of sport undertaken also influence the extent to which moral values can be developed. This finding also shows that the integration of moral values in sports does not happen automatically but requires a structured approach and awareness from all parties involved. The results of this research provide insight for educational practitioners, sports coaches, and policy makers to integrate moral values into sports programs as a character-building strategy.</p>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sport is an activity that not only functions to improve physical health, but also has a significant role in forming moral values. Moral values, such as honesty, respect, responsibility, cooperation and sportsmanship, can be learned and

applied through various aspects contained in sports. In this context, sport functions as an effective learning medium to instill and strengthen moral values in individuals of various age groups. Moral values are an important aspect in forming individual character which is related to attitudes, behavior and social responsibility. In the context of education and community life, efforts to increase moral values are often the main focus, considering the importance of morality in creating social harmony and developing individuals with integrity (Lickona, 1991). One effective approach to improving moral values is through sport.

One of the main ways sports teaches moral values is through the rules of the game. Each sport has rules that must be obeyed by all participants. Through compliance with these rules, athletes are taught the importance of honesty and discipline. In competitive games, participants also learn to respect the referee's decisions and recognize the outcome of the match, whether in victory or defeat. This helps form an attitude of humility, self-control, and respect for others (Bailey et al., 2009). Sport is not only a means to improve physical health, but also has the potential to be a medium for learning moral values, such as honesty, cooperation, respect and responsibility (Bailey et al., 2009). In practice, participation in sports involves intensive social interaction, application of rules, and healthy competition, all of which can contribute to the formation of an individual's character and morals.

However, the effectiveness of sport in improving moral values depends on various factors, including the training approach, the role of the coach, and the sport environment. Previous research shows that exercise programs designed with a focus on character development are more effective in achieving this goal (Hellison, 2011). The social interactions that occur in sports are also an effective means of instilling moral values. In team sports, for example, cooperation and communication between team members are key factors for success. Through this interaction, individuals learn to respect differences, support each other, and take

responsibility for their respective roles in achieving common goals. Apart from that, sport also provides opportunities to deal with conflict, so that participants are trained to resolve problems ethically and constructively (Shields & Bredemeier, 2009).

The role of the coach and the sporting environment also influence the extent to which moral values can be developed through sport. Coaches who model positive behavior, such as sportsmanship and respect, can serve as role models for athletes. A supportive environment, such as an inclusive team culture and healthy competition, can also encourage the internalization of moral values in sports participants. Research shows that sports programs that are specifically designed to integrate character education are more effective in improving participants' morality compared to programs that focus only on physical performance (Hellison, 2011). In addition, various sports programs oriented towards character development have been proven to be effective in building moral values. One widely known program is Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR), which integrates values education through physical activity. This program emphasizes personal responsibility, cooperation, and social contribution, so as to create a long-term positive impact on individual character (Hellison, 2011).

Although much research has explored the relationship between sport and character development or moral values, most of these studies are empirical in nature, focusing on specific contexts, such as school sports (Lee et al., 2007), or the influence of coach leadership on athlete ethics (Gould et al., 2006). These studies are generally descriptive in nature and do not provide a comprehensive picture of general patterns found across different types of sports, levels of participation, and age groups. Furthermore, much of the literature has not adopted a systematic approach to identifying and synthesizing existing findings, making it difficult for readers to understand the consistencies, variations, and gaps in existing research findings (Bailey et al., 2013).

Furthermore, there are still few studies that explicitly evaluate the role of contextual factors such as the social environment of sports, competitive norms, and training methods in shaping or inhibiting the internalization of moral values. This leaves an important question about the extent to which sports can truly be used as a strategic tool in moral education if not balanced with proper design and supervision. Therefore, a comprehensive, systematic, and structured literature review is needed to compile a knowledge map that can be the basis for moral education interventions through sports.

This study offers a new contribution through a comprehensive systematic literature review approach in examining the relationship between sports and moral value development. Unlike previous studies that tend to focus on one type of sport or a particular group of participants, this study includes a variety of sources, including academic journals, books, and policy reports, resulting in a broader and more applicable synthesis of findings. In addition, this study not only identifies the positive impacts of sports on moral values, but also explores the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the success of moral education through sports activities. The findings of this study can be a basis for education practitioners, coaches, and policy makers to design sports programs that explicitly integrate moral values, such as honesty, cooperation, and responsibility. This approach facilitates the development of a structured and sustainable character-based training model, so that it can answer the challenges of implementing moral education in the context of physical activities more effectively.

The research results also support a positive relationship between sport and the development of moral values. A study by Gibbons et al. (2003) show that participation in sports helps adolescents develop a sense of social responsibility and strengthens interpersonal relationships. These findings are consistent with a meta-analytic study by Bredemeier and Shields (1986), which concluded that

sport can be an effective means for moral learning, especially when designed with an approach that supports character formation. Thus, sport has great potential to be an effective tool for learning moral values.

However, its success depends greatly on the approach used, the role of the coach, and the sports environment created. Therefore, it is important for policy makers, coaches and educators to design sports programs that not only focus on physical aspects, but also on developing the character and morals of participants. Therefore, an in-depth study based on a systematic literature review is needed to understand the extent to which sport can contribute to increasing moral values and the factors that influence it.

This research aims to collect and analyze various related literature, so that it can provide a strong theoretical foundation for educators, coaches and policy makers in designing sports programs that are oriented towards the development of moral values. Thus, this article will focus on discussing the benefits and urgency of sport in increasing moral values. Apart from that, this article will also discuss several sports that help improve moral values.

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sustainable character-based training model, so that it can answer the challenges of implementing moral education in the context of physical activities more effectively.

## **2. METHOD**

This research uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. The SLR method is used to identify, review, evaluate, and interpret all existing research on the topic of the phenomenon area of interest, with specific relevant research questions. The SLR approach was chosen because it allows researchers to identify, evaluate, and interpret relevant literature systematically, so as to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the research topic (Kitchenham et al., 2009). The research procedure refers to the guidelines developed by (Kitchenham and Charters 2007), which consist of three main stages: planning the review, conducting the review, and reporting the review results.

The first stage, review planning, begins with formulating specific research questions, such as: “How does sport contribute to the development of individual moral values?” and “What factors influence the success of moral education through sport?” Next, inclusion and exclusion criteria are established to filter relevant literature, including publications between certain years (e.g. 2010–2024), document types (scientific journals, academic books, and research reports), and the main focus on the relationship between sport and moral values. The second stage, the review process, involves the process of searching for articles from various scientific databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect using keywords such as “sports and moral values”, “sports and character development”, and “physical education and ethics”. All publications found were then evaluated based on the title, abstract, and full content to ensure their compliance with the inclusion criteria. The selection process was carried out systematically using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic

Reviews and Meta-Analyses) flowchart to ensure transparency and replicability. The third stage, reporting the results of the review, involved a thematic analysis of the selected studies to identify key themes that emerged, such as the role of the coach, the importance of game rules, and the influence of sport type on moral value formation. Each finding was analyzed qualitatively to describe patterns of relationships between sport participation and character development and to identify research gaps for further study.

By using the SLR method, journals can be systematically assessed and identified, in each process following predetermined steps or protocols (Triandini et al., 2019). In the context of sport, validation of the concepts of morality and moral character is essential to ensure that the research is not only academically relevant but also has strong practical implications. The methodology used in this research was designed to provide insight in depth about the dynamics of moral character in sport, as well as offering a solid theoretical foundation for further development in this field.

The database in this literature research uses Google Scholar. According to (Will, 2016) in (Putra, Resta, Carsiwan, and Rahmat 2024) This website makes it easier for researchers to search for the journal publications they need, which is of course easy and fast in just three steps. Literature searches were carried out through scientific databases such as Scopus, PubMed, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect. Key words used include: "sport and moral values", "physical activity and character development", "moral education through sports" and "teaching values in sports".

The second stage is the screening stage, in the second stage the researcher will filter the systematic literature. This stage will determine the title and summary of which documents will be reviewed. The third stage is the feasibility stage, this stage has several stages, each stage consisting of the author's manual process of adding and deleting documents based on stability

criteria and checking document suitability. It is recommended that articles that have undergone extensive review be excluded from the systematic review procedure. This research uses four criteria. The four criteria are: 1) Using a time span of 10 years or in this research, namely 2014 to 2024. So if articles are written outside the specified time range, they will not be included in this literature review research. 2) Document type, the documents required for this research are documents that have empirical data in them (secondary documents such as review articles, books, conference papers will not be included). 3) English and Indonesian. The articles taken are articles that use English and Indonesian. 4) Indexed by Scopus and Sinta, articles published on Google Scholar need to be indexed to become the quality standard for existing articles.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This research uses qualitative research methods with a systematic literature review. This research found several important articles: three reputable international journal articles, Science Index and two international journal articles, Scopus Q4, obtained from SJR, the Mendeley database, Scispace, and Scopus.com. Then this research is evaluated, summarized and analyzed through a Library Review Matrix.

The results of this systematic review indicate that sports have significant potential in shaping and enhancing individual moral values, such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and respect. These values do not emerge automatically, but are developed through structured experiences in sports activities, such as positive social interactions, healthy competition, and the application of discipline in obeying the rules of the game (Shields & Bredemeier, 2009). This is in line with the social-cognitive theory which states that moral behavior is formed through observation, experience, and learning in a social environment (Bandura, 2001).

However, the effectiveness of sports in shaping morals is greatly influenced by a number of contextual factors. Research shows that the role of coaches is very important, especially in instilling positive values in students or athletes. Coaches who apply a value-based pedagogical approach have a greater influence in shaping the character of participants compared to those who only emphasize achievement (Camiré, Trudel, & Forneris, 2012). In addition, the type of sport also affects moral learning outcomes; team sports tend to be more effective in fostering values of cooperation and solidarity compared to individual sports (Rutten et al., 2007).

The substance of research articles and journals including title, researcher, year, method and results is as follows:

**Table 1. Selected Studies**

No	Title	Author	Year	Method	Result
1	Promoting values, emotional skills and health of socio-economically disadvantaged adolescents through sport	Rosa-María Rodríguez-Jiménez, Sonia García-Merino, Luis Martín-Fernández, Álvaro Bustamante-Sánchez, Manuel Carmona	2023	A mixed methodological approach was used to analyze the impact of basketball as a tool to improve physical condition, health, and the acquisition of emotional values and competencies among adolescents at risk of social exclusion.  Data collection involved two studies conducted over two seasons, focusing on living habits, physical fitness parameters, and participants' perceptions during the intervention, with various areas of improvement implemented throughout the studies.	This study expresses the need for increased physical demands during training sessions, suggests that increasing the intensity of physical activity can lead to better results in physical fitness and the acquisition of values and emotional competence among adolescents which risks social exclusion.  Trainer training was identified as an important element in program implementation, indicating that trainers were well prepared can significantly affect the effectiveness of using a basketball as a tool for promoting health and emotional skills in disadvantaged youth socio-economically
2	Sports As A Factor In The Morality Formation	Denisova Galina Sergeevna, Tuzova Anastasia Aleksandrovna , Gaydamaka Tatiana Aleksandrovna	2020	This research used a variety of methods including scrutiny of scientific, methodological, and specialized literature, which helped in gathering existing knowledge and frameworks related to the formation of morality through sport.	This study concluded that sport plays an important role in the personal and professional development of individuals, contributing not only to physical improvement but also to the moral, aesthetic and intellectual education of the younger generation. It was found that sport functions as a special type of cultural activity that

				Besides that, this study used questionnaires and monitoring to collect data from 225 fourth-year students at Alatau State University, allowing analysis of their attitudes towards sports, moral education and the influence of athletes' biographies leading on their moral development.	helps self-realization, self-knowledge, and self-improvement. Key findings from the study showed that many students recognized the educational value of athlete biographies leading and films about sports achievements, confirming the thesis that sport can purposefully influence the formation of moral norms, spiritual values, and moral behavior.
3	Sport as an analogy to teach life skills and redefine moral values: a case study of the 'Seedbeds of Peace' sport-for-development programme in Medellin, Colombia	Stephen Hills, Alejandro Gomez Velasquez, Matthew C. Walker	2018	This paper uses a study design case to illustrate the implementation and impact of the sports development program 'Seedbeds of Peace' in Medellin, Colombia, with a focus on how soccer is used as a tool for social change. The program capitalizes on the cultural significance of football in Colombia to teach life skills and redefine moral values among underprivileged children fortunate, addressing social problems stemming from the legacy of drug trafficking and violence in the region.	The 'Seedbeds of Peace' program utilizes football as a tool to teach life skills and redefine moral values among children disadvantaged children in Medellin, Colombia, dealing with social problems stemming from a history of drug trafficking and violence in the city. This case study contributes to the theoretical understanding of the role of sport in social change and provides new mechanisms for sport-for-development practitioners to implement in their programs, enhancing their strategies to drive outcomes positive social.
4	Structural Inequality, Homelessness, and Moral Worth: Salvaging the Self through Sport?	Jordan Koch, Jay Scherer, Rylan Kafara	2020	This paper uses urban ethnography as its primary research method, focusing on the lived experiences of a group of men experiencing homelessness. This approach allows an in-depth understanding of their social interactions and the collective production of moral values through sport.  This study examines the dynamics of a weekly sports program for development, analyzing how participation in these activities fosters a sense of	This study revealed that men experiencing homelessness were able to create a sense of moral value and community through their participation in a weekly sport for development program, which fostered social connection and a sense of belonging among the participants. The ethnography highlights how collective involvement in these sports not only provides a platform for social interaction but also contributes to participants' self-esteem and identity, allowing them to redefine their role in society despite their circumstances.

				community and contributes to men's sense of self-worth and social identity amidst their homelessness.	
5	Grounding Sport in Universal Moral Values to Support International Peace	Robert C. Schneider	2018	This paper emphasizes the application of utilitarian moral theory as a guiding framework for sport managers to create policies and practices that maximize happiness among all sport participants. This approach encourages sports organizations to focus on actions that produce the most positive outcomes for the individuals involved, thereby fostering a culture of satisfaction and well-being. It advocates a conscientious commitment from sports managers to promote peace through sport by building moral foundations within their organizations.	This paper argues that sport can serve as an effective medium for promoting international peace if sport managers are committed to creating and implementing practices that support universal moral values and happiness among participants. This involves focusing on excellence rather than a win-at-all-costs mentality, which can foster a more harmonious environment conducive to peace.  This emphasizes the importance of building trust within sports organizations, as a high moral standing can facilitate dialogue between individuals of different ideologies.

After completing the Eligibility process, the documents are checked and evaluated. Next, the results are used to answer research questions and discuss the analysis in detail by identifying the title then reading the summary and the entire text to examine the main themes of the document.

The results of this study provide important implications for the world of education and public policy. Integration of moral education through sports can be used as a strategy to strengthen character in the physical education curriculum in schools, as well as in youth athlete development programs. However, the implementation of this strategy requires special training for teachers and coaches to understand the value-based learning approach. Without such support, sports are at risk of failing to achieve the expected goals of moral education.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This research found that sport has a significant role in improving moral values through several key mechanisms, including rule-based learning, social interaction, and character development. Through a systematic analysis of relevant literature, it was revealed that the integration of sport into non-formal education programs can foster moral growth, particularly among socio-economically disadvantaged youth (Jiménez et al., 2023). However, to maximize its effectiveness, structured interventions are needed—such as incorporating value-focused activities, emotional competence training, and ensuring that coaches are equipped to convey moral lessons. Additionally, sport has been recognized as a cultural medium that nurtures ethical behavior, spiritual norms, and personal growth. Educational tools like biographies of elite athletes and sports films have been shown to enhance moral education by providing relatable role models and narratives (Sergeevna et al., 2020).

Programs such as *Seedbeds of Peace* in Colombia demonstrate how community passion for football can be leveraged to redefine moral values and promote social inclusion among children affected by violence and poverty, showing sport's potential as a tool for social change. Furthermore, participation in structured sporting activities has empowered marginalized groups, such as homeless individuals, by restoring self-worth and facilitating their contribution to a morally conscious community (Jordan et al., 2020). Finally, the application of utilitarian moral theory within sports organizations has underscored the importance of trust, ethical leadership, and inclusive dialogue as foundations for fostering collective moral development and societal harmony (Robert, 2018). Altogether, these findings emphasize that sport is more than just physical activity—it is a transformative platform for cultivating moral values, reinforcing social cohesion, and supporting ethical behavior across diverse populations.

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