The Principal's Strategy in Enforcing Teacher Discipline at Ta'mirul Islam Elementary School Surakarta

Siti Saharah   https://orcid.org/0009-0009-5731-7010
Karina Mahardika   https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8776-855X
Heldy Ramadhan   https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6518-3512

Affiliation (Faculty of Tarbiyah and Education, State Islamic University Raden Mas Said, Surakarta)

ABSTRACT

Modern education shows that enforcing discipline is not merely a matter of rules, but serves as a key factor in shaping character, improving the quality of learning, and sustaining a professional work culture within an educational institution. This study aims to analyze the principal's strategies in enforcing teacher discipline along with the design and implementation of specific and transparent policies. This research employs a qualitative approach by interviewing principals regarding their efforts in enforcing teacher discipline, which were analyzed using descriptive analysis methods. The findings reveal that principals employ various strategies to enforce teacher discipline, including building good communication with teachers, providing clear guidance, direction, and motivation, as well as developing specific policy strategies regarding punishment and reward systems. Furthermore, principals also conduct regular meetings to discuss teacher discipline issues and provide special training on the ethics of discipline enforcement. The contribution of this research lies in providing an empirical overview of the principal's strategies in enforcing teacher discipline, which not only strengthens character and professionalism but also serves as a practical reference for the development of educational management in schools.

Keywords: Principal Strategy, Teacher Discipline.

Introduction

Modern education shows that discipline is not merely a set of rules but serves as a key factor in shaping character, improving the quality of learning, and sustaining a professional work culture in schools. As defined by Jane Nelsen (2006), discipline should be based on self-awareness, responsibility, and respect rather than punishment. Meanwhile, according to B.F. Skinner (1953), discipline is formed through positive and negative reinforcement in behavior. Jacob Kounin (1970) further explains that effective discipline emerges from teachers' classroom management skills, such as withitness (full awareness) and

maintaining momentum. Discipline thus serves as the fundamental foundation that builds order while fostering responsibility.

The principal's strategy in enforcing teacher discipline is expected to create a consistent, participatory, and sustainable culture of discipline that shapes teachers' professional character and enhances the quality of learning in schools. This aligns with Fayol's (1949) classical management theory, particularly the control function, and Bass's (1990) transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes exemplary conduct and motivation. It is also grounded in Ministerial Regulation No. 10 of 2017 on Teacher Protection, which highlights the importance of professionalism and accountability in teachers' duties. Therefore, the principal's strategy in enforcing discipline underscores the synergy between leadership theory, management principles, and educational policy to establish a sustainable culture of teacher discipline in schools.

Although conceptually the principal's strategy is expected to uphold teacher discipline through the integration of theory and policy, in practice its implementation remains inconsistent. At Ta'mirul Islam Elementary School Surakarta, teacher discipline still faces challenges such as inconsistent supervision, lack of exemplary behavior among some senior teachers, and low teacher participation in developing a culture of discipline. Recent studies confirm that teacher discipline remains a pressing issue in schools. Rahayu and Sari (2022) emphasized that the effectiveness of the principal's strategy in fostering discipline largely depends on consistent supervision and exemplary modeling. Similarly, Nugraha et al. (2021) found that transformational leadership significantly influences teacher discipline through motivational and participatory approaches. This is further supported by Oktaviani and Rahman (2023), who revealed that open communication and continuous monitoring are key to successful discipline management. Hence, principals must adapt their approaches to the social and cultural context of their schools to ensure that discipline is enforced effectively and sustainably.

A potential solution to low teacher discipline lies in applying participatory managerial strategies that focus on strengthening work culture. Rahman (2021) noted that involving all stakeholders in school program planning can increase collective ownership and responsibility for discipline. Dewi and Hidayat (2022) also found that principals who actively engage teachers in planning and evaluation processes enhance their motivation and professional commitment. Similarly, Oktaviani and Rahman (2023) demonstrated that implementing collaborative supervision and providing positive feedback significantly improve teacher discipline and performance. Therefore, participatory and collaborative management approaches can serve as effective solutions for developing sustainable teacher discipline in elementary schools.

These challenges raise a fundamental question: how can principals effectively enforce teacher discipline within the context of Islamic elementary education? Rahayu and Sari (2022) highlighted that leadership effectiveness is influenced by a principal's ability to demonstrate exemplary behavior and maintain consistent supervision. Nugraha et al. (2021) reinforced this by showing that adaptive transformational leadership plays a crucial role in shaping teacher discipline. Furthermore, Susanti and Putra (2020) emphasized the importance of

exemplary values and reflective leadership in fostering a character-based work culture. Based on these findings, this study aims to analyze the principal's strategies in enforcing teacher discipline at Ta'mirul Islam Elementary School Surakarta as a contribution to developing an effective, participatory, and Islamic value-based educational leadership model.

Empirical studies indicate that the principal's role as a strategic leader is crucial in building and maintaining teacher discipline through a combination of exemplary conduct, systematic supervision, and consistent reward-and-punishment policies (Haryanti, Sutama, & Fathoni, 2023). Principals who apply strategic management measures such as formulating clear rules and sanctions, implementing attendance systems, and conducting regular evaluations have been shown to enhance teacher discipline and performance (Lestari, Sesmiarni, & Gusli, 2024). Moreover, participatory approaches that involve teachers in planning and monitoring programs strengthen professional commitment and ownership of school regulations (Wildan & Kurnia, 2023). In the context of Islamic education, integrating religious values and spiritual development has proven effective in fostering sustainable discipline (Fauzan, 2023). Khana and Nasir (2024) further emphasized that principals must balance exemplary leadership and supervision with effective interpersonal communication to prevent an authoritarian disciplinary culture. Similarly, Mursyid and Zainuddin (2023) highlighted the importance of reflective leadership and reward systems in enhancing teachers' sense of responsibility. In addition, Ningsih and Rahayu (2023) pointed out that digital communication media and technology-based supervision can improve monitoring effectiveness and teacher discipline. Overall, these studies demonstrate that principals who integrate strategic management, exemplary leadership, teacher participation, and technology utilization have significant potential to enforce teacher discipline sustainably in elementary schools.

Based on preliminary observations at Ta'mirul Islam Elementary School Surakarta in 2025, it was found that teacher discipline implementation remains inconsistent, particularly in terms of punctuality, administrative responsibility, and adherence to school regulations. This condition indicates that the principal's strategies in fostering and supervising teachers have not been fully effective in aligning with the institution's vision and mission. Prasetyo (2022) found that teacher discipline levels are strongly influenced by intrinsic motivation and the principal's leadership style. Likewise, Fitriani and Nasution (2023) revealed that the success of teacher discipline development largely depends on the principal's exemplary behavior and consistent supervision mechanisms. Lestari and Huda (2021) also underscored the importance of effective interpersonal communication between principals and teachers in fostering work discipline awareness. Therefore, this study is relevant in deeply examining the principal's strategies in enforcing teacher discipline at Ta'mirul Islam Elementary School Surakarta to identify more effective and sustainable patterns of discipline management.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, as its objective was to provide an in-depth depiction of the principal's strategies in enforcing teacher discipline. According to Sugiyono (2019), the descriptive qualitative method is used to understand social phenomena by describing situations factually and systematically. The research procedures included: (1) determining the research focus, (2) collecting data through observation, interviews, and documentation, (3) analyzing data through the stages of reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing, and (4) preparing the research report.

The subjects of this study were the principal and teachers at Ta'mirul Islam Elementary School Surakarta, while the object of the research was the principal's strategy in enforcing teacher discipline. The research was conducted at Ta'mirul Islam Elementary School Surakarta during the period of September–October 2025. The subjects were chosen because the principal plays a crucial role in establishing discipline, which is a key factor in maintaining the quality of learning and the work culture within the Islamic school.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted to explore the principal's strategies and teachers' perceptions of discipline. Observation was used to examine how the principal's strategies were applied in daily school activities, while documentation involved reviewing teacher regulations, meeting minutes, and discipline reports. Data validity was ensured through methodological and source triangulation, while reliability was maintained through consistent data recording and respondent verification (Moleong, 2018).

Data were analyzed using the interactive model by Miles & Huberman (1994), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This analysis aimed to identify patterns in the principal's strategies, whether persuasive, preventive, or repressive approaches, in enforcing teacher discipline. Through this technique, the researcher was able to present findings systematically and effectively address the study's focus.

Results

This research was conducted at Ta'mirul Islam Elementary School Surakarta, focusing on the principal's strategies in enforcing teacher discipline. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the principal and an analysis of documents such as attendance records, supervision reports, and meeting minutes on disciplinary issues.

The interview results indicated that the principal considered teacher discipline highly important, as it significantly affects teacher quality, student learning outcomes, and the institution's reputation. The following table presents a summary of the main findings.

Table 1. summary of the main findings

Discipline Enforcement Aspects	Key Findings	Supporting Evidence
The Importance of Discipline	Discipline improves teacher quality and student learning outcomes.	Principal's statement: "For teachers, it improves self-quality; for students, it helps achieve learning objectives."
Enforcement Strategy	Dissemination of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), attendance monitoring through fingerprint systems, regular supervision, and periodic evaluations.	Saturday meeting minutes and monthly fingerprint attendance reports.
Monitoring and Evaluation	Supervision is conducted weekly; teachers who violate rules are summoned and evaluated.	Attendance lists and supervision reports.
Rewards and Punishments	Disciplined teachers receive rewards (monetary or certificates), while undisciplined teachers receive verbal warnings up to written reprimands.	Teacher discipline Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).
Communication and Motivation	The principal conducts general meetings and personal approaches.	Meeting documentation and informal communication records.
Obstacles	Some senior teachers lack exemplary behavior, and the pekewuh (reluctance) culture poses an obstacle.	Principal interview
Changes in Teacher Behavior	The impact is not always significant; it depends on individual attitudes and the consistency of role modeling.	Individual teacher behavior change reports.

The following pie chart illustrates the proportion of dominant factors influencing teacher discipline based on the interview results.

Figure 1. illustrates the proportion of dominant factors influencing teacher discipline based on the interview results
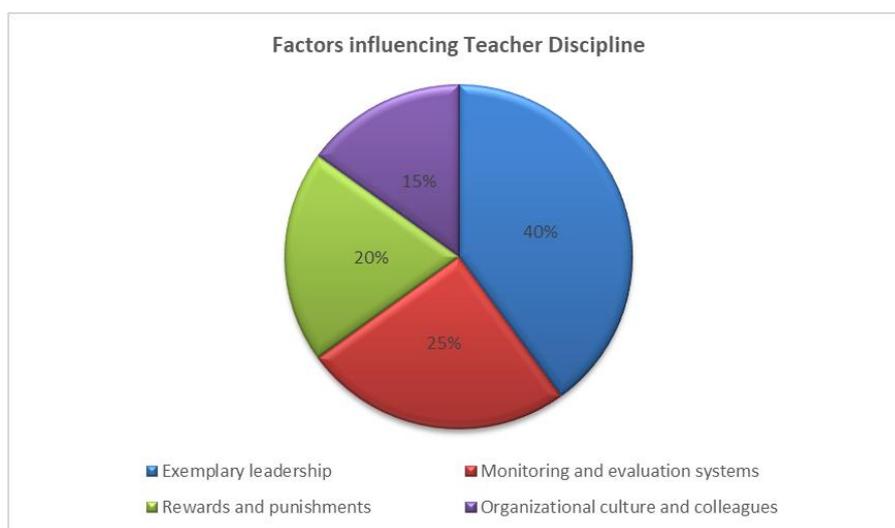
In general, the observation results showed that the success of discipline enforcement was largely determined by the principal's exemplary behavior, continuous supervision, and effective communication between teachers and school leadership.

This section deals with the research findings (level one headings). The findings obtained from the research have to be supported by sufficient data. The research results and the discovery must be the answers, or the research hypothesis stated previously in the introduction part. The findings section consists of a description of the results of the data analysis to answer the research question(s). The findings should summarize (scientific) findings rather than providing data in great detail. Please highlight differences between your results or findings and the previous publications by other researchers.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the principal's strategy in enforcing teacher discipline at Ta'mirul Islam Elementary School Surakarta involves a combination of structural, communicative, and personal exemplary approaches. The principal positions discipline as the foundation for improving the quality of education, rather than merely an administrative obligation. This view aligns with Nelsen's (2006) concept of discipline with dignity, which defines discipline not as punishment for violations but as a process of shaping character and professional responsibility. When teachers demonstrate a high level of discipline, the teaching and learning process becomes more organized, the classroom atmosphere more conducive, and students are provided with tangible examples of integrity and responsibility.

Theoretically, the principal's strategy in this study reflects Fayol's (1949) principles of managerial functions—planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling. The principal exercises the controlling function through the use of fingerprint attendance systems, regular supervision, and periodic evaluations of teacher performance. Organizational and coordination functions are evident in the distribution of roles and responsibilities among teachers, as well as in the establishment of open communication during weekly meetings. The implementation of the reward and punishment system represents a concrete form of the commanding function within the context of moral development. Thus, the principal's strategy reflects the application of classical management theory within the framework of modern Islamic education.

The findings also reveal the strong influence of transformational leadership as described by Bass (1990). The principal functions not only as a controller but also as an inspirer who fosters a spirit of change among teachers. The principal's exemplary behavior emerged as the most dominant factor (40%) influencing teacher discipline. This finding supports Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which explains that human behavior is shaped through observation and imitation. In this context, when the principal arrives on time, adheres to regulations, and acts fairly, teachers are likely to emulate such behavior patterns.

In addition to the exemplary approach, the principal also employs interpersonal communication and contextual motivation strategies. This

approach is reflected in weekly meetings and personal communication with teachers who exhibit lower levels of discipline. Such a strategy aligns with the findings of Northouse (2021) and Zhang et al. (2023), who emphasize that leadership effectiveness largely depends on the ability to build interpersonal relationships based on trust, empathy, and open two-way communication. The principal at Ta'mirul Islam Elementary School has successfully created a participatory work environment in which teachers feel valued and heard. This condition encourages behavioral change naturally rather than through hierarchical pressure or formal sanctions. As highlighted by Ali and Anwar (2022), empathetic communication plays a crucial role in fostering sustainable discipline within educational settings.

However, this study also found that the greatest challenge in enforcing discipline lies not in the system itself but in organizational culture and social factors. The cultural phenomenon of pekewuh—a sense of reluctance to reprimand senior teachers—often makes it difficult for the principal to provide direct feedback. This cultural norm creates a psychological barrier that limits the objective implementation of rewards and punishments. This finding is consistent with Rahmawati and Suryani (2022) as well as Handayani et al. (2023), who discovered that collective work culture in schools often creates a dilemma between maintaining social harmony and enforcing disciplinary rules. In the Javanese cultural context, respect for seniority becomes a dominant factor influencing the principal's decision-making. Therefore, persuasive and exemplary-based approaches, as suggested by Putra and Santosa (2021), serve as effective solutions in school environments that prioritize communal values.

Furthermore, the finding that not all teachers demonstrate significant behavioral changes indicates that the effectiveness of disciplinary strategies is also influenced by individual differences. Some teachers respond quickly to feedback or motivation, while others require more time to adapt. According to Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory, this can be explained by the variation in reinforcements received by each individual. Teachers who consistently receive positive reinforcement are more likely to internalize disciplined behavior, while those who receive insufficient feedback may experience behavioral stagnation. Therefore, a personalized and continuous reward system is essential in fostering long-term disciplinary behavior.

From a practical standpoint, the results of this study can serve as a foundation for developing a discipline management model based on exemplary leadership and effective communication. Principals should not merely act as administrative supervisors but as mentors who cultivate professional character. The implementation of digital monitoring systems, such as fingerprint attendance, should be accompanied by moral guidance and the strengthening of internal motivation. This aligns with the findings of Wahyudi and Nurkholis (2020) and Hidayat et al. (2024), who emphasize that technology-based supervision must be balanced with a humanistic approach to avoid diminishing teachers' intrinsic motivation. Schools should also strengthen a culture of collective reflection through ethical work forums and mentoring, as recommended by Kurniawan and Fitria (2023), who suggest that value-based

reflection and appreciation practices can foster sustainable discipline and professional responsibility.

Similarly, schools are encouraged to enhance collective reflection practices through work-ethics discussions, peer mentoring among teachers, and recognition programs rooted in Islamic values. In this way, discipline is no longer viewed as a mere formal obligation but as an integral part of teachers' spirituality and professionalism.

The limitation of this study lies in its scope and methodology. Since the research involved only one school, the findings cannot be generalized to other contexts such as Islamic junior high schools or public schools. Additionally, no quantitative measurement of changes in discipline levels was conducted, so the analysis remains descriptive. Future research is recommended to conduct comparative studies across schools with different cultural backgrounds and employ a mixed-method approach to statistically validate qualitative findings. Nonetheless, this study contributes significantly to strengthening Islamic educational leadership theory and provides a concrete depiction of best practices in building a teacher discipline culture grounded in exemplary leadership, professionalism, and humanistic communication.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the principal's strategy in enforcing teacher discipline at Ta'mirul Islam Elementary School Surakarta is implemented through a combination of structural, communicative, and personal exemplary approaches. The principal enforces discipline not merely as an administrative obligation but as an effort to build teachers' character and professionalism. The implementation of regular supervision, digital attendance systems, periodic evaluations, and a fair reward-and-punishment mechanism has proven effective in increasing teachers' disciplinary awareness. The principal's exemplary behavior is the most dominant factor in shaping teachers' discipline, supported by open interpersonal communication and continuous guidance.

The findings of this study have important implications for strengthening value- and character-based educational management. Principals should be seen not only as supervisors but also as moral mentors and professional motivators who foster a culture of discipline through exemplary conduct and empathetic communication. The use of digital systems such as fingerprint attendance should be balanced with moral development and collective reflection so that discipline grows from internal awareness rather than external enforcement. Thus, the findings of this study provide a practical foundation for developing an integrative and humanistic discipline management model in Islamic schools.

The researcher recommends that principals continue to strengthen reflective culture and two-way communication in developing teacher discipline through ethical work forums, peer mentoring, and value-based reward systems grounded in Islamic principles. Schools are also advised to expand the use of adaptive technology-based supervision to enhance efficiency without diminishing the humanistic aspect of leadership. Future research is suggested to employ comparative and mixed-method approaches across schools with different

cultural contexts to test the consistency and generalizability of effective and sustainable teacher discipline enforcement strategies.

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