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School Strategies for Developing Student's Competitive Spirit in Pacitan Elementary School: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Objective: *This study aims to examine the strategies implemented by Pacitan Elementary School to develop student's competitive spirit, identify the obstacles encountered during implementation, and describe the efforts undertaken by the school to overcome these challenges.* ***Method:*** *This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The participants consisted of seven informants, including one principal as the key informant, three teachers, and three student's. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman through data reduction, coding, thematic grouping, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity was established through source triangulation.* ***Results:*** *The findings indicate that the school develops student's competitive spirit through systematic planning, learning and extracurricular activities, teacher mentoring, training, opportunities to participate in competitions, school support, and continuous evaluation. Student's competitive spirit is reflected in four aspects: achievement motivation, self-improvement, discipline, and perseverance. The implementation is influenced by differences in student's abilities and interests, limited training time and facilities, and student's lack of confidence. The school addresses these challenges through mentoring, additional training, motivation, time management, and optimization of available resources.* ***Novelty:*** *This study highlights competitive spirit as an integrated developmental process involving school leadership, teacher mentoring, student participation, competitive activities, and continuous school support, rather than merely focusing on student's achievement outcomes.*

INTRODUCTION

Primary education plays a crucial role in developing student's potential in both academic and non-academic areas. At the primary school level, a culture of achievement is not merely about attaining high grades or winning competitions, but also encompasses student's ability to develop their potential, demonstrate courage, increase motivation, and strive for better results. Fostering this potential requires an educational environment that provides opportunities through various activities. Previous research indicates that school strategies implemented through in-class and extracurricular activities can support the development of student's character and potential [1]. Teachers provide guidance, motivation, and mentorship, while instructional strategies can support student's independence and readiness to face challenges [2]. School principals also contribute through programs involving planning, implementation, and evaluation to support a culture of achievement [3], [4]. Character education through learning activities, extracurricular programs, role modeling, and habituation, as well as teacher support for learning motivation, further demonstrates that a culture of achievement involves various elements within the school environment [5], [6].

This phenomenon also occurs in Pacitan Regency. Preliminary observations and school achievement records indicate that student's at Pacitan Elementary School possess potential in both academic and non-academic areas. Between 2023 and 2025, student's achieved various accomplishments at the sub-district, regency, and provincial levels, including drawing, marching, mini-soccer, poetry reading, science olympiads, National Student Sports Olympiad swimming, National Student Art Festival and Competition dance, English, Natural Sciences, Mathematics, calligraphy, and jujitsu. In 2025, student's also won first place in the regency-level Science Olympiad. These achievements demonstrate opportunities for student's to develop their abilities through competitive activities. However, such accomplishments also depend on school strategies in identifying potential, providing opportunities, coaching, and supporting student's throughout the development process. Therefore, the achievements of Pacitan Elementary School constitute a phenomenon worthy of further study, particularly concerning school strategies for fostering student's competitive spirit.

Pedagogical strategies are important in developing student potential because learning aims not only to support academic achievement but also to cultivate motivation, independence, and courage in facing challenges. Their implementation relies on teachers who interact directly with student's by identifying their abilities and interests, providing guidance, motivation, practice, and mentorship [2], [5]. This process requires support from school leadership through program planning, implementation, and evaluation [3], [4]. The interaction among pedagogical processes, teacher roles, and principal support can contribute to student's development through academic and non-academic activities, including achievement motivation, discipline, courage, and resilience [1], [3], [6]. Achievement motivation and competitive spirit are related but distinct concepts. Achievement motivation refers to an individual's internal drive to achieve goals, improve performance, and attain success based on personal standards. In contrast, competitive spirit refers to the enthusiasm, effort, and persistence demonstrated when students participate in competitive situations. Thus, achievement motivation emphasizes the internal desire to achieve, whereas competitive spirit emphasizes how such motivation is expressed when student's face challenges or competition.

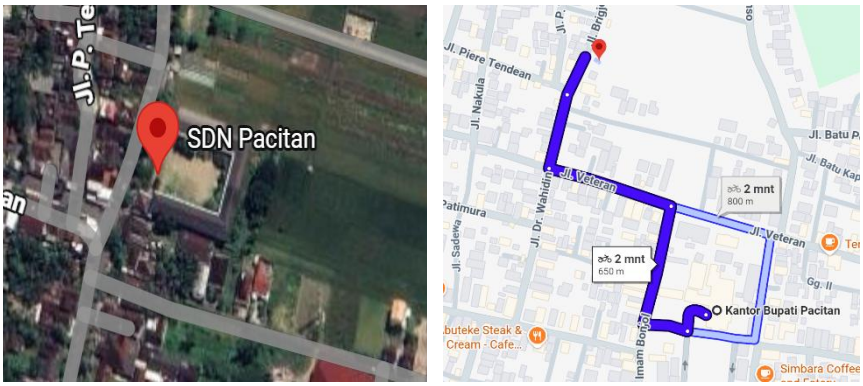
Amidst the increasingly competitive educational landscape, cultivating the ability to compete healthily from the elementary school level is important. Its development depends not only on student's individual capabilities but also on school strategies and support, including mentoring, guidance, opportunities to participate in competitions, and recognition. Although previous studies have addressed principal leadership, achievement culture, teacher performance, character education, and learning motivation, they have not specifically explained how school strategies are comprehensively implemented to cultivate a competitive spirit among elementary school student's [5], [6], [7], [8], [9] . Previous research tends to focus on educational quality, general character development, teacher roles, or specific aspects of student development. Therefore, there is a need to examine school strategies more comprehensively, including program planning, activity implementation, student mentoring, opportunities to participate in

competitions, school support, and evaluation. This study examines the school's strategies for fostering student's competitive spirit at Pacitan Elementary School, identifies the obstacles encountered during implementation, and describes the efforts undertaken by the school to overcome these challenges. Unlike studies that focus primarily on teachers, principals, or achievement culture separately, this study examines school strategies as an integrated process involving school leadership, teacher mentoring, student participation, competitive activities, and school support.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of fostering student's competitive spirit at the school level. The qualitative approach was used to describe the phenomenon based on conditions found directly in the field, including the strategies implemented by the school, obstacles encountered, and efforts undertaken to overcome them. The descriptive design was used to provide a factual description of the planning, implementation, and evaluation of school strategies in the context of Pacitan Elementary School [10].

The research was conducted at Pacitan Elementary School and involved seven participants, consisting of one principal, three teachers, and three student's. The principal was selected as the key informant because of the principal's role in designing school policies and making strategic decisions. Teachers were involved because they directly implemented strategies through learning and student development activities, while students were included because they directly experienced the process of developing a competitive spirit. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevant experience and information related to the research focus. Data collection continued until the information obtained was considered sufficient and data saturation was reached [11]. The research was conducted at Pacitan Elementary School. The location of the research site and its distance from the Pacitan Regent's Office are presented in Figure 1 below.



(a) (b)

Figure 1. (a) Location of Pacitan Elementary School; (b) Distance from Pacitan Regent's Office.
(Source: Google Maps)

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and documentation. Interviews with the principal and teachers focused on the planning, implementation, and obstacles encountered in fostering student's competitive spirit, while interviews with students explored their experiences and perceptions of competitive activities and school strategies. Direct observations were conducted to examine the implementation of student development activities, student participation in competitive activities, and interactions within the school environment. Documentation was used to support the findings through relevant school documents, photographs, and other documentation related to student activities and achievements [12], [13].

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During data reduction, relevant information from the interview, observation, and documentation data was selected and coded. The coded data were then grouped into themes and subthemes according to the research focus. Data were displayed descriptively through thematic summaries to identify patterns and relationships among the findings. Conclusions were drawn based on the identified patterns and were verified through direct interview quotations and interpretation of the participants' statements. The interpretation was further compared across data sources to ensure the consistency of the findings [14].

Data validity was established through source triangulation. The interpretation of interview data from the principal as the key informant was compared with information obtained from the three teachers and three student's. This comparison was conducted to identify the consistency and similarity of information concerning the school's strategies for fostering student's competitive spirit. The findings were further supported by observations and documentation, including photographs and relevant school records.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The research results were obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation involving the principal, teachers, and students. The interview data were coded based on 10 indicators and grouped into three main themes: school strategies, challenges and efforts, and manifestations of student's competitive spirit can be seen at Table 1 below.

Table 1. Thematic Summary of Research Findings

Theme	Focus	Main Findings
School Strategies	Planning, implementation, support, evaluation	Development of student's potential through learning activities, training, extracurricular activities, competitions, teacher guidance, and evaluation
Challenges and Efforts	Challenges and handling	Differences in ability, limited training time and facilities, and

		lack of confidence were addressed through mentoring, additional training, time management, and motivation
Competitive Spirit	Achievement, self-improvement, discipline, perseverance	Students demonstrated achievement motivation, willingness to improve, discipline, and persistence in facing difficulties.

The findings show that the school's strategy was implemented by considering student's potential and abilities. The principal stated, "The school plans programs by considering the student's potential and abilities." The teacher also explained, "Teachers are involved in identifying student's abilities and interests, as well as providing input on activities suited to the student's potential." From the student's perspective, participation in competitions was also related to their abilities and interests, as stated, "If I am considered capable of participating in the competition, the teacher usually invites me and lets me know what needs to be prepared."

The implementation involved learning activities, extracurricular activities, training, and competitions. The principal stated, "Implementation is carried out through instruction, extracurricular activities, training, and participation in various competitions." Teacher guidance was provided during preparation and training, while students were directly involved in preparing for competitions. One student stated, "I once participated in a storytelling competition. Before the contest, I practiced so I would be more fluent during my performance." The implementation of these strategies is reflected in student's participation and achievements in competitive activities, as shown in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2. Documentation of Student's Achievements in Competitive Activities (Source: Researcher's documentation)

The documentation shows student's participation and achievements in competitive activities. This documentation supports the interview and observation findings regarding the school's efforts to provide students with opportunities to develop their abilities and gain competitive experiences.

The school also provided support through facilities, teacher mentoring, opportunities to participate in competitions, and appreciation. Evaluation focused on student's development, participation, training process, abilities, and activity results. These findings indicate that the strategy was implemented as a continuous process of development rather than focusing solely on competition outcomes.

The implementation also faced several challenges, including differences in student's abilities and interests, limited training time, limited facilities, and lack of confidence. The principal stated, "The challenges that arise include differences in student's abilities and interests, limited time for practice, and a lack of certain facilities." A student also reported, "I sometimes feel nervous or struggle when I have to perform in front of a large audience." To address these challenges, the school provided mentoring, additional training, time management, motivation, and optimization of available facilities.

The student's competitive spirit was reflected in four aspects: achievement motivation, self-improvement, discipline, and perseverance. The student stated, "I want to achieve good results and make my teachers and school proud. I also want to improve my abilities compared to before." Regarding self-improvement, another statement showed that students continued to learn and practice: "I keep learning and practicing to improve my skills. If I can't do something yet or still make mistakes, I try again." Discipline was reflected in punctuality, following training schedules, and listening to teachers' directions. Perseverance was shown through student's willingness to try again when facing difficulties, as stated, "If I encounter difficulties, I try again instead of quitting immediately."

Discussion

The findings show that school strategies in fostering student's competitive spirit are implemented through planning, activity implementation, teacher mentoring, school support, competition opportunities, and evaluation. This finding is in line with Shinta and Ain [1], who explain the importance of school strategies in developing student's character at the elementary-school level. The present study extends this finding by showing that school strategies can also be directed toward developing student's competitive spirit through academic and non-academic activities.

Teacher involvement is an important component of the strategy because teachers identify student's abilities and interests, provide training, give motivation, and accompany student's during competitive activities. This finding is consistent with Bukit et al. [2], who discuss the role of teacher strategies in developing student's independence, and Ramadan et al. [5], who emphasize the role of teachers in increasing student's learning motivation. In this study, teacher mentoring was also important when student's

experienced nervousness or difficulties, allowing students to receive guidance, practice, and feedback during the preparation process.

School leadership also supports the development of student's competitive spirit through program planning, implementation, and evaluation. This finding is consistent with Arifin and Yusrolana [3], who discuss the role of school leadership in building an achievement culture. Similarly, Pujiningsih et al. [4] describe school leadership strategies through systematic planning, implementation, and evaluation. In the present study, these processes were reflected in the school's efforts to provide opportunities for student's to participate in competitions and develop their potential.

The findings further show that the implementation of the strategy needs to consider student's different abilities, interests, confidence levels, and available resources. Challenges such as limited training time and facilities were addressed through mentoring, additional training, motivation, and optimization of available resources. This finding is relevant to Handoko et al. [6], who discuss strategies and challenges in implementing character education in elementary schools. Thus, competitive activities in this study function not only as opportunities to achieve awards but also as experiences for developing discipline, confidence, and perseverance.

Another important finding concerns the way student achievement is understood. The results indicate that development is not measured only through competition outcomes but also through student's participation, effort, discipline, willingness to improve, and persistence in facing difficulties. This finding is related to previous studies concerning achievement culture and achievement motivation [3], [8], [15], [16]. However, this study specifically places these aspects within the development of student's competitive spirit, which is reflected in achievement motivation, self-improvement, discipline, and perseverance.

The development of competitive spirit at Pacitan Elementary School is also supported through non-academic and cultural activities, including traditional Javanese gamelan group *(karawitan)* and drum band. These activities provide opportunities for students to develop their interests and abilities through training and competition. This finding provides a contextual contribution to previous research on school achievement strategies by showing that competitive spirit can be developed through student's talents and interests, combined with teacher mentoring and school support.

Overall, the findings indicate that fostering student's competitive spirit involves the interaction of school leadership, teacher mentoring, opportunities for practice and competition, and continuous evaluation. The distinctive finding of this study is that competitive spirit is developed not merely as a desire to obtain achievements, but as a process of developing student's abilities, discipline, courage to participate, and perseverance when facing difficulties.

The findings suggest that these strategies work when school support is implemented as a continuous developmental process rather than being oriented solely toward winning competitions. The strategies are strengthened when student's receive opportunities to practice, guidance from teachers, encouragement to participate, and

recognition of their efforts and progress. Under these conditions, competitive activities become a learning experience that encourages student's to develop their abilities, gain confidence, and remain persistent when facing difficulties. Thus, the effectiveness of the strategy is not determined only by competition outcomes, but also by the extent to which the school creates an environment that values student's willingness to try, learn from difficulties, and improve continuously.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: The study concludes that school strategies for developing students' competitive spirit at Pacitan Elementary School are implemented through systematic planning, learning and extracurricular activities, teacher mentoring, training, competition participation opportunities, school support, and continuous evaluation. Students' competitive spirit is reflected in four aspects: achievement motivation, self-improvement, discipline, and perseverance. Overall, competitive spirit is developed through a continuous process that encourages students to improve their abilities, participate actively, maintain discipline, and persevere when facing difficulties. **Implication :** Schools should provide structured and continuous support for developing students' competitive spirit through mentoring, training, motivation, competition opportunities, and the optimization of available resources. These efforts should accommodate differences in students' abilities and interests while strengthening their confidence and encouraging self-development. **Limitation :** This study is limited by its single-site qualitative design at Pacitan Elementary School, making the findings contextual and limiting their generalizability to other primary schools. The implementation of strategies is also influenced by differences in student abilities and interests, limited training time and facilities, and students' lack of confidence. **Future Research :** Future research should consider multi-site or comparative qualitative designs involving rural and urban schools to explore broader institutional dynamics in fostering students' competitive spirit. Further studies may also examine how school strategies can be adapted to different student characteristics, resource availability, and educational contexts.

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