

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN SHAPING THE DISCIPLINARY CHARACTER OF UPPER-CLASS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the role of teachers in shaping the disciplinary character of upper elementary school students at SD Air Louw, located on Jalan Hatiari, Dusun Air Louw, Nusaniwe District, Ambon City. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and documentation, with five teachers as the main participants. Data analysis was conducted based on Thomas Lickona's character education theory, which emphasizes three main components of character formation: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The results of the study indicate that teachers play an important role in shaping students' disciplinary character through modeling, positive reinforcement, behavior reinforcement, and consistent enforcement of rules. Teachers also create a conducive learning environment for character development through communicative and reflective interactions. This study concludes that active involvement and moral awareness of teachers are key factors in the success of character education in elementary schools. These findings can serve as a reference for the development of more systematic and applicable character education programs at the elementary school level.

Keywords: The Role of Teachers, Discipline, Character Education

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan peran guru dalam membentuk karakter disiplin siswa sekolah dasar kelas atas di SD Air Louw, yang berlokasi di Jalan Hatiari, Dusun Air Louw, Kecamatan Nusaniwe, Kota Ambon. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan dokumentasi, dengan lima orang guru sebagai partisipan utama. Analisis data dilakukan berdasarkan pendekatan teori pendidikan karakter dari Thomas Lickona, yang menekankan tiga komponen utama pembentukan karakter: moral knowing, moral feeling, dan moral action. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru berperan penting dalam membentuk karakter disiplin siswa melalui keteladanan, pembiasaan positif, penguatan perilaku, dan penegakan aturan yang konsisten. Guru juga menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang kondusif untuk pengembangan karakter melalui interaksi yang komunikatif dan reflektif. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa keterlibatan aktif dan kesadaran nilai moral dari guru menjadi faktor kunci dalam keberhasilan pendidikan karakter di sekolah dasar. Temuan ini dapat menjadi acuan bagi pengembangan program pendidikan karakter yang lebih sistematis dan aplikatif di tingkat sekolah dasar.

Kata kunci: Peran Guru, Karakter Disiplin, Pendidikan Karakter

INTRODUCTION

Character education is one of the fundamental pillars in shaping a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also morally grounded, socially responsible, and able to live harmoniously within the community. In the realm of elementary education, this form of education holds a particularly crucial position because it lays the groundwork for a student's attitude, behavior, and moral compass from an early age. Among the many character values that must be cultivated, discipline emerges as a pivotal virtue. Discipline serves as the bedrock for fostering a responsible, orderly, and rule-abiding demeanor in children (Zain & Andi, 2020). It teaches students how to manage their time, fulfill obligations, and respect social norms, which are indispensable traits in both academic and social spheres. At the elementary level, especially in the upper grades such as fourth, fifth, and sixth, children begin to acquire a more sophisticated comprehension of moral and social values. This developmental stage marks a period when students are increasingly capable of differentiating between right and wrong, understanding the consequences of their actions, and showing empathy toward others. Hence, this stage becomes a strategic moment for instilling discipline as part of broader character education efforts. In this regard, the teacher's role becomes exceptionally central and transformative. Teachers are not only purveyors of academic content but also moral guides, behavior exemplars, and facilitators of ethical development (Wibowo et al., 2020).

At SD Negeri Air Louw, the implementation of character education with an emphasis on discipline reflects a conscious and collective effort to nurture morally upright and responsible individuals. The school recognizes that the cultivation of discipline must be embedded not just through formal rules and punishments but through a nurturing learning environment where values are modeled, discussed, and practiced. The role of teachers, therefore, becomes integral in this transformative process. Teachers at SD Negeri Air Louw are tasked with the responsibility of being consistent role models, guiding students not only with their words but more importantly through their actions and interactions. How a teacher conducts the class, maintains punctuality, addresses students, and responds to misbehavior all provide daily lessons in discipline. In-depth exploration of the teacher's role in this context reveals various pedagogical strategies and approaches that are employed to instill the value of discipline among upper-grade students. These include the use of routine activities, the establishment of classroom rules co-created with students, integration of moral stories in lessons, and consistent feedback systems. More importantly, the approach is not limited to punitive measures but extends to proactive and preventive strategies that encourage students to internalize discipline as a self-regulatory behavior rather than imposed control.

Thomas Lickona's theoretical framework on character education offers a comprehensive lens through which these efforts can be understood. Lickona identifies three core components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, which together encompass the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of character development (Taufik, 2020). The teachers at SD Negeri Air Louw operationalize this framework by fostering

students' understanding of right and wrong (moral knowing), nurturing empathy and emotional engagement with values (moral feeling), and guiding consistent value-based actions (moral action). This holistic approach ensures that discipline is not taught in isolation but as part of a broader cultivation of moral integrity. Discipline, as understood in educational theory, involves much more than mere obedience to rules. It includes the ability of students to regulate their own behavior, respect others' rights, fulfill responsibilities, and show consistency in efforts and attitudes. In a school setting, this translates to punctuality, completion of assignments, orderly conduct in and out of classrooms, and respect for teachers and peers. Instilling such traits in students requires a deliberate and structured effort on the part of teachers. The process involves repeated modeling of behavior, reinforcement through praise and correction, creation of a disciplined classroom climate, and incorporation of reflective dialogues where students are encouraged to think critically about their actions.

Furthermore, the relationship between teachers and students plays a significant role in shaping behavior. A respectful, caring, and supportive teacher-student relationship fosters a sense of security and motivation among students, making them more receptive to guidance. At SD Negeri Air Louw, such relational dynamics are consciously cultivated through regular class meetings, mentoring programs, and individual attention to students with behavioral challenges. Teachers actively listen to students' concerns, provide constructive feedback, and help them set personal behavioral goals, thereby personalizing the discipline-building process. Several pedagogical strategies are consistently employed to support discipline formation. These include the establishment of daily routines such as morning greetings, classroom cleaning schedules, and structured transitions between activities. Such routines not only promote a sense of order but also help in developing students' time management and cooperative skills. Moreover, the use of visual aids like posters displaying classroom rules, motivational quotes, and behavior charts reinforces expectations and encourages self-monitoring among students. Teachers also utilize storytelling, role-playing, and discussions to explore ethical dilemmas and discipline-related themes, making the concept of discipline more relatable and internalized.

Beyond strategies, the school's culture and environment play an influential role in the success of character education. A school environment that supports discipline through consistency in rules, collaboration among staff, and parental involvement enhances the likelihood of successful behavioral outcomes. SD Negeri Air Louw emphasizes the importance of involving parents through periodic meetings, home visits, and communication books, ensuring that the discipline taught in school is reinforced at home. This home-school collaboration fosters a consistent message and shared responsibility in shaping student character. Despite the best efforts, teachers also face several challenges in implementing discipline-based character education. Among the common inhibiting factors are differences in parenting styles at home, lack of role models outside the school, socio-economic constraints, and students' exposure to media content that contradicts the values being taught. These challenges often result in inconsistencies in behavior,

requiring teachers to employ patience, creativity, and persistence. Additionally, large class sizes and administrative burdens can limit teachers' capacity to provide individualized attention, further complicating the process of character formation. However, supporting factors also abound. The commitment of school leadership in prioritizing character education, availability of training for teachers, and the presence of a collaborative culture among educators significantly enhance the success of discipline-building efforts. At SD Negeri Air Louw, the school principal plays a proactive role in supporting teachers, facilitating coordination meetings to evaluate progress, and providing professional development opportunities that enhance pedagogical competencies in character education. This institutional backing empowers teachers and affirms the importance of their role.

METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative research type, which is deemed appropriate for exploring and understanding the experiences, strategies, and perspectives of teachers in shaping the disciplinary character of students (Budianto, 2024). The qualitative method allows the researcher to deeply examine the social and cultural context that influences the implementation of character education, especially discipline, within the school environment. The study was conducted at SD Negeri Air Louw, located on Jalan Hatiari, Dusun Air Louw, Kecamatan Nusaniwe, Kota Ambon. The research subjects consisted of five upper-grade teachers who taught in grades IV, V, and VI and who had direct involvement and experience in guiding and instilling discipline values in students.

To obtain comprehensive data, several data collection techniques were employed. In-depth interviews were conducted with the five teachers to gather detailed information about the approaches and strategies they used, as well as the challenges and successes they experienced in instilling discipline. In addition to interviews, documentation was also collected, including learning activity notes, class rules, and other school documentation related to character education initiatives. This documentation served to support and complement the information obtained from the interviews. The data analysis process utilized the Miles and Huberman model, which involves three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction involved selecting and simplifying relevant information from the field. The presentation of data was organized in narrative form and included excerpts from interviews to facilitate understanding. The process concluded with drawing meaningful conclusions and verifying them repeatedly to ensure accuracy and credibility. To validate the findings, data triangulation was carried out by comparing different sources and techniques, such as aligning interview results with documentation and reconfirming statements with the same informants multiple times. This process ensured the reliability and trustworthiness of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The role of teachers in shaping the character of discipline among upper-grade students at SD Negeri Air Louw is not only central but also multifaceted, encompassing the functions of modeling, guiding, reinforcing, and collaborating with various stakeholders to create a consistent and supportive learning environment. The results of this study reveal how teachers at SD Negeri Air Louw internalize and operationalize character education, particularly discipline, in their daily educational practices. Grounded in Thomas Lickona's character education framework, which emphasizes moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, the teachers' roles manifest in a series of deliberate actions that aim to shape the values, attitudes, and behavior of students (Suartama et al., 2020).

One of the key findings is the way teachers position themselves as role models in the classroom. They understand that students learn more from what they see than what they are told. Teachers demonstrate discipline through punctual attendance, consistent implementation of class rules, and ethical behavior in speech and action. These practices are not only instructive but also reflective of the moral action component described by Lickona. The presence of a consistent role model allows students to internalize the values of discipline through observation and imitation. As expressed by one teacher, "We can't just tell the children to be disciplined if we ourselves come late or are inconsistent. They learn from what they see." This realization underscores the need for teachers to reflect discipline not merely as a concept but as a way of being.

In addition to modeling, teachers at SD Negeri Air Louw apply habituation strategies to cultivate discipline. These include establishing daily routines, organizing structured schedules, and collaboratively creating class rules with students. This process of habituation is not passive; it is actively reinforced through positive feedback mechanisms. When students demonstrate disciplined behavior, such as punctuality or timely submission of assignments, they receive praise, additional responsibilities, or public recognition in the classroom. One teacher shared, "I usually praise the children who always come on time and collect assignments on time; sometimes I ask them to help me as the group leader." These acts of acknowledgment serve to instill a sense of pride and self-worth in students, aligning with the moral feeling component of character education. It emphasizes emotional engagement with moral values and helps students feel good about doing good.

Teachers also apply classroom rules consistently while maintaining a humane approach to discipline enforcement. Rather than relying on punitive or authoritarian methods, the focus is on educational discipline, which may take the form of verbal warnings, written reminders, or self-reflection tasks. Teachers seek to understand the reasons behind students' misbehavior and provide opportunities for improvement. One teacher explained, "If there is a violation, we talk to them, ask the reason, then allow them to correct. But the rules must still be enforced so that they understand what is right." This strategy corresponds to Lickona's moral knowing aspect, where students are guided to

understand not just the content of the rules but the ethical rationale behind them. It cultivates critical moral reasoning and encourages students to take responsibility for their actions (Suartama et al., 2020).

The effectiveness of these strategies is further supported by several facilitating factors. The support from the school principal plays a significant role in providing policy consistency and professional encouragement for teachers. Parental involvement is another vital factor, as families that reinforce school values at home enhance students' consistency in behavior. Moreover, the school environment itself is organized in a way that supports discipline, with structured spaces and routines that reinforce orderly behavior. However, the process is not without its challenges. Teachers face several inhibiting factors that complicate the formation of disciplined character. One major obstacle is the student's family background, particularly when parents are inconsistent or do not emphasize discipline at home. This inconsistency creates confusion and undermines the behavioral norms taught in school. Another challenge is the discrepancy between the school environment and students' social environment outside of school, including peer influence and exposure to media that may glorify undisciplined behavior. Additionally, the relatively large number of students per class makes it difficult for teachers to provide individualized guidance and monitoring, especially for students who require more attention or reinforcement.

Despite these challenges, the findings of this study confirm the significant impact of teachers on the formation of disciplinary character. At SD Negeri Air Louw, teachers adopt a holistic approach that integrates moral reasoning, emotional engagement, and consistent action. Character education is not treated as a separate subject but is interwoven into all aspects of teaching and learning. The strategies they use—such as modeling, reinforcement, routine building, and inclusive communication—are not only effective but also adaptive to the developmental stages of upper-grade elementary students. Importantly, the teachers' approach reflects a deep understanding of child development, recognizing that discipline at this age should not be imposed but cultivated through internal motivation and a supportive relationship with adults.

The collaboration between teachers and parents is another cornerstone of success. Teachers maintain communication with parents through formal and informal channels, ensuring that discipline is not confined to the school space but extends into students' daily lives at home. Parent-teacher meetings are used as forums to align expectations and share strategies for consistent discipline. This shared responsibility reinforces the importance of discipline as a value that must be sustained across different environments. It also helps address inconsistencies by creating a feedback loop between school and home, which strengthens the moral message being imparted.

In summary, the role of teachers at SD Negeri Air Louw in shaping the discipline character of upper-class students is exemplary of best practices in character education. They embody the role of educators not only in the academic sense but also as moral guides

who actively influence the behavior and values of their students. Through strategies grounded in the theoretical framework of Thomas Lickona, teachers engage students in a process of moral development that is both cognitive and emotional. They foster a school culture that promotes responsibility, order, and respect through concrete actions and consistent reinforcement. Moreover, the challenges faced do not hinder their commitment but rather inspire more adaptive and creative approaches to discipline formation.

The process of instilling discipline among students is a long-term endeavor that requires consistency, patience, and a deep understanding of students' social and emotional development. Teachers at SD Negeri Air Louw demonstrate that character education is most effective when it is embedded in everyday practices and reinforced through meaningful interactions. The findings of this study highlight that teacher consistency, role modeling, and a supportive school culture are instrumental in developing students who are disciplined, responsible, and capable of regulating their own behavior. Moreover, the alignment between school policies, parental involvement, and teacher strategies ensures that discipline becomes not merely a rule to follow but a value to live by. The integration of character education into the heart of the school's practices reflects an understanding that education is not only about knowledge acquisition but also about shaping individuals who are ready to contribute positively to society.

DISCUSSION

The development of discipline in elementary school students is a complex process involving various educational actors, with teachers occupying a central position as moral agents and primary educators. Research findings at Air Louw State Elementary School indicate that teachers play an active and holistic role in shaping the discipline of upper-grade students. Teachers not only convey instructions regarding disciplinary behavior, but they also exemplify, habituate, reinforce, and guide students through a humane, educational, and consistent approach. This approach is in line with Thomas Lickona's character education theory, which states that character is formed through the processes of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Riki et al., 2024). Teachers at Air Louw State Elementary School implement these three components in their daily teaching practices and behavior formation. One of the most powerful dimensions in the formation of disciplinary character is teacher modeling. Modeling is the most effective way to internalize values, especially for elementary school children who are still in the phase of imitating the behavior of adults around them.

Teachers at Air Louw State Elementary School understand that they are the main role models for students in terms of behavior. Punctuality in arriving at school, consistency in enforcing classroom rules, and ethical speech and behavior in front of students are part of their strategy to shape students' disciplinary attitudes. This demonstrates a close connection with the moral action aspect of Lickona's theory, where teachers demonstrate moral behavior that can be observed, imitated, and used as a standard by students in their daily lives. In addition to being role models, teachers also use positive habit formation

and reinforcement strategies to instill the value of discipline. Habituation is carried out through routine activities such as setting daily schedules, dividing class responsibilities, establishing and agreeing on class rules with students, and conducting regular behavioral reflections. Through habit formation, students are trained to understand the importance of order, responsibility, and obedience to rules as part of social life at school (Onishchuk et al., 2020). This strategy is enriched with positive reinforcement given when students demonstrate disciplined behavior, such as praise, assignment as group leaders, or mentioning students' names as role models in front of the class.

This strategy is related to moral feelings, which cultivate pride, confidence, and happiness in students when they act following moral values. Thus, discipline is not only an external obligation but is internalized as part of students' moral identity. Teachers also play the role of consistent yet humane enforcers of rules. They impose sanctions or reprimands for rule violations not through physical punishment or shaming students, but through educational approaches such as written warnings, invitations to reflect, or personal dialogue to understand the background of the violation. Mustikaningrum et al., (2021) said consistency in enforcing rules is important because it sends the message that discipline is not just school rules, but values that have a moral and social logic basis. In this context, teachers guide students to understand the reasons and meaning behind the rules, not just to obey them out of fear of punishment. This process reflects the moral knowing aspect, where students are helped to cognitively understand why disciplined behavior is important, both for themselves and their community. The results of this study also show that the process of character building cannot stand alone without support from the surrounding environment. Supporting factors include support from the principal, parental involvement, and a well-organized and conducive school environment.

The principal provides support in the form of policies that promote character education, provides training or guidance for teachers, and gives teachers room to innovate in their teaching. Meanwhile, parental involvement plays a major role in reinforcing the values of discipline instilled at school so that they continue to be carried over to the home. Regular communication between teachers and parents serves as a bridge to align perceptions and strengthen collaboration in shaping student behavior. The physical and social environment of the school also plays an important role in shaping disciplinary behavior (Malik, 2023). Clean and tidy classrooms, orderly schedules, and a school culture that encourages active student participation create an atmosphere that supports the internalization of disciplinary values. This is in line with Vygotsky's learning environment theory, which states that learning and behavior formation occur through social interaction in an environment that allows children to experience these values directly. In other words, schools become social laboratories where students experience, evaluate, and practice the values taught. However, there are several challenges faced by teachers in shaping students' discipline. One of the main challenges is the family background of students who do not support disciplined behavior, either due to irregular parenting patterns, lack of attention, or a permissive home environment. The discrepancy

between the values taught at school and the children's experiences at home causes moral confusion that can hinder the internalization of values. Teachers also face challenges from external conditions such as the influence of the media and social environments that tend to be permissive or contrary to disciplinary values. Meanwhile, large class sizes also make it difficult for teachers to give individual attention to each student, especially those who need a special approach. In facing these challenges, teachers demonstrate adaptive and creative attitudes. They do not give up on the conditions but continue to seek the best strategies to touch the hearts of students.

Teachers develop personal communication with students, use individual approaches for students with problems, and collaborate with parents and fellow teachers to find appropriate solutions. They are also active in building an inclusive and supportive school culture so that students feel valued, accepted, and motivated to change. In this context, Carl Rogers' humanistic approach is relevant to explain how teachers accompany students with empathy, sincerity, and unconditional positive regard. This approach makes students feel psychologically safe, making it easier for them to accept the values that are being instilled (Elbes & Oktaviani, 2022). In addition, research shows that the success of character building is greatly influenced by consistency in the teacher's approach. Teachers who are consistent in their words and actions, and who do not easily change in enforcing rules, can create strong trust and role models in students. This consistency is important because elementary school-aged children are still in the concrete operational stage according to Piaget, where their understanding of rules is highly dependent on stable and tangible patterns in their environment (Hidayati et al., 2020). When teachers are consistent in enforcing rules and rewarding positive behavior, students learn to understand the logical and moral connections between actions and their consequences. Overall, the results of this study reinforce the idea that teachers are a key element in the formation of discipline in elementary school students. By integrating moral values into learning and daily interactions, teachers are able to shape students who are responsible, orderly, and capable of self-regulation.

The strategies used by teachers at SD Negeri Air Louw reflect a comprehensive character approach, in which values are not only taught but also instilled through experience, real-life examples, and emotional reinforcement. The success of this program demonstrates that character education is not a short-term project but a continuous process that requires dedication, reflection, and synergy between teachers, students, parents, and the entire school community. In the context of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of education, the role of teachers can be positioned as part of the microsystem that has a direct influence on children's development. Teachers are not merely individuals who deliver material, but also part of the educational ecosystem that shapes children's values, attitudes, and behaviors holistically. Therefore, the consistent implementation of the character-building program at SD Negeri Air Louw can serve as a model for other schools in developing values-based and locally rooted character education. With the support of a strong school system, active parent cooperation, and reflective and professional teachers, character

education can become a strong foundation in preparing the future generation to be noble and responsible. If the existing challenges can be overcome through a collaborative and sustainable approach, the process of shaping students' discipline will be more effective. Schools, as social institutions, must function not only as places for cognitive learning but also as environments that support students' moral and emotional growth. Teachers, in this context, play a strategic role as guides who not only direct behavior but also shape children's hearts and minds through meaningful experiences, empathetic relationships, and learning that is relevant to their lives. The development of disciplined character is not the result of a single method but a combination of modeling, habit formation, reinforcement, consistency, communication, and empathy carried out synergistically.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of qualitative research conducted at SD Negeri Air Louw, it can be concluded that teachers hold a central and strategic role in shaping the disciplinary character of upper-grade elementary school students. This role is carried out through exemplary behavior, routine habituation, positive reinforcement, and consistent enforcement of rules with an educational and humanistic approach. Teachers serve as models whose behaviors are observed and imitated by students, and they also build structures and routines that encourage students to behave in disciplined ways. Following the theory of character education proposed by Thomas Lickona, the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action within the learning process has proven effective in instilling discipline among students. The study also highlights that the success of character education depends not only on the teacher's role but also on supporting factors such as school leadership, a conducive learning environment, and the active involvement of parents. On the other hand, several challenges arise, especially from the family background of students, inconsistencies between home and school environments, and peer influences outside of school. Based on these findings, several suggestions can be proposed. For teachers, it is important to continue innovating and developing learning strategies that can strengthen the value of discipline in a consistent and sustainable manner. Strengthening communication between teachers, students, and parents is also essential in ensuring that the values instilled at school are reinforced at home. For schools, it is recommended to provide more structural support and programs related to character education, including training for teachers to enhance their capacity in managing values-based learning. For parents, there is a need to play a more active role in creating a home environment that supports the development of disciplined behavior. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of the study by involving more participants or adopting quantitative methods to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of character education programs in broader contexts.

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