

THE ROLE OF THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM IN DEVELOPING DISCIPLINE ATTITUDES OF FIFTH-GRADE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

The low discipline of elementary school students, which is reflected in delays, irregularities in following classroom procedures, and weak adherence to school norms, shows that the formation of discipline cannot depend on formal instruction and written regulations alone. In basic education, the internalization of disciplinary values takes place through implicit daily experiences. This study aims to analyze the role of hidden curriculum in shaping the discipline attitude of grade V elementary school students and identify supporting and inhibiting factors for its implementation. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data was collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation review, then analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model that included reduction, presentation, and verification of data repeatedly. The results of the study show that hidden curriculum operates through three main mechanisms, namely the daily routine of the school, the role model of teachers, and social norms that are not written in the classroom culture. These three mechanisms synergistically shape student discipline behavior, including punctuality, adherence to procedures, academic independence, and the ability to self-regulate social interactions. Supporting factors include the stability of school culture and teacher commitment, while inhibiting factors include inconsistency in disciplinary practices, diversity of family backgrounds, and limited facilities. This study concludes that hidden curriculum has a strategic role in building student discipline in a natural, humanistic, and sustainable manner through strengthening the culture of habituation in elementary schools. This study provides empirical evidence regarding the operational mechanism of hidden curriculum in the formation of discipline in Indonesian elementary schools.

Keywords: *hidden curriculum; student discipline; elementary school.*

Abstrak

Rendahnya kedisiplinan peserta didik sekolah dasar, yang tercermin dalam keterlambatan, ketidakteraturan mengikuti prosedur kelas, serta lemahnya kepatuhan terhadap norma sekolah, menunjukkan bahwa pembentukan disiplin tidak dapat bergantung pada instruksi formal dan regulasi tertulis semata. Dalam pendidikan dasar, internalisasi nilai disiplin banyak berlangsung melalui pengalaman keseharian yang bersifat implisit. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran *hidden curriculum* dalam membentuk sikap disiplin siswa kelas V sekolah dasar serta mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor pendukung dan penghambat implementasinya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, dan telaah dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña yang meliputi reduksi, penyajian, dan verifikasi data secara berulang. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *hidden curriculum* beroperasi melalui tiga mekanisme utama, yaitu rutinitas harian sekolah, keteladanan guru, dan norma sosial tidak tertulis dalam budaya kelas. Ketiga mekanisme tersebut secara sinergis membentuk perilaku disiplin siswa, meliputi ketepatan waktu, ketaatan terhadap prosedur, kemandirian akademik, dan kemampuan regulasi diri dalam interaksi sosial. Faktor pendukung meliputi stabilitas budaya sekolah dan komitmen guru, sedangkan faktor penghambat mencakup ketidakkonsistenan praktik pendisiplinan, keberagaman latar belakang keluarga, dan keterbatasan fasilitas. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa *hidden curriculum* memiliki peran strategis dalam membangun disiplin siswa secara alami, humanis, dan berkelanjutan melalui penguatan kultur pembiasaan di sekolah dasar. Studi ini memberikan bukti empiris mengenai mekanisme operasional *hidden curriculum* dalam pembentukan disiplin di sekolah dasar Indonesia.

Kata kunci: *hidden curriculum; disiplin siswa; sekolah dasar.*

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Introduction

The phenomenon of low student discipline is still a significant problem in various elementary schools. Teachers often face various forms of disciplinary violations, such as late attendance, non-compliance with class procedures, and behavior that interferes with the learning process. These problems are not incidental but reflect systemic problems that are also identified at the national level through the results of international assessments. The findings of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2022 show that around 25% of Indonesian students have difficulty concentrating on most subjects, 24% admit that they do not listen to their teachers' explanations, and 25–27% experience learning interruptions due to the use of personal and peer digital devices (OECD, 2023). The data indicates that the classroom discipline climate is still not conducive, so the formation of disciplined behavior requires a sustainable, contextual, and culturally rooted approach, not solely through the enforcement of rules that are momentary.

This condition confirms that the formation of disciplinary attitudes cannot be left only to formal teaching mechanisms or the enforcement of explicit rules. An approach that is able to instill disciplined values through daily experiences in the school environment is needed. In the context of Indonesia's education policy, the Independent Curriculum places the 8 Dimensions of the Graduate Profile as the main orientation for the formation of students' character, including discipline aspects. Through co-curricular guidelines, the importance of habituating character values through cross-activity projects that are integrated with school culture is emphasized. This implies that the formation of discipline is not enough to be done through teaching materials but needs to be strengthened by school ecology that normalizes orderly, timely, and procedural compliance. In addition, it can also be done by instilling civic disposition from an early age so that it is able to filter negative things that are not in accordance with Indonesian culture, be able to adapt and compete in the scope of the global community and can build Indonesia into a better country in accordance with the values of Pancasila, of course with the involvement of all parties (Sama' & Aini, 2022).

In practice, school ecology works through habits, examples, and unwritten norms that direct student behavior, which in educational studies is known as the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum encompasses a set of social values, norms, and practices that are not explicitly formulated in formal curriculum documents, but are internalized through interactions between teachers, students, and the school environment. Through this implicit mechanism, disciplinary values are formed naturally, sustainably, and not instructive-formal. Therefore, strengthening the hidden curriculum is a relevant strategy in fostering student discipline in a contextual and in-depth manner, especially at the elementary school level which is a transition phase towards greater independence and social responsibility. In addition, hidden curriculum also contributes to building a positive emotional atmosphere and fostering a sense of belonging to the school, which in turn increases student motivation and involvement in social learning (Ghanbari et al., 2025).

Conceptually, hidden curriculum is a fundamental concept in education that refers to values, norms, behavior patterns, and moral messages that students learn indirectly through

daily activities at school. These elements work through culture, structure, and social interactions that are not explicitly written in the formal curriculum. (Rossouw, 2023) defines the hidden curriculum as an "implicit educational domain" that runs parallel to the written curriculum, but has a significant influence on shaping students' character, social identity, and moral sensitivity. Character education itself can be built through extracurricular activities, habituation at school, and classroom learning, and will be more effective if supported by cooperation between schools and parents (Salsabillah & Tirtoni, 2025).

In the context of basic education, the role of the hidden curriculum is increasingly crucial because students are in a sensitive cognitive, social, and moral development phase. (Lischka-schmidt & Lischka-schmidt, 2025) show that daily routines, repetitive interaction patterns, and school rituals form the so-called visible hidden curriculum, which is a process of internalizing values that takes place slowly through social habits and experiences. Understanding the hidden curriculum in this phase is important to ensure that the school environment makes a positive contribution to the formation of children's character. In general, hidden curriculum plays a role in implicitly transferring values, attitudes, and skills to students, especially in the development of social skills, creativity, and discipline (Kian et al., 2020).

Theoretically, hidden curriculum can be explained through various conceptual frameworks. The perspective of symbolic interactionism views that students learn values through the interpretation of symbols and social actions, such as gestures, expressions, and teachers' communication patterns. Socialization theory places school as the primary socialization agent after the family, where childhood experiences in school have long-term implications for social preferences and moral development (Ito et al., 2022). Bandura's social learning theory emphasizes that children learn through observation and imitation, so that the teacher's example becomes an important foundation in the formation of discipline. Meanwhile, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory views schools as microsystems that have a direct influence on children's development, where hidden curriculum operates through micro-interactions in daily life.

According to (Rossouw, 2023) the hidden curriculum has several main dimensions, namely organizational, instructional, social relational, and moral-ethical dimensions. The organizational dimension includes the time structure, order, and rhythm of school activities that contribute to the formation of habits such as punctuality and the ability to manage activities (Johansen & Solli, 2022). The instructional dimension is reflected in teaching strategies, patterns of academic interaction, and consistency of teacher reinforcement that helps develop students' self-control and perseverance (Ito et al., 2022). The social relational dimension includes interpersonal relationships between teachers and students as well as between students, where informal interaction and empathic communication play an important role in the moral formation of learners (Park et al., 2023). The moral-ethical dimension includes values such as honesty, empathy, discipline, and responsibility learned by example.

Discipline itself refers to the ability of students to regulate behavior, obey rules, and act according to applicable values (Roza & Witanto, 2024). In daily school life, students learn discipline not only through written rules, but also through hands-on experience that is manifested in routines such as morning queues, class pickets, joint prayer, and transitions between activities. Habituation that is carried out repeatedly has been proven to be able to form disciplinary behavior patterns (Ito et al., 2022). Teachers as observed and imitated figures have a central role, where the teacher's disciplinary attitude includes simple matters such as punctuality, conveys a strong message of value to students (Billa et al., 2025). Warm and

empathetic interactions also make learners feel valued, which is the basis for the growth of intrinsic discipline (Park et al., 2023).

Learners' ability to regulate thoughts, emotions, and actions known as self-regulated learning (SRL) develops in a consistent and supportive learning environment. (Chen et al., 2024) show that a stable classroom atmosphere helps learners find a learning rhythm, while (Cunha et al., 2023) assert that daily routines provide a structure that allows for the development of learning independence. Since discipline is an integral part of SRL, the hidden curriculum plays a significant role in its formation. However, an exclusive and punishment-based approach to discipline has the potential to have a negative impact on student development (Piltz et al., 2025). Therefore, schools need to develop a positive and dialogical hidden curriculum to support welfare and sustainable discipline.

Although education policy has been directed at character building through co-curricular activities, empirical evidence on the role of hidden curriculum in the context of Indonesian primary schools is still limited. (Ebabuye, 2023) found that the implementation of hidden curriculum contributes to improving discipline and social responsibility through teacher example and habituation of positive behavior. (Rossouw, 2023) show that hidden curriculum works effectively when the values conveyed by teachers are aligned with the school's daily practices, while (Park et al., 2023) assert that informal interactions outside the classroom have a significant influence on the internalization of disciplinary values in primary education. However, empirical studies that explicitly explore the operational mechanisms of hidden curriculum in shaping discipline at the elementary school level in Indonesia remain limited, so the relationship between implicit norms, teachers' daily practices, and students' disciplinary behavior has not been studied.

Based on initial observations of grade V elementary school students in Kalianget District, Sumenep Regency, it was found that discipline problems are still the main challenge. Some students still show late attendance, disorder in the morning queue, and inconsistency in following the teacher's instructions. Various habitual practices such as greetings, joint prayers, class pickets, and rule enforcement have been carried out, but some are still reactive and have not been fully internalized as school culture. In addition, the example of teachers and the pattern of social interaction between students show a significant influence on the formation of disciplinary behavior.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze how hidden curriculum operates in the daily life of elementary schools as a mechanism for forming disciplinary attitudes. In particular, this study aims to: (1) describe the forms of hidden curriculum that are manifested in elementary school activities and interactions; (2) analyze the role of teachers, classroom rites, and school culture in implicitly transmitting disciplinary values; (3) identify factors that support and hinder the sustainability of practices; and (4) mapping indicators of discipline behavior as a result of internalizing values. Through a qualitative approach with a case study design, this research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of hidden curriculum studies at the basic education level and become a practical reference for teachers and policymakers in designing contextual, consistent, and sustainable discipline habituation strategies.

Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study does not aim to quantitatively test the relationship between variables, but rather to understand in depth the implicit phenomena that shape disciplinary behavior in the real context of elementary schools (Creswell & Poth, 2023). The case study design allows researchers to comprehensively explore the processes, contexts, and meanings of everyday practices (Yin, 2022), specifically how hidden curriculum operates through routines, examples, and unwritten norms. This approach is in line with the view of (Rossouw, 2023), who emphasizes that the hidden curriculum needs to be analyzed as a structure of practice and implicit values through contextual exploration.

The research was carried out in a grade V elementary school located in Kalianget District, Sumenep Regency. The research location was chosen because it showed a variation in the level of student discipline and had a relatively strong school culture, especially in the implementation of co-curricular activities. The research lasted for two months, from September to November 2025.

The target of this research is the practice of hidden curriculum which plays a role in the formation of discipline attitudes of elementary school students. The subjects of the study include: (1) grade V teachers as the main actors in the formation and transmission of implicit values; (2) grade V students as recipients and perpetrators of internalizing disciplinary values; and (3) the principal as a policy setter and director of school culture. The selection of subjects was carried out purposively, considering the subject's direct involvement in the school's daily practice which represents the hidden curriculum mechanism.

The research procedure is carried out in stages and sequentially, including: (1) the pre-field stage, which includes initial observation, determination of research focus, and preparation of instruments; (2) the data collection stage, which is carried out through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies; (3) the data analysis stage, which is carried out simultaneously from the beginning of data collection to the drawing of conclusions; and (4) the validation stage of findings, through triangulation and checking the validity of the data.

The data sources in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through direct observation of student activities and in-depth interviews with classroom teachers and principals. Secondary data is in the form of school documents related to discipline, such as habituation programs, discipline records, school activity agendas, and student attendance data

The main instrument of research is the researcher as a human instrument (Miles et al., 2018). To support data collection, several auxiliary instruments were used, namely: (1) structured observation guidelines compiled based on teacher exemplary indicators, school routines, social norms, response to violations, and learning climate, referring to (Park et al., 2023); (2) semi-structured in-depth interview guidelines for teachers, students, and principals (Kallio et al., 2021); and (3) documentation checklist that includes disciplinary records, activity agendas, and other supporting documents.

Data collection techniques include: (1) non-interventional participatory observation to record hidden curriculum practices that appear in classroom routines and cultures (Yin, 2022); (2) in-depth interviews to explore the informant's meaning of the discipline and habituation applied; and (3) documentation studies to strengthen and verify findings from observations and interviews.

Data analysis was carried out using the interactive model (Miles et al., 2018), which included three main stages: (1) data reduction through the process of coding and grouping categories such as teacher roles, routines, norms, sanctions, and learning climate; (2) the presentation of data in the form of descriptive narratives, pattern tables, and maps of inter-category relationships; and (3) the withdrawal and verification of conclusions repeatedly until the main themes and mechanisms of the hidden curriculum in the formation of student discipline are obtained.

The validity of the data is ensured through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time (Denzin, 2017) to ensure the consistency and credibility of the information. In addition, member checking was carried out on informants to confirm the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation, as well as peer debriefing to obtain a critical assessment of the analysis process and results.

Results and Discussion

This study aims to describe the forms of hidden curriculum, analyze its working mechanism in fostering discipline, identify supporting and inhibiting factors for its sustainability, and map discipline indicators that appear in student behavior. All results were presented based on observation data analysis, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies for two months (September to November 2025).

Based on participatory observation, it was found that the hidden curriculum in this school is manifested in three main elements, namely. First, the school's daily routine that consistently shapes disciplined behavior includes, morning attendance and rows before entering class, greetings and prayers before learning, class pickets and spontaneous procedures such as tidying up benches and learning tools. Observation data showed that 85% of students attended before the bell rang during the three weeks of observation, students started greetings independently without the teacher's direction and many students carried out pickets, although 2-3 students still needed to be reminded.

Student interview excerpts:

Student A: *"We used to line up first before entering. If you're late, you feel embarrassed with your friends."*

Student B: *"If you picket, usually directly assign tasks. I'm going to sweep it on Monday."*

This custom is not listed as a special program of discipline formation but has become a socially internalized class culture.

Second, the example of teachers. Exemplarity appears in the way teachers attend, behave, manage the classroom, and enforce rules. The results of the observation showed that the teacher was present on time in 90% of the learning sessions, the teacher consistently gave examples of polite speech, emotional regulation, and orderly behavior and the teacher enforced the rules in an educational manner without intimidation.

Student interview excerpts:

Student C: *"Teacher, if you reprimand, don't get angry, but still be firm. I remember my mistake."*

Classroom teacher interview quotes:

Grade V Teacher: *"I always try to come early. Students usually imitate attitudes, not just listen to the rules."*

Excerpt from the principal's interview:

Principal: *"Example is the main point of our school culture. Children learn from what they see every day."*

Emotional and behavioral exemplarity has been proven to have a strong influence in encouraging students' self-regulation.

Third, the norms are implicit in class culture. Norms that are not written but understood by students include: raising your hand before speaking, walking slowly when entering class, polite language in interactions, not interrupting the conversation of friends. Observational data show: 70–80% of students adhere to norms without direct instruction; Non-compliance generally occurs in students with less organized family backgrounds

Teacher interview:

Teacher: *"I don't always remember, but the children already know how to raise their hands first. It develops through everyday habits."*

The analysis of the hidden curriculum working mechanism in fostering discipline shows that the hidden curriculum works through three mechanisms simultaneously. First, the habituation mechanism. Daily routines create a rhythm of behavior that is formed repeatedly until they turn into a habit. For example, Punctual attendance can shape punctuality, Morning rows can create order and readiness to learn, tidying up benches can build responsibility for the learning environment. From the observation results, there was a 30% decrease in delays during the study, students seemed to do salam, greeting, and prayer independently during observation. Second, role modelling mechanisms. Teachers become the main actors in the internalization of discipline through real behavior models. From the observation results, the dominant teacher's behavior was observed, including Consistency: being present on time, starting class with greetings, showing order, Emotional modelling: not easily raising their voice, giving reflection and Rule modelling: obeying school procedures (for example, attendance, use of polite language). From the results of the interview.

Student D: *"If the teacher is in line, we are also in line. It feels like if you don't queue, it's disrespectful."*

Third, the mechanism of socialization of norms (social imitation). Norms are built through interaction between students and teachers. This process can be seen in imitation of communication patterns, giving examples by senior students or students with high discipline, and positive peer pressure. This is supported by the results of observation in class, in 2 out of 4 group discussion sessions, students reminded their friends without being asked by the teacher, at home, 75% of students automatically tidy up the bench without instructions.

Then the supporting and inhibiting factors for the sustainability of the hidden curriculum in elementary schools. The sustainability of the hidden curriculum in elementary schools is greatly influenced by several factors that reinforce each other. First, a strong school culture is the main foundation for the formation of disciplinary values. A co-curricular program that runs consistently creates a stable rhythm of daily activities, while the principal plays an active role in guiding teachers so that the expected values and practices are directed and maintained.

The second factor is the stable role model of teachers, which is reflected in the high level of teacher discipline in carrying out their duties. Observational data showed that teachers were on time in about 90% of learning sessions, and consistently provided examples of orderly, polite,

and orderly behavior. This consistency makes it easier for students to internalize disciplinary values through the process of imitation.

Third, student involvement is also an important factor. Students show enthusiasm in following the morning line, picket activities, and other routines. In addition, during the study, a significant increase in students' self-awareness was seen, for example in arranging learning supplies and tidying up the classroom without having to be reminded by the teacher.

Furthermore, the sustainability of the hidden curriculum is also supported by school documents that support disciplinary values, such as discipline, habituation programs, and student discipline records. These documents become formal references that indirectly strengthen non-formal practices in the field, so that the value of discipline is not only taught but also institutionalized in the school culture.

On the other hand, there are several factors that hinder the optimal sustainability of the hidden curriculum. The first factor is the inconsistency between teachers in applying the rules. Differences in reprimanding styles, classroom management methods, and levels of understanding of the hidden curriculum concept cause students to receive non-uniform value messages.

The second factor is related to the physical condition of the school, which is not supportive. Narrow classrooms make seating and queue arrangements often difficult to do in an orderly manner. In addition, the limited area of the morning line creates the potential for crowds or commotion, so routines do not always run optimally. The next factor is the variation in family background. Students who come from homes with less regular parenting tend to take longer to adjust to the rhythm and norms of school. This condition causes the internalization of discipline values to not run evenly across all students.

The last factor is the reduction of meaning in the implementation of routines. Some activities that were originally designed to instill moral values have slowly turned into administrative activities only. In addition, not all teachers associate routines with deeper moral messages, so the practice loses its educational function and no longer has a maximum impact on the formation of students' character. based on the results of teacher interviews:

"There are teachers who are more permissive, some are very strict. Children are confused about which standards to follow."

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation studies, a number of indicators of disciplined behavior that appear in students were obtained. These indicators are then mapped to see their relationship with the hidden curriculum elements that take place in the school environment.

Table 1. Indicators of Diciplined Behavior Found

Indicators of Disciplined Behavior Found		
Discipline Indicators	Field Evidence	Connection with the Hidden Curriculum
Timeliness	30% reduction in delays	Morning row routines and teacher example present early
Responsibility	80% of students carry out picketing	Group norms and habituation
Neatness and order	The bench is tidied up without instructions	Internalization through routine

Communication courtesy	70–80% follow the hand lift rule	Imitation of teachers and positive social pressure
Self-control	Interruptions decreased by 40%	Role-modelling of teachers in the regulation of emotions
Learning independence	Preparing a book without being told	Routine and self-control

Thus, it can be concluded that the hidden curriculum is an effective and influential instrument in fostering the discipline of elementary school students. The effectiveness of this mechanism is highly determined by the consistency of school culture, the role model of teachers in classroom behavior and management, and the strength of social norms formed through daily interactions. The support of an adequate school physical environment and supportive family conditions also strengthen the process of internalizing the values of discipline. The hidden curriculum not only forms obedience to the rules but also encourages the development of self-regulation skills and moral awareness that grow gradually and naturally in students.

This discussion examines in depth the research findings on the role of hidden curriculum in shaping the discipline attitude of grade V elementary school students, by integrating theoretical frameworks and the latest empirical research results both from the national and international scopes. In general, the results of the study show that the formation of discipline is not only produced through formal written rules, but also through daily interactions, consistent routines, examples displayed by teachers, and implicit norms that live in the school community. Thus, the school's daily culture functions as a hidden curriculum that works subtly but sustainably in shaping student behavior and character, in line with the principles of education that humanize students.

Hidden Curriculum in School Routine: Discipline Formation through Habituation. The findings of the study show that the hidden curriculum form is especially seen through routines such as morning lines, class pickets, greetings-prayers, queues to enter classes, and tidying up benches. This routine takes place daily and is not listed as a special program of discipline formation but naturally forms a strong habituation ecology.

These findings are in line with the view of (Rossouw, 2023), who states that hidden curriculum is manifested through structures, rituals, and daily practices that convey value messages without the need to be outlined in formal documents. This routine creates a "value ecology", which is a cultural environment that conditions students to be organized, respectful of time, and responsible.

The organization of school time, such as the rhythm of learning and the transition of activities, has also been shown to affect discipline patterns. This is in accordance with (Johansen & Solli, 2022) who stated that the school time structure carries a normative message about efficiency and responsibility. In the context of this study, the stable rhythm of activities from morning to the end of the lesson helps students understand the time limit, prepare themselves, and maintain focus.

In addition, togetherness routines such as pickets, group work, and ceremonies act as an arena for internalizing social values. This is in line with (Ito et al., 2022) found that the experience of hidden curriculum at the elementary school level contributes to the formation of long-term social preferences such as cooperation and self-control. Students in this study showed a positive response, for example, 80% carried out picketing and 75% tidied up benches without instruction.

The findings regarding "automatic" habits such as raising their hands before speaking and queuing before entering class are also in line with the ethnographic research of (Lischka-schmidt & Lischka-schmidt, 2025) who explain that repetitive patterns of interaction in schools create norms that are no longer hidden because they have become part of students' daily behavior.

National studies also support these findings. (Malahati & Rokhimawan, 2024) note that religious and social habits play a significant role in shaping discipline, while (Muhammad et al., 2023) found that simple habits such as greeting teachers and being present on time are more effective than formal discipline. Thus, this study emphasizes that hidden curriculum through daily routines is an important foundation in the formation of discipline of elementary school students.

The Role of the Teacher as a Mediator of the Hidden Curriculum. The results of the study show that teachers have a central position in reviving the hidden curriculum. Punctuality of teachers (90% attend on time), consistency in behaving politely, enforcing rules in an educational manner, and the ability to manage emotions are concrete models for students to imitate discipline.

The role of teachers as a behavioral model is in line with the theory of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL), where (Chen et al., 2024) emphasized that children's self-regulation develops from a consistent learning environment and the existence of adult figures who can be used as examples. The hidden curriculum that arises from the way teachers interact daily becomes a social context that implicitly shapes students' character and experience (Gunio, 2021).

The results of the study also showed that students imitate the teacher's behavior, for example joining the queue when the teacher did it. This is in line with the findings of (Cunha et al., 2023) that teacher intervention in daily routines can improve students' ability to focus, time management, and task completion.

The humanist approach shown by teachers can be seen from empathic reprimands without bullying in line with the findings of (Siska, 2022)(Siska, 2022) who affirm that a reflective approach is more effective than harsh punishment in building long-term discipline. Teachers' consistency in commitment and punctuality as conveyed by (Billa et al., 2025) has also been proven to have a direct impact on the formation of student discipline.

In contrast, (Piltz et al., 2025) show that exclusion-based discipline approaches such as suspension have a negative impact on children's emotional development. In this study, teachers apply a restorative approach that improves relationships and develops students' moral understanding. Thus, teachers act as mediators who connect the formal curriculum with implicit values that live in daily practice.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for the Implementation of the Hidden Curriculum. The findings of the study show that the implementation of hidden curriculum that fosters discipline is strengthened by several supporting factors. First, a stable and consistent school culture. Second, the teacher's commitment in carrying out routines and showing examples. Third, support for school documents such as discipline and habituation programs that strengthen non-formal practices.

These findings are in line with the (OECD, 2023) which emphasizes the importance of a conducive classroom ecology so that students can focus, obey the rules, and have a good learning rhythm. However, the study also found a few obstacles to the sustainability of the hidden curriculum. Inconsistency between teachers in enforcing the rules causes students to receive messages of non-uniform characters. This is in accordance with the findings of (Nurreni et al., 2021) that the inconsistency of norms creates confusion of grades in students.

The Impact of the Hidden Curriculum on Discipline and Self-Regulation. The results of the study showed that hidden curriculum had a positive impact on various discipline indicators such as punctuality, picket responsibility, communication politeness, self-control, and learning independence. For example, student tardiness decreased by 30%, interruptions during learning decreased by 40%, and many students showed learning readiness without direct instruction.

This impact is in line with (Rohmah, 2021) also revealed that the relationship between teachers, students and a stable routine is more effective in establishing long-term discipline than the punishment system.

In the perspective of SRL, the indicators found, such as students being able to prepare their own learning materials and understand the consequences of behavior, indicate that discipline has been internalized as part of self-regulation. These findings are consistent with (Chen et al., 2024) and (Zakiah, 2023) who affirm that self-regulation develops from stable social experiences.

Overall, this study shows that student discipline in elementary school is mostly formed through daily experiences that take place in the hidden curriculum. Consistent routines, teaching examples, and implicit norms that develop in the school's social interactions create an environment that supports the growth of discipline naturally and sustainably. These findings enrich the literature on hidden curriculum in the context of elementary schools in Indonesia and provide a practical basis for teachers and schools to design more conscious, directed, and humane habituation strategies according to the needs of children's development.

In the future, this research opens opportunities for the development of several further ideas. Further research can be directed to explore a more structured hidden curriculum implementation model, develop habituation guidelines for teachers and schools, and test the effectiveness of humanist approaches in a variety of different school contexts. In addition, an in-depth study of parental involvement and the social environment in strengthening discipline habits can provide a more comprehensive understanding. These efforts are expected to be able to produce a more comprehensive and sustainable educational strategy in fostering disciplined character in students.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the hidden curriculum plays a strategic role in shaping discipline attitudes among fifth-grade elementary school students in Kalianget District. The formation of discipline does not primarily occur through formal instruction or punitive enforcement but through implicit and continuous processes embedded in daily school practices.

The findings indicate that discipline is internalized through three main mechanisms: consistent daily routines, teacher exemplification, and implicit social norms within classroom culture. Routine activities cultivate habits of punctuality, orderliness, and learning readiness; teacher modeling functions as a central reference for students' self-regulation and moral awareness; and unwritten norms foster disciplined behavior through social interaction and peer imitation.

The effectiveness of the hidden curriculum is supported by a stable school culture, teacher consistency, and a clear rhythm of activities, while challenges arise from inconsistencies in disciplinary practices, limited facilities, and diverse family backgrounds. Importantly, a humanistic and restorative approach to discipline is shown to be more effective than punishment-based strategies in promoting sustainable discipline and self-regulation.

Overall, this research confirms that strengthening the hidden curriculum through coherent school culture, consistent teacher practices, and supportive social interactions provides a sustainable foundation for developing discipline and character in elementary education.

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