



Theacers' Professional Vulnerability in Student Character Discipline Practices : A Case Study of Digital Parent-School Communication

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ABSTRACT

Teachers play a strategic role in developing students' character through disciplinary practices in schools. However, teachers face challenges in balancing educational responsibilities, child protection, relationships with parents, and professional risks arising from disciplinary practices. This study aims to examine teachers' professional vulnerability in student character discipline practices and the role of digital communication between schools and parents in the context of parental reporting cases. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The participants consisted of one classroom teacher, one religious education teacher, and one school principal in Soppeng Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Data were collected through interviews, observations, documentation, and analysis of WhatsApp conversations, and were analyzed using thematic analysis supported by Atlas.ti software. Data trustworthiness was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings indicate that teachers perceive character discipline as a moral and professional responsibility in developing students' character. Teachers maintain disciplinary practices through habituation, positive approaches, consistency in rule implementation, peer support, and religious practices. However, experiences of parental reporting create professional vulnerabilities, including increased caution, decision-making dilemmas, and psychological pressure. Digital communication through WhatsApp supports transparency, documentation, clarification, and school-parent coordination, but it also has the potential to generate misunderstandings. These findings demonstrate that character discipline practices occur through a negotiation process between efforts to develop students' character and teachers' management of professional risks within school-family relationships.

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INTRODUCTION

Protection is a fundamental aspect of human life, including professional life. Every individual, institution, and organization has the right to receive protection that guarantees safety, security, and legal certainty in carrying out their duties. Within the context of a state, such protection becomes the responsibility of the government as part of the principles of a state based on law. This principle is reflected in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which emphasizes that the state aims to protect all Indonesian people and the entire territory of Indonesia, promote public welfare, and advance the intellectual life of the nation.

Character education is a system that instills character values in students, including knowledge, individual awareness, determination, willingness, and actions to implement these values in relation to God, oneself, other human beings, the environment, and the nation (Aningsih et al., 2022). A safe and conducive educational environment is a fundamental prerequisite for an effective learning process. In the field of education, the principle of protection also holds a highly significant position. Teachers, as professional educators, play a strategic role in shaping students' character, knowledge, and skills. Teachers serve as real-life role models and play an essential role in students' character development. Therefore, ideally, teachers should receive legal, professional, and social protection guarantees so that they can carry out their educational responsibilities optimally without pressure or threats from various parties.

Nevertheless, the current reality in the Indonesian education sector indicates that teacher protection still faces various challenges. The demands placed on teachers as the primary agents in character formation continue to increase, along with additional responsibilities that require teachers to demonstrate greater professionalism in their work. Teachers function not only as educators but also as role models and moral guides for students (Ahdhianto et al., 2025). Teachers encounter complex professional realities, ranging from administrative workloads, limited welfare conditions, to vulnerability to criminalization and social media judgment, which can create psychological pressure. The changing paradigm of education, which increasingly emphasizes humanistic approaches and the protection of children's rights, often leads to differences in understanding regarding student discipline practices in schools. Disciplinary actions carried out by teachers, although intended to build character and maintain an orderly learning environment, are in some cases perceived as violations of human rights or even regarded as forms of violence against children.

Furthermore, child protection regulations are often interpreted narrowly by some parties, potentially resulting in the criminalization of teachers. Several cases have shown that teachers who provide disciplinary sanctions to students have been reported by parents or other parties on the grounds of violating children's rights. This condition indicates an imbalance in understanding between child protection and the protection of the teaching profession within educational practices. The development of digital communication technology has transformed interaction patterns between schools and parents. Various platforms, such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and social media, enable communication to occur rapidly, be documented, and be accessed by multiple parties simultaneously. In the educational context, digital technology functions not only as a means of delivering information but also as a medium for discussing students' academic development, behavior, and various disciplinary issues.

On the other hand, the use of digital technology presents new challenges for the teaching profession. Information regarding disciplinary actions taken by teachers can be easily disseminated, interpreted differently by various parties, or become a source of conflict when communication does not occur effectively. Digital documentation, such as messages, photographs, voice recordings, and screenshots of conversations, is often used as material for evaluation as well as evidence in resolving conflicts between schools and parents. This condition has the potential to increase teachers' professional vulnerability because every disciplinary action may receive broader responses compared to conventional face-to-face communication. In addition to providing opportunities to enhance transparency and collaboration between schools and families, the use of digital platforms also raises issues related to privacy, data security, and the ethics of educational communication. Therefore, it is important to understand how digital communication influences student discipline practices, teacher-parent relationships, and teachers' perceptions of their professional security in carrying out their educational responsibilities.

These conditions indicate the emergence of uncertainty and vulnerability in teachers' positions as educators. In such situations, some teachers become more cautious and even tend to avoid taking disciplinary actions toward students due to concerns about facing legal consequences or conflicts with parents. As a result, many teachers choose to focus solely on delivering instructional content without becoming deeply involved in fostering students' character and discipline. As stated in (Wulandari, 2021) study, the education system in schools should no longer emphasize academic achievement solely through measurable outcomes but should also focus on developing and strengthening students' morality and mentality in social interactions as an essential element of education. Therefore, teachers need full support in shaping students' character, not only in improving academic abilities but also in developing students' capacity to interact and socialize effectively within their environment.

In the long term, this situation has the potential to reduce the effectiveness of the educational process, particularly in the formation of students' character and moral values. When the function of education is not balanced between knowledge transfer and character development, the national education goal of shaping a generation that is characterized by integrity, ethics, and responsibility will be difficult to achieve. The relationship between schools, teachers, and parents must be aligned in supporting education, particularly character education for students. Within this context, studies on teachers' professional vulnerability in the process of fostering students' character discipline in education have developed in two main directions. First, research has examined changes in teachers' approaches to disciplining students' character to ensure that the educational process aligns with the moral values instilled in the school environment. Second, studies have explored the influence of the surrounding environment on teachers in implementing students' character discipline practices. However, empirical studies that explicitly integrate teacher protection, child protection, and student character education within an educational context remain relatively limited. Therefore, this study aims to analyze teachers' professional vulnerability in the process of student character discipline and to examine how digital communication between schools and parents influences disciplinary practices, educational decision-making, and teachers' perceptions of professional security following cases of parental reporting.

The development of digital technology has also transformed communication patterns between schools and parents, particularly through instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp. Digital communication, especially through WhatsApp, functions not only as a medium for delivering information but also as a space for documentation, transparency, potential misunderstandings, conflict escalation, privacy concerns, and a source of evidence in disputes between schools and parents. In addition to facilitating coordination and accelerating the delivery of information regarding students' development, digital communication also introduces new challenges in character discipline practices. The documentation of conversations, screenshots, and the ease of information dissemination can enhance transparency; however, at the same time, these features may potentially lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, and increased professional vulnerability among teachers when disciplinary decisions are questioned by parents. Therefore, it is important to understand how digital communication influences teachers' experiences in implementing character discipline and how these conditions shape teachers' professional practices in schools.

Based on these conditions, examining teachers' professional vulnerability in the process of student character discipline has become increasingly important. Character development in schools is a fundamental aspect of education and can be achieved through systematic and consistent habituation processes (Hazyimara & Wenty Septria Darma Suwarni, 2023). Teachers are the primary actors in the educational process and bear significant responsibility for shaping

the quality of future generations. Without a clear and equitable system of protection, teachers will face difficulties in fulfilling their professional roles effectively. Therefore, it is essential to establish a shared understanding of disciplinary practices that are consistent with current educational standards. Such an understanding is necessary to prevent misunderstandings between teachers and parents regarding the implementation of student character discipline in the school environment.

Based on the issues outlined above, previous studies have primarily examined teacher professional protection, child protection, and character education as separate areas of inquiry. However, the interrelationship among these three aspects in the practice of student character discipline in elementary schools, particularly when teachers face the risk of parental complaints or reports and when digital communication is used to manage conflicts, has received relatively little empirical attention. Therefore, this study aims to understand teachers' professional experiences in navigating the dynamics of student character discipline amid the demands of child protection and school–family relationships. Specifically, this study seeks to answer two research questions: (1) How do teachers and school administrators experience and interpret professional vulnerability in the process of student character discipline following parental complaints or reports? (2) How does digital communication through WhatsApp shape disciplinary decision-making, communication documentation, and teachers' perceptions of professional security in school–parent relationships?

Through this investigation, the study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' position in implementing character education while contributing to the development of disciplinary practices that achieve an appropriate balance between student character development, child protection, and the professional protection of teachers.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences, perspectives, and interpretations regarding professional vulnerability in the process of fostering students' character discipline. The case study design was chosen because this research focuses on an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon within a real-life context, namely the dynamics of student character discipline in elementary schools when teachers face the demands of character development, child protection, relationships with parents, and professional risks arising from disciplinary practices.

Through this design, the study explores how teachers and school stakeholders experience and interpret professional vulnerability following parental complaints or reports, the strategies employed to maintain student discipline, and the role of digital communication through WhatsApp in decision-making processes, communication documentation, and problem resolution related to student character discipline. Therefore, the case study design enables this research to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of teachers' experiences in carrying out their roles as character educators within the elementary school environment.

The research participants were selected using purposive sampling, which involves the deliberate selection of participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The participant selection criteria included: (1) teachers or school principals who were directly involved in the process of fostering students' character discipline in elementary schools; (2) having a minimum of five years of experience in teaching practices and student character development; (3) having encountered issues, conflicts, or reports related to student disciplinary practices; and (4) being willing to provide in-depth information regarding their experiences.

Based on these criteria, the study involved one classroom teacher (P1), one religious education teacher (P2), and one school principal (P3) in Soppeng Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The selection of teachers and the school principal as participants was based on the research focus, which examines teachers' professional experiences in dealing with dilemmas in student character discipline. Therefore, this study focuses on how educators interpret professional risks, character development strategies, and changes in disciplinary practices following interactions and dynamics with parents.

Table 1. Participant Profile

Code	Professional Role	Years of Experience	Role in the Study
P1	Classroom Teacher	15	Experienced the disciplinary case directly and implemented student disciplinary practices
P2	Religious Education Teacher	12	Participated in character education and student disciplinary practices
P3	Principal	18	Managed school policy and coordinated the response to the parental complaint

The selection of the case in Soppeng Regency was based on its contextual and theoretical significance. Contextually, the school under investigation had experienced disciplinary dynamics involving tensions between efforts to foster students' character, child protection considerations, and teachers' concerns regarding the potential risks of parental reports. This study focuses on a case of character discipline that occurred when a teacher took disciplinary action toward a student who repeatedly violated school rules, such as disrupting the learning process and failing to follow the teacher's instructions.

The disciplinary action was carried out in the form of educational reprimands and guidance in accordance with the procedures implemented by the school. However, the student's parents interpreted the action as inappropriate treatment and subsequently submitted a report to the relevant authorities. Although the case was resolved through communication between the school and the parents, the incident influenced how teachers perceived disciplinary practices, increased their caution in carrying out professional responsibilities, and encouraged the use of digital communication as part of the coordination and conflict-resolution process.

Theoretically, this case was selected because it provides an opportunity to explore how teachers negotiate their roles as character educators amid the demands of child protection, increasing public sensitivity toward disciplinary practices in schools, and the use of digital communication in school-parent relationships. All individual and school identities were anonymized to ensure the confidentiality of participants. Data collection was conducted from April 9 to June 4, 2026.

Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format, allowing the researcher to follow a set of guiding questions while providing participants with opportunities to explain their experiences and perspectives in greater depth. Observations were conducted to examine the school environment, disciplinary practices, and interactions between teachers and students in daily activities. Observation notes were used to confirm information obtained from the interviews, particularly regarding teachers' communication practices with students, guidance strategies, and changes in disciplinary approaches following the emergence of the reporting case.

The observation focus included the forms of teacher communication when providing guidance to students, strategies for providing positive reinforcement, students' responses to school rules, and patterns of teacher-parent interaction in school activities. In addition,

documentation studies were used to complement the research data through documents related to school activities and the process of fostering students' character discipline.

In addition to interviews, observations, and documentation, this study also analyzed forms of digital communication between schools and parents, including WhatsApp group conversations, private messages related to disciplinary cases, and digital records used in coordinating students' character education. Specifically, the study identified the number of WhatsApp conversations that met the criteria as data sources. A total of 28 WhatsApp conversations (18 group conversations and 10 private conversations) directly related to disciplinary cases were analyzed as part of the research data.

This study was conducted by adhering to the ethical principles of qualitative research, including respecting participant autonomy, maintaining data confidentiality, and minimizing potential risks for all parties involved. Before the data collection process, all participants received an explanation regarding the research objectives, types of data collected, potential benefits of the study, and their right to withdraw from participation at any time without any consequences. All participants subsequently provided voluntary informed consent to participate in interviews, observations, and the use of relevant documents and digital communications related to the research objectives.

The use of digital communication data was carried out only after obtaining consent from all parties whose communications were analyzed. For WhatsApp group conversations, permission was obtained from the teacher and group members whose conversations were used as research data sources. No communication data were used without the consent of the relevant parties. This study did not undergo institutional ethics committee review because, according to the research procedures applicable in the study program where the research was conducted, this study was categorized as social and educational research that did not involve medical interventions or vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, all research procedures continued to implement ethical principles through informed consent, voluntary participation, identity anonymization, and protection of participant data confidentiality.

The analysis of digital communication focused on WhatsApp conversations directly related to the process of fostering students' character discipline and communication between the school and parents following the occurrence of the reporting case. The digital data analyzed were collected during the period of April–June 2026, coinciding with the research data collection process. Data selection was conducted purposively based on the following criteria: (1) related to discussions on student discipline; (2) involving communication among teachers, the school principal, and parents; and (3) obtaining access permission from the parties who owned the data. Conversations that were unrelated to the research focus or contained irrelevant personal information were excluded from the analysis.

To maintain participant confidentiality, all individuals' names, school names, telephone numbers, and other identifying information were anonymized using pseudonyms. All screenshots and quotations from WhatsApp messages were edited to remove personal identifiers. Digital data and all research documents were securely stored for five years after the completion of the study in password-protected storage media and were accessible only to the researchers during the analysis process. After the retention period, the data will be permanently deleted to protect participant privacy.

All information that could potentially identify students, including names, photographs, telephone numbers, addresses, and other personal information, was removed before the analysis process began. The study only used communication content related to character discipline practices to ensure the protection of children's identities. The data analysis technique employed in this study was thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (Braun et al., 2023). Thematic analysis was used to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns of meaning or themes emerging

from various research data sources, including interviews, observations, documentation, and WhatsApp communications.

The research was conducted by three researchers with academic backgrounds in education. The first author was responsible for conducting the field research, including in-depth interviews, observations, documentation collection, and the collection of digital communication data. The second author contributed to reviewing the coding process, providing input on the development of subthemes and themes, and engaging in critical discussions regarding the analytical findings. The third author contributed to data transcription, initial coding using Atlas.ti, methodological review, evaluation of the interpretation of findings, and ensuring the alignment between the research findings and the theoretical framework employed.

The analysis process began with data familiarization through repeated readings of interview transcripts, observation notes, documents, and WhatsApp conversations using Atlas.ti software. Subsequently, initial coding was conducted on data related to character discipline practices, teacher-parent relationships, responses to reporting cases, and the use of digital communication. Codes from all data sources were then compared through triangulation processes to identify similarities and differences in findings before being organized into subthemes and themes. The next stages involved reviewing the suitability of themes against the entire dataset, defining and naming themes, and systematically developing the research report.

All authors periodically discussed the analytical findings, compared interpretations of the data, and documented analytical decisions through discussions and analytic memos throughout the research process. This approach was not intended to eliminate researcher subjectivity but rather to reflect how the researchers' backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives could influence the interpretation process. Therefore, the resulting interpretations remained consistent with the research context and empirical evidence.

Data trustworthiness was established through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the classroom teacher (P1), religious education teacher (P2), and school principal (P3) to obtain a comprehensive understanding of students' character discipline practices. Technique triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from interviews, observations, school documents, and WhatsApp digital communications related to disciplinary processes and school-parent relationships.

Comparisons among data sources were conducted to identify consistency, differences in perspectives, and strengthen interpretations of the research themes. The results of the triangulation process were then presented in the form of a matrix illustrating the relationship between data sources and research themes, demonstrating how each theme was supported by interviews, observation findings, school documents, and WhatsApp digital communication.

After the themes were reviewed based on the entire dataset, the researchers developed a final interpretation representing participants' experiences of teachers' professional vulnerability in the process of fostering students' character discipline. Through the analysis of various data sources obtained by the researchers, conclusions were drawn as responses to the research questions. These conclusions were subsequently used as the final report of the research implementation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that, according to the participants, the practice of fostering students' character discipline is not only related to the implementation of school rules but is also influenced by teachers' interpretations of discipline, the strategies employed to maintain student discipline, and the dynamics of relationships with students' parents. Participants reported implementing

various strategies, including disciplinary habituation, positive approaches, peer support, consistency in applying rules, and religious habituation.

However, in practice, teachers also experienced various forms of professional vulnerability, including limited professional protection, experiences of being reported by parents, professional dilemmas, and psychological pressure. Nevertheless, participants perceived that disciplinary practices were associated with changes in students' behavior based on their experiences throughout the character development process at school.

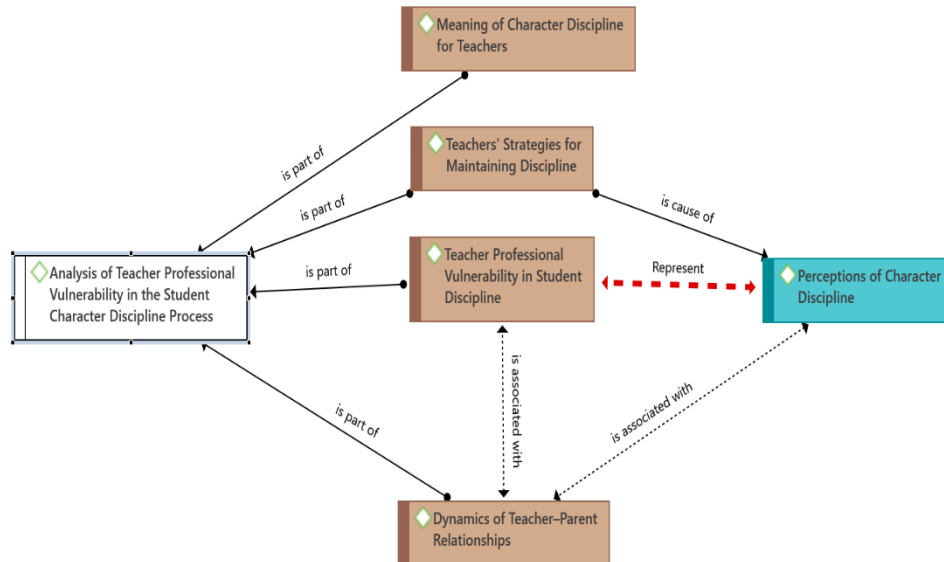


Figure 1. Thematic Analysis of Teachers' Professional Vulnerability in Student Character Discipline Practices

Based on the data analysis, the findings of this study were organized into five major themes: (1) the meaning of character discipline from teachers' perspectives; (2) teachers' strategies for maintaining character discipline; (3) teachers' professional vulnerability in character discipline practices; (4) the dynamics of teacher-parent relationships; and (5) teachers' perceptions of the impact of character discipline on students' behavior.

Table 2. Data Source Triangulation Matrix Based on Research Themes

Final Theme	Interviews	Observations	Documents	WhatsApp Digital Communications
Meaning of Character Discipline for Teachers	Grade 6 classroom teacher (P1), religious education teacher (P2), and school principal (P3) explained that discipline is understood not merely as the enforcement of rules but as a process of developing students' responsibility, independence, and positive character.	Observations showed that teachers provided guidance, advice, and habituation of positive behaviors before and during learning activities.	School regulations and character habituation program documents indicated that student discipline is directed toward developing responsibility and compliance with school values.	Communication with parents showed the delivery of information regarding students' behavioral development as part of the character development process.

Final Theme	Interviews	Observations	Documents	WhatsApp Digital Communications
Teachers' Strategies in Maintaining Character Discipline	Participants explained the use of strategies such as humanistic approaches, positive affirmation, habituation, advice, and collaboration with other teachers in addressing student behavior.	Observation results showed that teachers predominantly used persuasive approaches, positive reinforcement, and interpersonal communication rather than direct disciplinary actions.	School program documents and classroom rules demonstrated the existence of student guidance procedures through educational approaches and character habituation.	WhatsApp messages showed teacher coordination with parents in communicating students' development and seeking solutions to behavioral problems.
Teachers' Professional Vulnerability in Student Discipline	Teachers and the school principal expressed concerns regarding the risks of parental reports, psychological pressure, and increased caution in implementing disciplinary actions after cases of parental objections emerged.	Observations showed changes in teachers' attitudes, with teachers becoming more careful when providing reprimands and considering communication before taking corrective actions.	School documents related to regulations and student guidance procedures demonstrated efforts to maintain a balance between student discipline and child protection.	WhatsApp communication documentation illustrated the processes of clarification, information sharing, and coordination between the school and parents after differences in perceptions regarding disciplinary actions emerged.
Dynamics of Teacher-Parent Relationships in Character Development	Teachers and the school principal viewed open communication with parents as an important factor in establishing shared understanding regarding character education.	Observations of school activities showed interactions between teachers and parents in supporting students' development.	Documentation of school activities, such as parent meetings and school communication records, demonstrated efforts to build collaboration between families and schools.	WhatsApp conversations showed that digital media were used to provide information, clarify issues, and maintain communication between the school and families.
Perceptions of Changes in Student Behavior	Teachers and the school principal reported observed changes in students' behavior, such as increased discipline, responsibility, and compliance with school rules.	Observations showed several behavioral changes among students in following classroom rules, participating in learning activities, and interacting socially with peers.	Student guidance records and school documents related to character-building activities served as supporting sources regarding the process of developing positive behaviors.	Communication with parents showed the delivery of information regarding students' behavioral development, although changes occurring in the home environment were still understood as perceptions from the school's perspective.

All data sources, including interview transcripts, observation notes, school documents, and WhatsApp communications that met the research criteria, were imported into Atlas.ti to facilitate data management, coding processes, code organization, and the exploration of relationships among themes. The initial coding process generated 68 preliminary codes, which were subsequently reviewed by merging codes with similar meanings and removing irrelevant codes, resulting in 18 subthemes and five main themes.

Throughout the analysis process, several codes were revised, merged, or removed when they had overlapping meanings, lacked sufficient supporting data, or were not relevant to the research focus. Code revisions were conducted iteratively until the final thematic structure was obtained that best represented the overall dataset.

WhatsApp communication data were not analyzed as an independent data source but were used to strengthen, confirm, and enrich findings obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. Findings from digital communication contributed particularly to the themes of Teacher-Parent Relationships, Teachers' Strategies in Character Discipline, and Teachers' Professional Vulnerability, especially in illustrating changes in communication patterns following the occurrence of the reporting case.

Throughout the analysis process, the interpretations of findings were periodically discussed among the researchers. Differences in interpretations regarding codes or themes were addressed by revisiting the raw data until a consensus was reached regarding the interpretation that most appropriately reflected the research context.

Table 3. Illustration of the Coding Framework

Raw Quote	Initial Code	Subtheme	Final Theme
"I remain their teacher—not just as an educator, but as their parent."	Teachers as Second Parents	The Meaning of a Teacher's Role	The Importance of Character Discipline for Teachers
"Character must be prioritized."	Character education as a priority	The Responsibility of Shaping Character	The Importance of Character Education for Teachers
"Positive affirmation to children on how to behave properly."	A positive approach	Humanistic Approach	Teachers' Strategies for Maintaining Discipline
"Teachers actively work together."	Support among teachers	Peer Collaboration	Teachers' Strategies for Maintaining Discipline
"Because the law is unbalanced."	Legal protections are still inadequate	Limitations on Professional Protection	The Vulnerabilities of the Teaching Profession
"My friends are scared, too, because things like that happen all the time."	Teachers' fears	Psychological stress	The Vulnerability of the Teaching Profession
"A good relationship with parents really does require good communication."	The importance of communication	Building partnerships	The Dynamics of the Teacher-Parent Relationship
"He didn't want to talk it out like family members do; he went straight to the authorities."	Conflicts resulting from miscommunication	Misunderstandings with parents	The Dynamics of the Teacher-Parent Relationship
"The kids who used to be late now come in early in the morning."	Changes in student discipline	Behavioral changes	The Impact of Character Discipline

"His behavior at home has also changed a lot."	Impact on the family environment	Generalization of behavioral changes	The Impact of Character Discipline
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Before presenting the research themes, it is important to explain that all findings in this study emerged from participants' experiences following a case in which a parent reported a teacher in relation to student disciplinary practices. This study demonstrates that teachers' professional vulnerability represents a central concept connecting all empirical themes. Teachers' interpretations of discipline, the strategies they employed, relationships with parents, the use of digital communication, and perceptions of changes in student behavior were all influenced by the level of professional security experienced by teachers.

The experience of being reported by parents not only led teachers to modify their approaches to implementing discipline but also transformed their communication patterns, decision-making processes, and forms of collaboration with families. Therefore, professional vulnerability is not merely one of the research themes; rather, it serves as a contextual framework that shapes the entire practice of fostering students' character discipline.

The Meaning of Character Discipline for Teachers

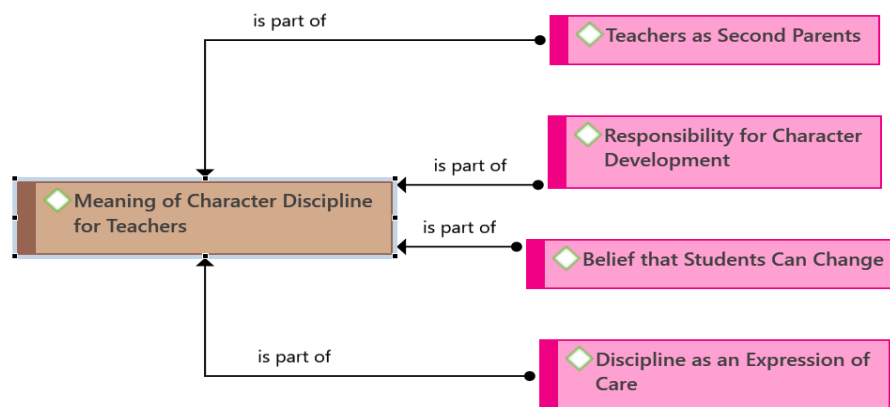


Figure 2. Data Analysis Results: The Meaning of Character Discipline for Teachers

The meaning of character discipline for teachers serves as an important foundation in the process of students' character development at school. From the participants' perspectives, discipline is not merely related to the implementation of rules, the provision of reprimands, or the control of student behavior, but is also understood as part of teachers' moral and professional responsibilities in guiding students' development. In practice, teachers do not only act as instructors but also as figures who accompany, guide, and provide character development for students throughout their experiences in the school environment.

One of the meanings that emerged from this study was teachers' perception of their role as a second parent for students. The close relationship between teachers and students leads disciplinary practices to be understood as part of character development embedded in students' daily lives at school. P1 stated: *"I always return to my role as a teacher, not only as an educator but also as their parent"* (P1). A similar perspective was expressed by P2, who explained that, as a teacher, parents' trust becomes part of the responsibility that must be carried out when students are entrusted to the school: *"They have entrusted their children to me to be educated"* (P2). These statements indicate that participants interpret the teacher-student relationship not only within an academic context but also as a developmental relationship involving moral responsibility and concern for students' growth. Therefore, from the teachers' perspective, character discipline represents part of their professional role in guiding students to develop positively within the school environment.

In addition to being understood as a form of caregiving, discipline was also interpreted by participants as teachers' responsibility in shaping students' character. From the teachers' perspectives, the educational process is not solely oriented toward academic achievement but also encompasses the development of students' attitudes, behaviors, and discipline. This was expressed by P1: *"I consider this as a responsibility, to help shape them into better individuals"* (P1). A similar view was expressed by P2, who emphasized the importance of character education in the educational process at school: *"Character must be prioritized"* (P2). Based on interviews with P1 and P2, participants interpreted character development as an essential component of teachers' professional responsibilities. Teachers perceived that the disciplinary process should be implemented through continuous guidance to help students develop discipline, responsibility, and positive behaviors.

Furthermore, participants demonstrated a belief that students have the potential to develop through consistent disciplinary processes. Discipline was understood as a long-term process requiring patience, commitment, and continuity. P3 explained: *"So that children can truly develop integrity, possess responsibility, and have good character"* (P3). This statement indicates that, from the school principal's perspective, character discipline is directed toward developing students' values of integrity, responsibility, and positive character. Thus, participants viewed discipline not merely as a response to violations but as a developmental process requiring continuous guidance and support.

Based on the participants' perspectives, teacher firmness in the disciplinary process was not understood as a form of punishment alone but as a means of guidance to help students recognize mistakes and improve their behavior. This was expressed by P1: *"Every time I express my anger to students, I explain that behind my anger, there is always care and affection"* (P1). This statement demonstrates that teachers perceive corrective actions as part of their concern for students' development. A similar perspective was expressed by P2, who emphasized that discipline is not always associated with harsh actions but requires consistency in implementing rules: *"Teacher consistency in implementing discipline. Being firm does not necessarily mean being harsh"* (P2). Participants indicated that teachers attempt to develop educational disciplinary practices by considering students' developmental needs and emotional conditions.

Based on the interview analysis, teachers interpret character discipline as an integral part of educational responsibility grounded in values of care, affection, and belief in students' potential for change. This interpretation serves as the foundation for teachers in implementing disciplinary strategies to support students' character development within the school environment.

Teachers' Strategies for Maintaining Discipline

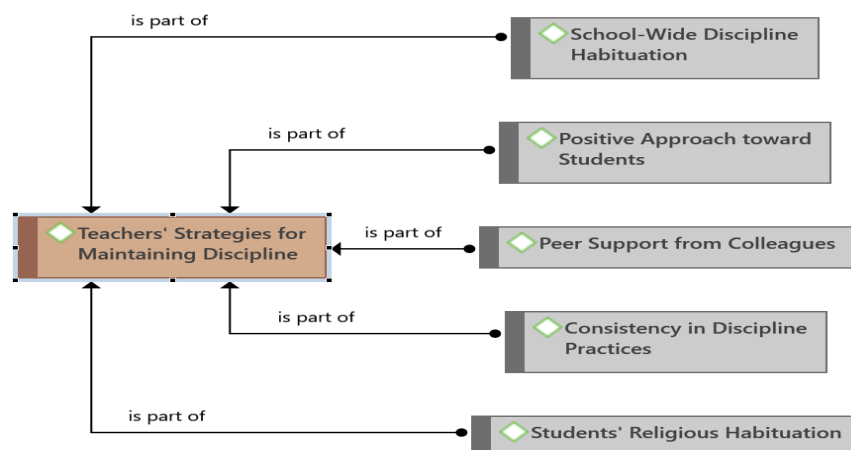


Figure 3. Data Analysis Results: Teachers' Strategies in Maintaining Discipline

Teachers' strategies in maintaining discipline represent an implementation of their understanding of the importance of students' character development. Based on the research findings, teachers strive to sustain the disciplinary process through school discipline habituation, positive approaches toward students, peer support, consistency in rule implementation, and religious habituation within the school environment. These strategies are implemented as teachers' efforts to support the continuous development of students' disciplinary attitudes through educational and humanistic approaches.

One of the strategies implemented by teachers is developing school discipline habituation through routine activities conducted before learning begins. Based on participants' perspectives, these habituation practices have become part of the school culture to instill values of discipline, responsibility, and positive student behavior in daily activities. P1 explained: *"Alhamdulillah, the morning activities from Monday to Saturday begin when the bell rings at seven o'clock"* (P1). A similar statement was conveyed by P2, who explained that the school has routine habituation activities conducted every morning: *"Therefore, every day there is this habituation activity. So, every day, every morning, it is delivered"* (P2). The statements from both participants indicate that routine habituation is considered an important strategy in maintaining consistency in implementing disciplinary values at school. Through these activities, teachers attempt to create an environment that supports students' character development through rules that are applied consistently and repeatedly.

In addition to school discipline habituation, teachers also implement positive approaches toward students in the disciplinary process. This approach is carried out by providing positive affirmation, building emotional connections, and providing guidance to students when they encounter problems. P2 explained: *"Positive affirmation for children about how they should behave well and politely"* (P2). This approach demonstrates that teachers do not only focus on giving reprimands but also attempt to build closer and more supportive communication with students. P1 stated: *"There is closeness there, so for example, if there is a problem at school or in the classroom, do not tell it to other classes, just tell me"* (P1). P1's statement indicates that a positive approach is an important component in maintaining discipline because it helps students feel cared for, guided, and supported throughout the character development process.

Disciplinary strategies are also strengthened through peer support within the school environment. Based on participants' experiences, the disciplinary process is not carried out individually but also involves collaboration among teachers in addressing challenges that arise. P1 explained: *"Some colleagues have also become enthusiastic that this is one of the tests and challenges as educators"* (P1). Similarly, P2 described the existence of support among teachers in dealing with disciplinary issues: *"Teacher colleagues actively work together to help, so thankfully things can return to normal"* (P2). These statements indicate that, from teachers' perspectives, peer support serves as a source of professional and emotional reinforcement in carrying out responsibilities related to student discipline.

Furthermore, teachers attempt to maintain consistency in disciplinary practices despite experiencing various pressures and negative experiences in their professional practice. Teachers continue to implement school rules and provide guidance to students as part of their educational responsibilities. P1 explained: *"I still want to move forward and continue according to what has been regulated in our school"* (P1). This statement demonstrates that teachers strive to maintain their role as educators despite having experienced conflicts or reports from students' parents. P3 also emphasized that the school continues to enforce rules regarding student violations: *"As long as these children make mistakes, we from the school, together with the teachers, will continue to provide reprimands"* (P3). The interview analysis shows that consistency is an important strategy in maintaining the continuity of character discipline practices at school. Teachers attempt to

continue implementing rules and character guidance despite challenges encountered in disciplinary practices.

Another strategy implemented by the school is students' religious habituation as part of character development. Religious habituation is conducted through congregational prayers, recitation of short chapters from the Qur'an, training students to lead prayers, and habituation of greetings and polite behavior within the school environment. P2 explained: *"On Tuesdays, we perform Dhuha prayer, and before going home we pray first; sometimes the students also become prayer leaders"* (P2). P1 also explained that religious activities have become part of students' morning routines at school: *"In the morning, there is a short chapter recitation activity followed by Dhuha prayer"* (P1). Religious habituation is perceived as a strategy that helps develop students' discipline, responsibility, and positive behavior in daily life. In addition to strengthening students' spiritual values, these activities also contribute to creating a more orderly and conducive school culture.

The interview analysis shows that teachers' strategies in maintaining discipline are implemented through school discipline habituation, positive approaches toward students, peer support, consistency in rule implementation, and students' religious habituation. These strategies represent teachers' efforts to sustain the process of students' character development amid various challenges encountered in disciplinary practices at school.

The Vulnerability of the Teaching Profession in Discipline

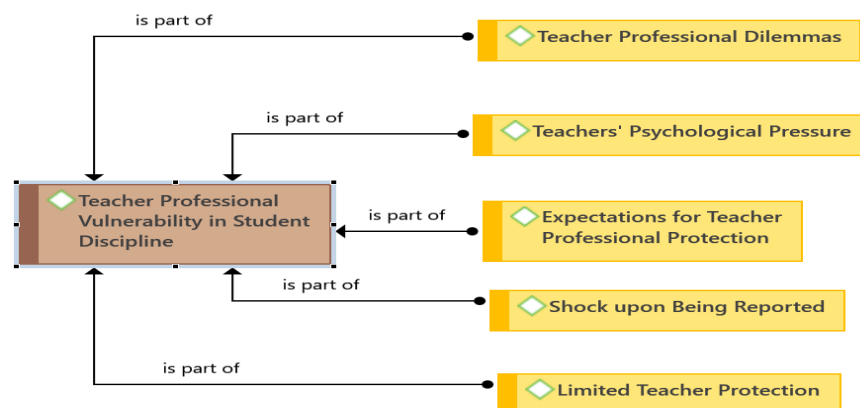


Figure 4. Data Analysis Results: Teachers' Professional Vulnerability in Discipline

Practices represents a challenge that emerges amid teachers' efforts to sustain the process of students' character development in schools. Although various disciplinary strategies continue to be implemented, teachers still face pressure, concerns, and the risk of being reported by students' parents. This situation places teachers in a dilemma because they are required to educate and guide students while simultaneously facing the possibility of conflicts and legal issues.

One form of vulnerability experienced by participants was related to perceptions regarding the limited professional protection available to teachers when carrying out disciplinary responsibilities. P2 stated: *"This is because the law is not balanced. So, ..."* (P2). This statement indicates that, from P2's perspective, there is concern that existing regulations do not fully provide teachers with a sense of security when implementing educational interventions for students. A similar view was expressed by P3, who explained: *"The dilemma now is why many teachers are being criminalized, because it is indeed due to the weakness of teacher protection laws"* (P3). This statement demonstrates that P3 perceives professional protection issues as one of the factors influencing teachers' sense of security in carrying out disciplinary practices. Based on the interview analysis, perceptions regarding limited professional protection represent one of the

experiences that shape teachers' vulnerability in the process of fostering students' character discipline.

Furthermore, from the perspectives of teachers and the school principal, the experience of receiving reports from students' parents was perceived as a surprising event for teachers. Participants interpreted that the disciplinary actions previously implemented were part of efforts to foster students' character development. However, based on teachers' experiences, these actions could be interpreted differently by parents, creating tensions between the school and families. P1 explained:

"I was also surprised that, among the many students and parents I have worked with, this was the first time a parent truly felt that the way I educated and guided their child was inappropriate" (P1).

The statement indicates that, from P1's perspective, the report from the parent was an unexpected experience because the teacher perceived the disciplinary actions taken as part of their responsibility in guiding students. A similar experience was expressed by P2, who conveyed surprise regarding the emergence of the issue: *"That is why we were surprised yesterday, why suddenly something like this happened" (P2)*. In addition, P1 perceived that the report emerged due to differences in understanding between the school and parents regarding student disciplinary practices: *"Actually, the emergence of the report was caused by a misunderstanding, due to poor communication between the parents and the school" (P1)*. Observation results showed that, after the reporting case occurred, teachers more frequently provided personal reprimands rather than addressing students in front of the class.

This situation subsequently created a dilemma for teachers in carrying out the disciplinary process. Teachers continued to feel responsible for developing students' character but were also confronted with concerns about possible responses that might arise. P2 stated: *"Of course, we feel that as educators this is a major challenge" (P2)*. A similar view was expressed by P3: *"This phenomenon indeed creates a dilemma for teachers when discussing issues related to discipline" (P3)*.

Amid these circumstances, teachers expressed the need for clearer and fairer professional protection so that they could carry out their educational responsibilities with greater confidence and security. P1 stated: *"There is also a need for fair legal protection" (P1)*. A similar expectation was expressed by P2: *"Hopefully, in the future, there will be special attention given to us as educators so that we can receive more equitable protection" (P2)*. For teachers, the existence of clear protection is considered essential to ensure that character education processes can continue without being overshadowed by excessive fear or pressure.

This vulnerability also reflects teachers' psychological conditions in carrying out disciplinary responsibilities. Experiences of being reported and various cases that have occurred have made some teachers more cautious when providing reprimands to students. P1 explained: *"My colleagues are also afraid because incidents like this keep happening at this school" (P1)*. This sense of fear was also experienced by P2: *"Regarding the feeling of fear, yes" (P2)*. P3 further explained that such conditions caused teachers to feel anxious in carrying out their duties: *"Teachers do feel burdened and somewhat worried in carrying out their responsibilities" (P3)*.

Overall, teachers' professional vulnerability in student discipline demonstrates the tension between educational responsibilities and the risks faced by teachers in implementing disciplinary practices at school. This condition not only influences the implementation of character education but also reflects teachers' sense of professional security and psychological well-being in carrying out their roles as educators.

The Dynamics of the Teacher-Parent Relationship

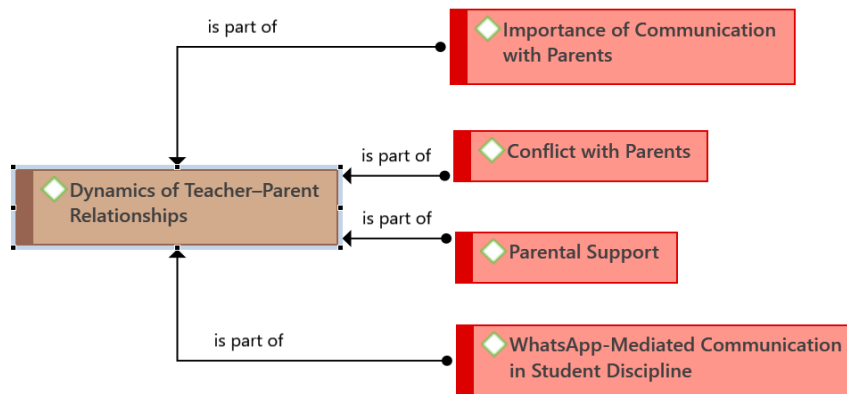


Figure 5. Data Analysis Results: The Dynamics of Teacher-Parent Relationships

The dynamics of teacher-parent relationships represent an important aspect of the process of fostering students' character discipline at school. In practice, these relationships do not always remain stable, as they involve support, collaboration, and conflicts that may emerge throughout the disciplinary process. This condition indicates that students' character development is not solely the responsibility of the school but also requires parental involvement and understanding.

Several teachers revealed that some parents provided support for the disciplinary processes implemented at school. This support was demonstrated through parents' trust in teachers to educate and foster students' character. P1 explained: *"They have entrusted their child to me to be educated"* (P1). In addition, teachers also experienced positive responses from parents regarding various character development efforts conducted at school: *"There were also positive responses from parents, Alhamdulillah"* (P1).

Similar support was expressed by P2, who explained that some parents even requested assistance from teachers when dealing with children's behavioral issues at home: *"If there is a problem at home, for example, when the child does not want to go to religious lessons and so on, they actually ask the homeroom teacher for help"* (P2).

P1's statement was also supported by the analysis of WhatsApp conversations, which showed that teachers tended to provide explanations regarding the objectives of disciplinary actions before requesting responses from parents. In several conversations, teachers used more persuasive language and communicated students' behavioral development gradually to minimize the potential for misunderstanding.

In addition to interview findings, documentation of digital communication through WhatsApp also showed that teachers regularly informed parents about students' behavioral development as part of the disciplinary process.

Teacher: *"Good afternoon, Ma'am. Today, your child had several instances of disturbing classmates during the learning process. We have already provided guidance and reminders in the classroom. We kindly request your cooperation in reminding and guiding your child again at home."*

Parent: *"Thank you for the information, Ma'am. We will talk with our child at home so that they can become more disciplined."*

This form of support demonstrates parents' trust in teachers' roles in guiding students' behavior. Furthermore, the relationship established between the school and parents was perceived to become closer after various challenges were faced together. P1 explained: *"Through that incident, there was also a stronger relationship between parents and the school"* (P1).

In addition to support, the relationship between teachers and parents was also characterized by conflicts and misunderstandings. Conflicts generally emerged when disciplinary actions implemented by teachers were perceived differently by students' parents. P1 stated: *"They did not want to discuss it in a family manner, but immediately reported it"* (P1). A similar view was expressed by P2, who considered that the report was made hastily without prior communication with the school: *"Perhaps it was a hasty decision to report, even though there were other possible ways"* (P2). Meanwhile, P1 explained that the conflict was influenced by inadequate communication between the school and parents: *"As a homeroom teacher, I personally experienced misunderstandings and communication problems between parents and teachers"* (P1).

These conditions demonstrate that differences in understanding regarding disciplinary practices can create tensions between teachers and parents. When communication does not function effectively, disciplinary actions intended to guide students may instead lead to conflict. Therefore, communication between teachers and parents is considered essential in supporting the student disciplinary process. Teachers recognize that positive relationships with parents can help reduce misunderstandings and strengthen collaboration in students' character development. P1 explained: *"A good relationship with parents is indeed necessary, along with good communication"* (P1). A similar view was expressed by P2, who emphasized that communication with parents needs to be continuously developed: *"For the future, it is indeed important to maintain communication with parents"* (P2).

Digital communication increases transparency while also increasing teachers' psychological pressure through accessibility beyond working hours, the risk of misunderstandings, and the possibility of digital messages being used as evidence in disputes. Efforts to strengthen communication are carried out by schools through various meetings with parents and the provision of information regarding students' development. P1 explained: *"Almost every year, we meet with parents"* (P1). In addition, communication is also conducted through WhatsApp groups and direct coordination with parents regarding students' behavioral development at school. According to teachers, open communication helps parents understand that disciplinary practices are implemented as part of the educational process and students' character development.

It can be concluded that the dynamics of teacher-parent relationships reveal a complex relationship within the process of student discipline. Parental support can strengthen character development processes, but misunderstandings and ineffective communication may also generate conflict. Therefore, effective communication and collaboration between schools and parents are important factors in supporting the success of students' character discipline at school.

Further findings indicate that digital communication also increases teachers' accessibility beyond working hours. Parents can contact teachers at any time to inquire about their children's development or express concerns regarding disciplinary actions implemented at school. Although such communication strengthens school-parent relationships, teachers experience psychological pressure because they feel the need to remain available to respond to various questions and complaints delivered through WhatsApp.

Thus, this study demonstrates that digital communication plays a dual role in the process of fostering students' character discipline. On the one hand, WhatsApp enhances transparency, documentation, and ease of communication between schools and parents. On the other hand, digital communication records also influence how teachers make decisions when addressing disciplinary violations because each action can be more easily documented and potentially become the basis for evaluation or conflict. Participants reported that these experiences influenced the way they made decisions when dealing with disciplinary violations.

Perceptions of Character Discipline

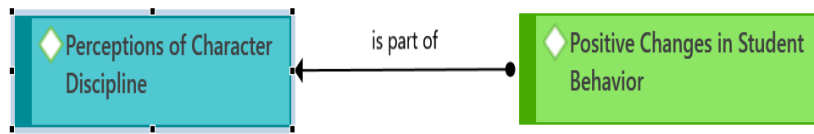


Figure 6. Data Analysis Results: Perceptions of Character Discipline

Based on the observations and experiences of teachers and the school principal, students demonstrated positively perceived behavioral changes following the implementation of character discipline strategies, including increased compliance with rules, responsibility, and involvement in school activities. These changes represent the observations and experiences of participants throughout their implementation of disciplinary practices at school. Teachers reported that various habituation activities, positive approaches, and consistency in discipline practices were perceived to be associated with improvements in students' discipline, responsibility, and positive behaviors. According to teachers, these changes were observed both within the school environment and through feedback provided by parents.

One of the changes perceived by teachers was related to increased student discipline, particularly regarding punctuality and compliance with school regulations. P1 explained: *"Children who used to come late now arrive early in the morning"* (P1). Teachers also observed improvements in students' disciplinary conditions compared to previous situations. This was reflected in the decreasing number of students arriving late at school.

"At seven o'clock, not all students used to be inside the school, meaning that many were still wandering around, arriving late, and so on. Alhamdulillah, from what I have observed, there have been changes; now there are only one or two students who arrive late" (P1).

In addition to discipline, positive changes were also observed in students' attitudes and cooperation during daily activities at school. P1 stated: *"Alhamdulillah, the children here also have good cooperation, and their discipline has improved"* (P1). Changes in students' behavior were also perceived by parents at home. P2 explained that parents reported improvements in their children's behavior after participating in various character habituation activities at school: *"They said that since this teacher became the homeroom teacher, their child has experienced many changes"* (P2). According to P2, these changes were not only visible at school but were also reflected in students' attitudes within the family environment. *"Alhamdulillah, it has been very positive. Because since the implementation of this character habituation, they said that the child's attitude at home has also changed significantly"* (P2).

Furthermore, P3 also observed changes in students' behavior and social interactions compared to previous conditions: *"I see that these children's social interactions have indeed improved; they have become more open and able to interact freely"* (P3). These various changes indicate that the character discipline process implemented by the school has contributed to teachers' perceptions of positive changes in students' behavior. Discipline habituation, humanistic approaches, and collaboration between teachers and parents have supported the development of students' behavior to become more orderly, responsible, and capable of adapting to their social environment. Despite the various challenges and vulnerabilities experienced by teachers during the disciplinary process, character development efforts continue to demonstrate positive outcomes for students' behavioral development.

Discussion

Discipline as a Teacher's Moral Responsibility

The research findings indicate that teachers perceive character discipline as part of their moral responsibility within the educational process. Professional teachers are characterized by mastery of teacher competencies, including pedagogical competence, personality competence, social competence, and professional competence, which position the teaching profession as an agent of change (Finsensia Ansel et al., 2023). Teachers not only perform their roles as educators but also position themselves as parental figures who guide and direct students' behavioral development at school. In this context, discipline is understood as a form of care and concern for students' character development rather than merely an effort to enforce rules.

The firmness applied by teachers is also interpreted as part of a humanistic guidance process. Teachers attempt to develop students' awareness through approaches that continue to consider children's emotional conditions. This perspective is consistent with the concept of positive discipline, which views discipline as an educational process aimed at developing students' responsibility and self-awareness rather than merely as a form of punishment. Positive discipline is a program designed to teach students to become responsible and respectful members of society. The strategies implemented by teachers in this study reflect the principles of positive discipline (Imron et al., 2025). Teachers relied more on persuasive communication, habituation, and guidance rather than physical punishment. Furthermore, after the reporting incident occurred, teachers increasingly prioritized dialogue with students and parents through digital communication before implementing disciplinary actions.

In addition, teachers' belief in students' potential for change demonstrates that character development is understood as a gradual and continuous process. As stated by (Lickona, 1991), character refers to the deepest qualities that enable individuals to respond to situations in morally appropriate ways. Character education requires habituation, role modeling, and consistency in its implementation. Therefore, the disciplinary practices implemented by teachers in this study were not intended as forms of punishment but rather as processes for developing students' responsibility and self-control.

School Culture as a Strategy for Maintaining Discipline

The various strategies implemented by teachers demonstrate that character discipline is developed through a school culture that supports positive student behavior. The implementation of value-based strategies is carried out through role modeling and providing guidance to students (Amelia & Dafit, 2023). According to Dakhi (2020) in (Zaki et al., 2025), teachers can prevent undisciplined behavior through real examples, assigning homework to foster responsibility, increasing students' reading interest, developing students' talents, integrating character education through spiritual and social activities, and collaborating with students' parents. Teacher firmness in addressing student violations is implemented through consistent rule enforcement, providing advice, and applying persuasive approaches so that the disciplinary process remains within the framework of character development. Discipline habituation, positive approaches, peer support, consistency in rules, and religious habituation are part of school efforts to create an educational environment conducive to character formation.

Routine habituation activities demonstrate that schools apply a habituation approach in character education. Rules are established by teachers at the beginning of lessons, where students who need to change their learning environment are allowed to work independently in designated areas near the classroom without requiring teacher permission, as long as they do not disturb other students. This approach becomes one of the strategies used by teachers to maintain student discipline (Hasanov & Brandišauskienė, 2025). Self-discipline among students does not emerge solely from rules or corrective actions; rather, it develops through repeated participation in daily school practices that gradually become familiar and meaningful (Bhoke et al., 2025). Through

daily activities, students are gradually accustomed to understanding the values of discipline, responsibility, and social attitudes in their everyday lives. This approach aligns with character education theory, which emphasizes the importance of habit formation as the foundation of students' behavioral development.

In addition to positive habituation practices implemented at school, teachers' ability to integrate sustainability into the curriculum and utilize outdoor learning environments is essential in addressing increasingly complex global challenges (Coştu & Karakuş, 2025). On the other hand, the positive approaches implemented by teachers demonstrate a shift in disciplinary practices toward more dialogical and supportive approaches. Teachers do not merely focus on providing reprimands but also develop emotional connections with students to make the guidance process more effective. Collaboration among teachers also strengthens the sustainability of disciplinary practices because character education is viewed as a shared responsibility among all members of the school community.

The findings of this study emphasize that students' character development is influenced by interactions among interconnected systems within the environment, consistent with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2009). The results indicate that the effectiveness of character discipline does not depend solely on teachers' actions in the classroom but also on the quality of communication, support, and collaboration among teachers, parents, and school stakeholders. In the context of digital technology development, communication through WhatsApp has become part of these interactions, which can strengthen coordination and transparency but may also increase teachers' professional vulnerability when communication leads to misunderstandings or conflicts.

WhatsApp communication is positioned as part of the educational ecosystem interaction that can strengthen school-parent collaboration while simultaneously increasing teachers' professional vulnerability when digital communication triggers conflict or misinterpretation. Therefore, the success of character discipline is the result of synergy among all components of the educational ecosystem, as explained by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory. However, digital communication also has the potential to increase the risk of misunderstanding when messages are received without the context provided by face-to-face interaction. Therefore, policies in Indonesia are needed that not only protect children's rights but also provide legal certainty for teachers in implementing educational disciplinary practices that are aligned with professional ethical standards.

The Paradox of Teachers in Implementing Discipline

According to (Gušauskienė et al., 2025), the Guidelines of the European Trade Union Committee for Education and the European Federation of Education Employers (2013) state that any form of violence experienced by a teacher from a student or a student's parent is categorized as third-party violence. This form of violence includes physical violence, verbal aggression, and threats of retaliation, in which the perpetrator is not a colleague. Although teachers attempt to sustain the process of character discipline, this study demonstrates the professional vulnerabilities encountered by teachers in educational practices at schools. Limited professional protection, experiences of being reported by parents, and psychological pressure indicate that teachers are placed in a dilemma when carrying out their disciplinary responsibilities.

As professional educators, teachers play a crucial role in improving the intellectual development of Indonesian society (Pratama et al., 2025). Teachers do not only function as transmitters of knowledge but also serve as character educators and role models for students (Li et al., 2025). On the one hand, teachers have the responsibility to develop students' character and enforce discipline. On the other hand, teachers also experience concerns regarding the possibility of conflicts and legal issues arising from disciplinary actions they implement. This condition

demonstrates a paradox in character education, where teachers are expected to educate students firmly while not fully experiencing a sense of security in carrying out their professional roles.

This study is consistent with previous research indicating that the increasing number of reports against teachers may affect teachers' sense of security and confidence in conducting character development practices at school. Consequently, some teachers become more cautious and anxious when providing guidance or reprimands to students.

Parent-Teacher Communication in Character Development

This study also demonstrates that the relationship between teachers and parents plays an important role in the process of student discipline. Parental support contributes to strengthening students' character development, whereas misunderstandings and ineffective communication have the potential to generate conflicts between schools and families. Parents' trust in teachers indicates that character education is not solely the responsibility of schools but also requires family involvement. Parental involvement facilitates the learning process through communication interactions between parents and children (Triwardhani et al., 2020). This finding aligns with Ki Hajar Dewantara's concept of the *Tripusat Pendidikan* (Three Centers of Education), which emphasizes the importance of synergy among schools, families, and the community in children's educational processes. The perspective of *Tripusat Pendidikan* highlights that character development is a shared responsibility among schools, families, and society.

The research findings show that when communication between schools and parents is disrupted, the disciplinary process also becomes less effective. Conversely, effective communication through school meetings and WhatsApp strengthens collaboration in students' character development. However, differences in understanding regarding disciplinary practices often create tensions between teachers and parents. Therefore, open communication becomes an essential factor in establishing shared perceptions regarding the process of students' character development. The school's efforts through regular meetings and communication with parents demonstrate that collaboration between schools and families is an important component in supporting the success of character discipline implementation.

Character Discipline and Changes in Student Behavior

This study shows that participants perceived character discipline practices as being associated with changes in students' behavior. These findings represent the perceptions of teachers and the school principal based on their experiences in guiding students throughout the educational process and are not intended as causal evidence regarding the effectiveness of character discipline. Teachers reported that the implementation of discipline habituation, guidance, and humanistic approaches contributed to changes in students' behavior, including increased responsibility, compliance with rules, cooperation skills, and social awareness.

These findings are consistent with the perspective of (Fuad & Achmad, 2020), who stated that discipline helps individuals develop self-control, responsibility, and awareness of their social environment. In the context of this study, changes in students' behavior are not understood merely as the outcomes of school rule implementation but also as a character development process formed through consistent interactions among teachers, students, and the educational environment. Nevertheless, the process of character discipline also presents challenges for teachers. Teachers' efforts to develop students' discipline must consider parents' perceptions regarding the boundaries between educational actions and actions that may be perceived as excessive. Therefore, teachers need to balance the need to provide behavioral guidance with maintaining trust-based relationships with students' families.

Student character development is influenced by interactions among different environments that shape students' experiences and behaviors. Character education in Indonesia also emphasizes moral values derived from religion, Pancasila, and citizenship education (Rahmah et al., 2024). Thus, the success of students' character development does not solely

depend on teachers' disciplinary strategies but also on the support and harmonious communication between schools and families.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that teachers' professional vulnerability influences students' character discipline practices within a limited case study context. In the case examined, teachers perceived discipline as part of their moral and professional responsibility to develop students' character through approaches that are firm, humanistic, and caring. However, experiences of being reported by parents made teachers more cautious in making disciplinary decisions and encouraged changes in communication patterns and decision-making processes at school. The findings also reveal that digital communication, particularly through WhatsApp, plays an important role in maintaining transparency, providing clarification, and facilitating coordination between schools and parents after differences in perceptions emerge. Nevertheless, the use of digital communication may also increase psychological pressure and intensify the risk of misunderstanding because every message is documented and may potentially become a basis for conflict. Overall, the findings of this study should be understood as an interpretation of a specific case and are not intended to be broadly generalized. Therefore, future research should involve more participants, incorporate the perspectives of parents and students, and examine more deeply the role of digital communication in character discipline practices across diverse school contexts.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used solely to assist with language refinement, grammatical improvement, and enhancement of the readability of the manuscript. The AI tools were not used to generate research data, conduct data analysis, develop research findings, or make scholarly interpretations and conclusions. All AI-assisted outputs were critically reviewed, verified, and revised by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, originality, and final content of the manuscript.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

NKW conducted the field investigation, including interviews, observations, documentation, and the collection of digital communication data. ATL contributed to reviewing the coding process, refining the development of subthemes and themes, and critically discussing the analytical findings. AP contributed to data transcription, initial coding using Atlas.ti, methodological review, evaluation of the interpretation of findings, and ensuring alignment between the empirical findings and the theoretical framework. All authors participated in discussing and interpreting the findings, reviewing analytical decisions, critically revising the manuscript, and approving the final version for publication.

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