

**FOSTERING ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP CHARACTER THROUGH HIZBUL
WATHAN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: EVIDENCE FROM
MUHAMMADIYAH SCHOOL IN INDONESIA**

JURNAL

**Diajukan Sebagai Salah Satu Syarat Guna Memperoleh Gelar
Sarjana Strata (S-1) Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam**



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FAKULTAS STUDI ISLAM DAN PERADABAN
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Fostering Islamic leadership character through hizbul wathan extracurricular activities: evidence from Muhammadiyah school in Indonesia

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Abstract: The formation of students' leadership character is one of the primary goals of character education within Muhammadiyah schools, particularly through Hizbul Wathan (HW) extracurricular activities. This study aims to analyze the role of Hizbul Wathan extracurricular activities in shaping the leadership character of students at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya, with a focus on the contribution of HW activities, the role of instructors, and the supporting and inhibiting factors in program implementation. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis involving instructors, student administrators, and active HW members, who were selected using purposive sampling technique. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis with source and technique triangulation to ensure data validity. The research findings indicate that HW activities such as marching drills, camping, scouting training, and leadership exercises make a tangible contribution to shaping students' leadership character through direct field experiences. Instructors play a role not only as technical guides, but also as motivators and role models who encourage the internalization of Islamic-based leadership values. The originality of this study lies in its in-depth examination of HW's role specifically at the vocational high school level, which has thus far remained rarely investigated empirically. The limitations of this study include a scope restricted to a single school, meaning that generalization of the findings must be carried out with caution. The implications of this research provide practical recommendations for schools in optimizing the management of HW programs as an effective, purposeful, and sustainable vehicle for the formation of student leadership.

Keywords: Hizbul wathan, Indonesian institution, extracurricular, Islamic education, student leadership.

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Introduction

Education does not focus solely on academic achievement, but also on character development and 21st-century competencies, one of which is leadership ability. At the Vocational High School (SMK) level, leadership skills are particularly important because students are being prepared to enter the workforce, which demands independence, responsibility, and the ability to collaborate effectively within a team. Student leadership is the ability to influence, direct, and cooperate with others to achieve shared goals, developed through learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom (Reka et al., 2020; Tambak & Sukenti, 2026). Developing student leadership skills is not only through classroom instruction but also through extracurricular activities that provide students with hands-on, real-world experiences. Extracurricular activities

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have been shown to improve leadership skills, communication skills, social awareness, and student engagement within the school environment. Through group discussions, collaborative projects, and leadership exercises, students can develop communication skills, decision-making skills, and teamwork skills (Yoseph et al., 2024; Tambak et al., 2026).

In the context of leadership character building in Muhammadiyah education, improving student leadership is not only oriented towards mastering technical leadership skills, but also integrated with Islamic values that emphasize responsibility, trustworthiness, and exemplary behavior. Hizbul Wathan (HW) is a unique Muhammadiyah scouting organization that plays a vital and strategic role in instilling values through various educational and applied activities (Rina et al., 2025). At SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya, Hizbul Wathan serves as an extracurricular activity that contributes to the formation of student leadership character through direct experiences, such as leading groups, collaborating with peers, and making decisions in certain situations. Through this process, students not only develop intellectually but also hone leadership skills that reflect discipline, self-confidence, and a sense of responsibility (Nudin et al., 2024; Sukenti & Tambak, 2025).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of Hizbul Wathan extracurricular activities in shaping leadership character at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya still requires more in-depth investigation. These findings give rise to several research questions: How does the Hizbul Wathan extracurricular activity contribute to the development of students' leadership abilities at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya? How does the Hizbul Wathan instructor contribute to the formation of students' leadership character? In addition, it is also important to analyze the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of Hizbul Wathan activities in an effort to develop student leadership. These questions form the central focus of the present study. The benefits of this research are divided into two aspects: theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of scientific research on the formation of student leadership through extracurricular activities, particularly in the context of Hizbul Wathan within Muhammadiyah educational settings. Furthermore, this research can enrich understanding of the role of activities, the contribution of instructors, and the factors that influence the success of student leadership formation. Practically, this research is intended to serve as a reference for schools, especially SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya, in optimizing the implementation of Hizbul Wathan activities through the strengthening of the instructor's role and the management of supporting and inhibiting factors, so that the formation of student leadership can take place more effectively, purposefully, and sustainably.

Previous studies have demonstrated that scouting and extracurricular activities have a significant contribution to the formation of students' character and leadership. The research by (Baidowi, 2020) shows that the management of both intracurricular and extracurricular activities plays a role in the comprehensive instillation of character values in students. Additionally, other research affirms that good management of extracurricular activities can improve the quality of leadership and student development optimally (Yunianto, Surohman, & Hasanah, 2021).

However, these studies remain general in scope and have not specifically examined the role of Hizbul Wathan in shaping student leadership, particularly at the vocational school (SMK) level. In fact, each school has distinct characteristics in implementing extracurricular activities, resulting in different impacts on students' character formation. This indicates a research gap between the importance of Hizbul Wathan's role as a medium for leadership formation and the limited empirical studies that examine its implementation directly in SMK settings. Based on this discussion, the present study aims to analyze the role of Hizbul Wathan extracurricular activities in forming student leadership at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya, with a focus on the implementation of Hizbul Wathan activities and the process of student leadership formation.

Literature review

Basic concepts of leadership character formation

Leadership character formation is the process of developing values, attitudes, and leadership behaviors that encompass responsibility, honesty, discipline, and the ability to positively influence others. Leadership is not merely understood as the capacity to lead, but also encompasses exemplary behavior and integrity as the primary foundation in shaping one's character (Usman, 2015). Strong leadership character is not formed instantaneously; rather, it develops through a process of value internalization that takes place consistently and continuously throughout a person's educational experiences (Day et al., 2021). Furthermore, leadership character formation in the educational context is carried out through processes of habituation, role modeling, and direct experience in various activities that actively engage students. This process holds strategic importance because leadership functions as an agent of change capable of shaping students' character holistically, encompassing attitudes, values, and social behavior (Meila Weeke Alfulana et al., 2021). Additionally, research demonstrates that educational environments that consistently instill leadership values through various structured activities have been proven to significantly enhance students' leadership competencies. From a contemporary educational perspective, leadership character formation cannot be separated from an experiential learning approach (Faris et al., 2026). This approach emphasizes that leadership values and competencies will develop more effectively through direct engagement in real-world situations, such as group work, student organizations, and extracurricular activities. In line with this, (Murphy, S.E. and Johnson, 2016) affirm that leadership development programs that are structured and involve critical reflection have been proven to accelerate the internalization of leadership character in young individuals. The direct experiences students gain in such situations not only reinforce their conceptual understanding but also foster the formation of an authentic leadership identity (Aziz, 2022).

In addition, leadership character formation is also greatly influenced by the surrounding social environment and a supportive school culture. A participatory school climate and positive relationships between educators and students have been proven to be important factors in strengthening leadership character development. Recent research indicates that supportive teacher-student interactions make a tangible contribution to the formation of character traits such as empathy, responsibility, and the ability to make ethical decisions (Darling-hammond et al., 2020). This condition affirms that leadership character formation is not solely the responsibility of the individual, but is also the result of an educational ecosystem collectively built by all school stakeholders. Therefore, leadership character formation is an integrative, dynamic, and continuous process that combines moral values, direct experience, and real-world practice within an educational environment. When implemented systematically and consistently, this process not only produces individuals capable of leading effectively, but also shapes individuals of strong character, high integrity, and social responsibility (Azizah Baiti Nikmah, 2024).

Hizbul wathan

Hizbul Wathan is a scouting organization within the Muhammadiyah environment that plays a strategic role as a vehicle for developing students' character and leadership through a variety of educational and practical activities (Irawan, 2018). As an Islamic scouting organization, Hizbul Wathan is not merely an ordinary extracurricular activity; it functions as a medium for structured character formation grounded in Islamic values. Hizbul Wathan activities are designed to instill principles such as discipline, responsibility, self-reliance, and the ability to collaborate, which form the basis of students' leadership character formation (Arif Fikri, 2019). These values are not only taught theoretically but are internalized through direct practice in every organized activity, thereby forming habits and character that are durably embedded in students (Kuswanto, 2021).

Through activities such as regular training, competitions, and group activities, students are trained to engage directly in the leadership process, including leading groups, making decisions, and solving problems independently (Fachrizal et al., 2025). This process of direct involvement is aligned with the principle of experiential learning, which emphasizes that learning will be more meaningful and lasting when acquired through real experience. This demonstrates that Hizbul Wathan not only serves as an extracurricular activity, but also as an effective means of shaping students' leadership character through real-world experience (Imam, 2022). Through this approach, students gradually develop interpersonal skills, mental resilience, and a sense of responsibility—core components of effective leadership character. Furthermore, the success of Hizbul Wathan in shaping leadership character is also supported by the active role of coaches

(instructors) who function as both facilitators and role models for students. Coaches do not merely provide technical guidance; they also serve as models of leadership behavior that students can observe and emulate in their daily lives. Research indicates that the exemplary conduct demonstrated by coaches in scouting activities makes a significant contribution to the internalization of leadership values in students (Vina et al., 2021). In addition, the collaborative and challenging atmosphere of Hizbul Wathan activities creates an environment conducive to the growth of a leadership spirit, as students are required to interact, negotiate, and adapt in various situations that demand swift and sound decision-making.

In the context of Muhammadiyah education, Hizbul Wathan also possesses a spiritual dimension that distinguishes it from general scouting organizations. Islamic values such as honesty (shiddiq), trustworthiness (amanah), and social concern are incorporated into every program activity, so that the leadership character formation that occurs is not solely grounded in technical competence, but also in the formation of morality and ethics rooted in Islamic teachings (Ali Noer et al., 2017). This makes Hizbul Wathan a unique model of value-based leadership development that is relevant to the needs of character education in the contemporary era. Therefore, Hizbul Wathan is a comprehensive and integrative vehicle for leadership character formation, capable of combining physical, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions within a single structured program. The organization's success in producing generations of individuals with strong character and a leadership spirit makes it one of the important assets within the Muhammadiyah educational ecosystem—one that deserves to be continuously developed and strengthened (Kuswanto, 2021).

leadership character formation in Muhammadiyah schools

Muhammadiyah schools have a distinctive characteristic of integrating Islamic values into the educational process, including in the formation of students' leadership character (Aydrus et al., 2022). Character education in Muhammadiyah schools is carried out not only through classroom instruction but also through extracurricular activities such as Hizbul Wathan, which serves as a means of developing student leadership. The values instilled through these activities include independence, responsibility, discipline, and social concern, which are aligned with the educational goals of Muhammadiyah in shaping a generation with noble character and integrity (Vina et al., 2021).

In the context of SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya, Hizbul Wathan activities serve as one of the effective media for developing students' leadership character through direct involvement in various activities such as regular training sessions, group work, and social activities. An experience-based approach is considered capable of enhancing students' leadership abilities, as they are trained to be responsible, make decisions, and actively participate in activities (Kuswanto, 2021). Furthermore, the success of leadership character formation is also influenced by the support of teachers, instructors, and a conducive school environment. The role of instructors in providing direction, motivation, and role modeling is a crucial factor in fostering students' leadership attitudes optimally (Kusumandari & Rohmah, 2018).

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of Hizbul Wathan extracurricular activities in shaping students' leadership character at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya. A qualitative case study is considered appropriate because it enables researchers to explore social phenomena within their real-life context and obtain a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives (Nowell et al., 2017). Furthermore, qualitative research is effective for investigating leadership development processes because it emphasizes participants' lived experiences and interpretations (Curry et al., 2020).

The research was conducted at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya. The informants consisted of Hizbul Wathan instructors, student administrators, and students who actively participated in Hizbul Wathan activities. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, namely selecting participants who possessed direct experience and relevant knowledge regarding the implementation of Hizbul Wathan and the development of leadership character among students. This technique is commonly applied in qualitative studies to obtain rich and meaningful information from individuals directly involved in the phenomenon being investigated (Tong, 2022). Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and views regarding

leadership formation through Hizbul Wathan activities. Participatory observation was conducted during regular training sessions, marching drills (PBB), leadership training, camping activities, and social service programs to observe students' interactions and leadership practices directly. In addition, document analysis was conducted by reviewing activity schedules, organizational structures, work programs, and evaluation reports related to Hizbul Wathan activities. The combination of multiple data sources allows researchers to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study and strengthens the credibility of the findings (Park, 2018).

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis process involved several stages: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and producing the final report (Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic analysis was chosen because it enables researchers to systematically identify patterns and themes emerging from participants' experiences and narratives (Xu, 2020). Through this process, the study generated a comprehensive understanding of how Hizbul Wathan contributes to the development of students' leadership character, the role of instructors, and the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing program implementation at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya. To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from instructors, student leaders, and members of Hizbul Wathan, while technique triangulation was carried out by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documentation. The use of triangulation is essential in qualitative research to enhance trustworthiness and minimize researcher bias (Nowell et al., 2017).

Results

Description of the hizbul wathan program

Hizbul Wathan (HW) at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya is a mandatory extracurricular activity that has become part of the educational identity of Muhammadiyah schools. In the daily life of the school, Hizbul Wathan activities are held every Wednesday afternoon, actively involving all students under the guidance of experienced instructors. This activity does not stand alone as a mere routine, but is designed systematically as part of the school's effort to shape students' character to be disciplined, responsible, and to possess a strong spirit of leadership (Baidowi, 2020). From the very beginning of their membership, students are introduced to the basic values of Hizbul Wathan scouting, such as loyalty, honesty, and a spirit of dedication, which serve as the foundation for every activity carried out.

The Hizbul Wathan program at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya encompasses various types of structured and complementary activities. Weekly routine training forms the core of this program, in which students practice marching drills, rope work, semaphore, scouting codes, and leadership simulations in small groups (Rizqillah et al., 2025). In marching drill training, for example, students are alternately appointed as the commander of the formation, responsible for leading movements and maintaining the cohesion of the group. This process directly trains the courage to speak, assertiveness in decision-making, and the ability to manage group members effectively (Reka et al., 2020). Beyond physical activities, the Hizbul Wathan program at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya also consistently integrates Islamic values into every aspect of its activities. Before beginning training, students are accustomed to praying together, reciting the Hizbul Wathan scouting pledge, and listening to a brief piece of advice from the instructor. This habituation is not merely a formal routine, but is part of an effort to develop students' spiritual character, which is the hallmark of Muhammadiyah education. Values such as trustworthiness (*amanah*), honesty, and care for others are consistently instilled through various social activities, such as environmental service and community service activities regularly carried out by Hizbul Wathan members (Irawan, 2018).

The organizational structure of Hizbul Wathan at this school is also designed in such a way that students have real opportunities to practice leading an organization. There is a core executive committee consisting of Grade XI students selected through a deliberation mechanism, along with instructors who are experienced in scouting. Within this structure, student executives are directly responsible for planning programs, coordinating members, and reporting on activities each month. It is this real experience of organizing that makes Hizbul Wathan a true leadership laboratory for the students (Yunianto et al., 2021). Thus, the Hizbul Wathan program at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya is not merely a supplementary extracurricular activity, but rather a character-building program that runs naturally, consistently, and in an integrated manner with Islamic values. Through

various structured activities that still provide space for students to develop organically, Hizbul Wathan has proven itself to be one of the important pillars in realizing the educational goals of SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya in producing graduates who are of strong character, have a leadership spirit, and possess noble morals (Ali Noer et al., 2017).

Hizbul wathan in the formation of leadership character

Hizbul Wathan plays a strategic role in shaping students' leadership character at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya. Based on the results of interviews with students and instructors, leadership character is the primary aspect developed through this program. Leadership formation is carried out through the implementation of scheduled activities and direct supervision by instructors, so that each student receives a structured and guided leadership experience (Hendharsa & Rawa, 2024). This process is in line with the view that effective leadership is not born from theory alone, but from direct involvement in real situations that demand responsibility, initiative, and the ability to manage others concretely (Elsa et al., 2025).

One of the most visible activities in developing leadership character in the field is marching drill training. In this activity, the student appointed as the formation commander bears full responsibility for giving commands, organizing formations, and maintaining the cohesion of the group. Based on field observations, in the early stages of implementation many students appeared to lack confidence and were hesitant when leading. However, after repeatedly and consistently following the training, they gradually became accustomed to speaking assertively, grew more confident, and were able to manage group members more effectively. This demonstrates that students' leadership abilities develop in a real way through consistent training and direct experience (Yoseph et al., 2024). The assertiveness in giving commands and the ability to maintain group concentration honed through marching drills indirectly shapes leadership character that is firm, organized, and responsible within the students.

Meanwhile, in camping activities, leadership formation becomes even more visibly apparent because students are placed directly in real field situations. Based on interview findings, students learn to divide tasks within the group, such as preparing equipment, arranging activity schedules, and resolving problems that arise. The role of the group leader is crucial in directing members and making decisions amid limited facilities and conditions that are not always ideal (Aulia et al., 2024). Although there are obstacles such as limited facilities, this activity still provides valuable experiences in training students' responsibility, cooperation, and independence as part of their leadership character. It is this dynamic and challenging situation that makes students' leadership experiences feel more authentic and meaningful compared to leadership learning that is purely theoretical.

Beyond these two activities, the formation of leadership character at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya also takes place through daily interactions between students and instructors during routine training sessions. Instructors actively provide direct feedback to students after each activity session, discussing what went well and what needs to be improved. This process is important because it encourages students not only to act as leaders, but also to channel themselves critically and remain open to input. Research shows that structured reflection carried out after leadership experiences contributes significantly to the formation of character and leadership identity in young individuals (Sahertian et al., 2022). Thus, the combination of direct experience, instructor supervision, and the process of reflection that occurs naturally within Hizbul Wathan activities makes this program an effective and sustainable leadership formation ecosystem at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya. Through both of these activities and the entire series of programs, students' leadership abilities develop in a real way through direct experiences that occur naturally in the field. This development is not only visible from the technical aspects of leadership, such as the ability to give orders or organize a group, but also from deeper aspects of character, such as increased self-confidence, empathy toward group members, and an awareness of the importance of collective responsibility in achieving shared goals (Yusnita & Aslami, 2022).

Challenges and solutions in the implementation of the hizbul wathan program

The implementation of the Hizbul Wathan program in developing students' leadership at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya does not always run smoothly. In the field, there are a number of real obstacles felt directly by both students and instructors in every implementation of the activities. One of the most frequently cited obstacles is the limitation of space and facilities. Based on the results of interviews with instructors and students, the school's relatively small land area constitutes

a significant barrier, particularly for activities that require open spaces such as marching drill training, field leadership simulations, and other physical activities. When the HW training schedule arrives, the Grade XI executive committee together with the instructors must first ensure which area is available for use on that day, as the space normally used is not infrequently already occupied for other purposes (Gunawan & Benty, 2017)

The challenge is felt to be even greater when the number of active HW members is quite large, while the available facilities do not match the need. In the field, this condition is felt in reality when a single set of scouting equipment must be shared alternately by dozens of students at once. The limited number of scouting ropes means that some students must wait quite a long time before they can practice, while students who have already finished using the equipment do not always have alternative activities that can be immediately undertaken. This situation frequently causes gaps in activity that potentially reduce students' concentration and enthusiasm during the training session. Instructors who are aware of this condition endeavor to resolve it by dividing members into small groups in turns, yet the limited equipment remains an obstacle that is not easy to overcome in a short time (Silitonga, 2024).

On the other hand, the large number of students participating in HW also makes it difficult for instructors to provide attention and guidance evenly to each member. In a single training session, instructors must monitor dozens of students at once, so that students who require more intensive guidance sometimes do not receive sufficient attention. This condition indirectly affects the equalization of leadership development among members, where more active and confident students tend to get more opportunities to perform and develop compared to more passive students. In the face of these various constraints, one of the concrete solutions applied in the field is to utilize the school mosque as an alternative venue for HW activities. When the school yard is not available for use, the instructors and Grade XI executive committee transfer the activities into the mosque located within the SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya environment. Inside the mosque, activities that are normally physical in nature are adapted to become activities more suited to being conducted indoors, such as leadership discussions, decision-making simulations, and roleplay. Utilizing the mosque as an activity space turns out to bring its own added value, as the calm and spiritually rich atmosphere of the mosque actually reinforces the dimension of character formation in students, oriented not only toward technical competence but also toward ethics and the morality of leadership (Hidayat, 2018)

In addition to its use for discussion activities, the mosque is also utilized as a venue for nonphysical scouting skills training, such as Morse code, basic rope work, and program planning. Dividing into small groups inside the mosque also becomes an effective solution to address the limited equipment, as each group can use the available equipment in turns without having to wait too long. Although it may seem unconventional, scouting activities inside the mosque actually proceed in an orderly manner and with great enthusiasm. Students appear more focused and disciplined because they feel they are in a place whose sanctity must be respected, so that their behavior and attitude are automatically better maintained (Fahyuni, 2020). These creative efforts in utilizing the mosque and managing the limitations of facilities show that constrained conditions do not become an obstacle for the school and instructors to continue innovating. The Grade XI executive committee members who are directly involved in the process of finding solutions also gain a very valuable leadership experience, namely learning how a leader must be capable of making adaptive decisions, managing limited resources optimally, and maintaining members' enthusiasm amid various existing constraints. It is this real-life experience that ultimately also shapes students' leadership character to be more resilient, creative, and ready to face various challenges in the future (Thoyibah et al., 2025).

Activities that support the formation of leadership character

Hizbul Wathan plays a significant role in the formation of students' character at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya. Based on conditions occurring in the field, HW activities at this school are by no means a meaningless weekly routine, but rather a process of character formation that takes place naturally and continuously within every activity that unfolds. Whenever the HW training schedule arrives, the school atmosphere feels different. Students who are HW members are seen actively preparing themselves, putting on their scouting uniforms neatly, and gathering at the designated location before training time begins. This simple discipline is the initial reflection of the true process of leadership character formation (Baidowi, 2020).



Figure 1: Marching training

In the field, HW activities at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya are carried out with the active involvement of all members under the coordination of Grade XI executives and the guidance of instructors. The Grade XI executives hold an important role in ensuring every activity runs according to the plan that has been drawn up. They do not merely act as technical implementers, but also as leaders who bear full responsibility for the running of activities from start to finish. In the process, the Grade XI executives frequently face various unexpected situations, such as members arriving late, insufficient equipment, or weather that is unsuitable for outdoor activities. It is precisely in facing such dynamics that their leadership abilities are genuinely trained, as they are required to think quickly, make the right decisions, and maintain the enthusiasm of all members so that the activities continue to run well (Reka et al., 2020).

In addition to the executives, all HW members also gain leadership experience through various activities designed in a structured manner while still providing space for students to develop organically (Fahyuni, 2020). Every activity carried out is always linked to Islamic leadership values, such as honesty, trustworthiness (*amanah*), responsibility, and care for others (Ajmaina, 2019). The accompanying instructors do not only serve as supervisors, but also as facilitators who actively encourage students to dare to perform, take initiative, and learn from every experience they undergo. It is this process that makes every HW activity at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya a real and meaningful leadership laboratory for the students (Agustina, 2024). Through various activities oriented toward the formation of students' leadership, among others (Agus, 2013):

Marching drill

Based on field observations, marching drill activities are one of the most visible activities in developing students' leadership at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya. This activity is held in the school yard during every weekly training session, involving all HW members present. Students appointed as formation commanders bear full responsibility for giving commands, organizing movements, and maintaining the cohesion of the group (Yanin et al., 2025; Yasin et al., 2025; Tambak et al., 2024). In the field, the atmosphere of marching drill training feels quite dynamic and full of positive pressure. When a student is trusted to command a formation for the first time, expressions of nervousness and hesitation are clearly visible on his or her face. The voice sounds soft and unassertive, making it difficult for members of the formation to catch the commands given. The accompanying instructor provides immediate on-the-spot correction, instructing the student to stand more upright, speak more loudly, and look at the group members with full confidence (Penggaling, 2023; Tambak & Sukenti, 2025). Based on interview results with students, they admitted that the moment of leading a formation for the first time felt very tense, as they felt all eyes were on them and every mistake was immediately visible to all members. Yet it is precisely this pressure that motivates them to keep learning and improving themselves in every subsequent training session.

After repeatedly and consistently following the training over several weeks, the changes that occur within the students are quite significant. They begin to get accustomed to speaking assertively, feel more confident when standing in front of the group, and are able to control

members more effectively. Even some students who were initially very quiet and lacked confidence begin to show the courage to take initiative and speak up loudly. This demonstrates that students' leadership abilities develop in a real way through consistent training processes and direct experience carried out repeatedly (Reka et al., 2020).

Camping

In camping activities, leadership formation is far more visibly apparent and profound because students are placed directly in real field situations. Unlike weekly training that still takes place in the school environment, camping places students in conditions that are truly different from their daily lives. They must live together in groups for several full days, far from the comfort of home and school (Ferdiansyah et al., 2025). Based on interview results with students, they revealed that camping activities are the most effective as well as the most challenging moment in their journey in HW. At camp, students must divide tasks within the group in a concrete manner, such as preparing equipment before departure, setting up tents upon arrival at the location, arranging cooking duty schedules, and leading the evening activities that have been designed by the executives. The appointed group leader can no longer hide behind the instructors' directives, as in the field they must make decisions independently and quickly. When differences of opinion arise among group members regarding the division of tasks or technical aspects of activity implementation, the group leader is required to act as a wise mediator while still maintaining the enthusiasm and cohesion of the team (Irma Yunita et al., 2023).

Based on field observations, it is visible how group leaders who initially appeared overwhelmed in managing their members gradually begin to find their own way to lead. Some use a firm and structured approach, while others prefer a warm and dialogic leadership style. Interestingly, both leadership styles are equally successful in mobilizing their respective group members, and it is precisely this diversity of leadership styles that becomes interesting discussion material during the evaluation session with instructors after the activity is completed. Despite constraints such as limited facilities, camping activities still provide the most authentic and meaningful leadership experience for students of SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya.

Scouting training

Regular scouting training conducted every week forms the primary foundation for the formation of students' leadership character at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya. This activity is carried out on a scheduled basis and covers various scouting materials such as rope work, codes, first aid, and basic navigation. In every training session, the Grade XI executives always begin with an opening roll call, checking of attribute completeness, and the recitation of the scouting pledge as a reminder of the values that every member must uphold. Based on interviews with instructors, this routine training is designed not only to train technical scouting skills, but more than that, to build students' character and positive habits on a sustainable basis. In the field, students are trained to arrive on time, dress neatly, and be ready to follow the entire series of activities with full responsibility. Instructors conveyed that students who were initially frequently late and undisciplined, after consistently following routine training for one semester, showed quite significant changes in behavior (Ummah, 2026; Tambak & Sukenti, 2024). They became more punctual, more orderly, and more proactive in helping to prepare training needs without having to be asked first.



Figure 2. Hizbul Wathan Scout Training

From observations, students who actively follow scouting training on a regular basis tend to be more capable of cooperating, more responsible, and more ready when given a leadership role in various situations. The process of habituation that takes place every week slowly but surely shapes the leadership mindset and behavior that becomes deeply embedded in students, so that leadership is no longer felt as a burden but as a natural part of their character (Baidowi, 2020; Chapakiya et al., 2025).

Leadership training

Leadership training in Hizbul Wathan at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya is conducted by providing students with direct opportunities to lead in a real manner, such as becoming a group leader or the person in charge of a particular activity. These leadership opportunities are given in rotation so that all students obtain the same experience without exception (Talib, 2025).



Figure 3. Leadership training

Based on interview results with students, they admitted that the experience of being a person in charge of an activity for the first time felt very different from merely being an ordinary participant. When given that responsibility, the student must prepare a rundown of the event, coordinate members, ensure all preparations proceed according to plan, and lead the activity from start to finish. Not infrequently they face situations in which members do not fully follow the instructions given, or there are technical matters that deviate from the initial plan. It is precisely in facing such situations that the most real leadership learning occurs, because they must immediately think and act to overcome problems that arise in front of all members.

Based on field observations, a clear difference is visible between students who have already had the opportunity to lead and those who have not. Students who have previously led tend to be bolder in speaking, more proactive in taking initiative, and calmer when facing unexpected

situations. This affirms that providing space and trust for students to lead directly is the most effective strategy in forming authentic, sustainable leadership character that is genuinely felt by students in their real lives at school (Sahertian et al., 2022).

Discussion

The research findings indicate that Hizbul Wathan plays a significant role in shaping the leadership character of students at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya. These findings suggest that leadership development is not solely acquired through classroom learning, but also through direct experience in extracurricular activities. Through active involvement in various HW activities, students have the opportunity to develop communication skills, decision-making abilities, teamwork, and a sense of responsibility. These findings are consistent with research stating that Hizbul Wathan activities contribute to the development of students' disciplinary character, sense of responsibility, and leadership qualities (Azizah Baiti Nikmah, 2024; Namora et al., 2025; Baihaqi et al., 2026; Muallimin et al., 2026; Tambak et al., 2023). The findings of this study are also in line with research demonstrating that Hizbul Wathan extracurricular activities are capable of enhancing students' leadership skills through practical learning experiences. The experience of leading groups in marching drills and camping activities provides students with the space to learn how to face real challenges in the leadership process (Imam Muhayat, 2022; Amalia et al., 2026; Tambak et al., 2026; Saputra et al., 2026).

The research findings show that camping activities serve as an effective means of developing students' leadership, as they provide direct experience in managing groups and resolving various problems in the field. Such direct experience helps students develop leadership skills, independence, and a sense of responsibility in a more tangible way compared to purely theoretical learning (Fahyuni, 2020; Muhajir et al., 2025). Beyond field activities, the role of instructors has also proven to be crucial in the process of shaping leadership character. Instructors do not merely act as guides, but also as motivators and role models who provide evaluation and direction to students. Ongoing mentorship helps students enhance their leadership abilities while simultaneously reinforcing the positive character traits they possess (Jailani, 2022; Miratunisa et al., 2026; Nurhayati et al., 2026). On the other hand, this study identified a challenge in the form of limited facilities and activity spaces. Nevertheless, the school was able to overcome this constraint through various adaptive strategies, such as utilizing alternative spaces and dividing students into small groups. This situation demonstrates that the success of leadership development is not solely determined by the completeness of facilities, but also by the creativity and program management capabilities of the school and its instructors (Kusumandari & Rohmah, 2018; Abdullah et al., 2025; Sukenti et al., 2026).

Overall, the research findings affirm that Hizbul Wathan is an effective character education platform for shaping students' leadership. Through a combination of scouting activities, direct experience, the habituation of Islamic values, and instructor mentorship, students develop not only in terms of leadership skills, but also in terms of morality, responsibility, and integrity as future leaders.

Conclusion

This study as a whole proves that Hizbul Wathan extracurricular activities play a significant and strategic role in shaping the leadership character of students at SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya. Leadership development does not occur solely through classroom instruction; rather, it largely grows and develops through the direct experiences students undergo in various HW activities, such as marching drills, camping, regular scouting training, and leadership exercises. Through active involvement in this series of activities, students genuinely develop communication skills, decision-making abilities, teamwork, self-confidence, and a sense of responsibility that becomes organically embedded within them. More specifically, marching drill activities have proven to be one of the most effective media for training students' courage to perform in front of others, assertiveness in giving commands, and the ability to manage group members in a structured manner. Students who initially appeared hesitant and lacked confidence in leading a formation, after consistently and repeatedly participating in training sessions, demonstrated quite significant changes in terms of self-confidence, assertiveness, and the ability to control the group. This proves that the habituation process carried out in a routine and structured manner produces a tangible impact on the development of students' leadership character. Meanwhile, camping activities

provide a more authentic and profound dimension of leadership, as students are placed directly in real field situations, far from the comfort zone of the school environment. In such conditions, students are required to divide tasks, make decisions independently, manage differences of opinion among group members, and maintain the enthusiasm and cohesion of the team amid various existing limitations. It is this experience that makes camping the most real and meaningful leadership laboratory for students.

Beyond field activities, regular weekly scouting training has also proven to build leadership character through the habituation of positive values such as discipline, punctuality, neatness, and the readiness to take responsibility without needing to be instructed beforehand. Students who were initially frequently late and undisciplined, after consistently following routine training for one semester, demonstrated quite meaningful behavioral changes, becoming more punctual, more orderly, and more proactive in preparing training needs. This weekly habituation process slowly but surely shapes the leadership mindset and behavior that becomes deeply embedded in students, so that leadership is no longer perceived as a burden but as a natural part of their character. Instructors have proven to hold an equally important role throughout the entire process of leadership character formation. They are not merely technical guides, but also motivators, facilitators, and role models who consistently encourage students to internalize Islamic-based leadership values such as trustworthiness, honesty, discipline, and social concern. The feedback provided by instructors after each activity session encourages students not only to act as leaders, but also to reflect critically and remain open to input. This structured reflection process, which occurs naturally within every HW activity, has proven to contribute significantly to the formation of students' leadership identity and character on a sustained basis. The integration of Islamic values into every aspect of HW activities also makes this program not only shape technical leadership competencies, but also build strong moral integrity and character within students as future leaders of noble conduct.

Nevertheless, this study has a number of limitations that must be honestly acknowledged. This research was conducted at only one location, namely SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya, so the findings produced may not be directly generalized to other Muhammadiyah schools that have different characteristics, school cultures, and facility conditions. In addition, the limitations of facilities and activity spaces found in the field indicate that the school's infrastructural conditions remain a factor influencing the quality and reach of HW program implementation optimally. Nevertheless, the school and instructors were able to overcome these limitations through various creative adaptive strategies, such as utilizing the school mosque as an alternative venue and dividing members into small groups, so that activities could continue to take place effectively and meaningfully. This situation simultaneously proves that the success of leadership development is not solely determined by the completeness of facilities, but also by the creativity, commitment, and program management capabilities possessed by the school and its instructors. From the perspective of implications, this research makes a meaningful theoretical contribution to the development of scientific studies on the formation of student leadership character through extracurricular activities, particularly in the context of Islamic scouting organizations within Muhammadiyah educational settings. The findings of this study affirm the relevance of the experiential learning approach in developing student leadership at the vocational high school level, while simultaneously strengthening the argument that value-based extracurricular activities make an indispensable contribution to shaping a generation of leaders who are of strong character, high integrity, and ready to face future challenges. Practically, these findings serve as an important recommendation for schools to continue optimizing HW programs through strengthening instructor capacity, providing more adequate facilities, and managing programs in a more structured and sustainable manner. For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct similar studies across multiple Muhammadiyah schools using a comparative approach in order to produce findings that are more comprehensive, representative, and broadly generalizable, in service of advancing leadership character education in Indonesia.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Contributions of the authors in this article: First author, contributed as concepts and drafters of the article, data analyzers, interpreters, writing the manuscript and critically revising the article; Second author, as the critically revising the article, and editing of the language of manuscript, collecting data and critically revising the article. All authors agree to take responsibility for all aspects of this work. Both authors contributed equally and approved the final version of the

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The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

Declaration of use artificial intelligence

The author uses generative artificial intelligence in this paper for the data analysis process.

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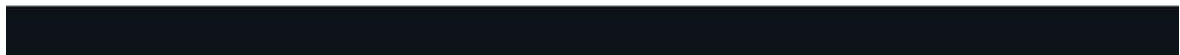
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