

English Teacher's Role in Forming the Students' Discipline Character in Kurikulum Merdeka at SMP Negeri 3 Bawolato

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Abstract: This research explores the role of English teachers in shaping students' discipline character in the context of *Kurikulum Merdeka* at SMP Negeri 3 Bawolato. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research investigates the causes of student indiscipline and how teachers respond to it through observation and interviews. Findings show that lack of parental supervision, peer influence, low motivation, and poor study habits are major contributing factors. The English teacher plays three roles: role model, classroom manager, and motivator. This research emphasizes the importance of character-based education in supporting curriculum implementation and student development

Keywords: *English Teacher's Role; Students' Discipline; Character Education; Kurikulum Merdeka*

1. INTRODUCTION

Discipline among students holds a fundamental role in realizing educational objectives and shaping their character development. Nevertheless, many schools, including SMP Negeri 3 Bawolato, continue to face recurring issues of indiscipline, such as lateness, incomplete assignments, and frequent violations of school norms. These disruptions hinder both academic progress and moral growth. Several studies (Ardin, 2020); (Lase et al., 2024) have identified contributing factors such as inadequate parental involvement, negative peer influence, and low intrinsic motivation.

In response to such challenges, teachers are now expected to take on roles that extend beyond conventional teaching. The implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Indonesia serves as a flexible framework to empower educators in promoting both autonomy and character development in learners. As explained by Rifa et al. (2022, in (Taqwallah, 2024), this curriculum provides schools with the liberty to tailor their approach based on local resources and capacities, while also granting teachers the freedom to deliver essential competencies. ((Akbar et al., 2023), further assert that *Kurikulum Merdeka* represents not merely a revision, but a significant shift aimed at modernizing education to meet global and workplace demands.

This curriculum promotes project-based learning, flexibility, and the integration of Pancasila values, which offers teachers the opportunity to address behavioral issues in a more contextual and humanistic manner (Khasanah et al., 2022); (Desmarianti & Ahyani, 2024). According to Hasibuan (2024), teachers' preparedness to implement curricular reforms plays a pivotal role in cultivating character-oriented education. In particular, discipline is seen as the foundation upon which other positive character traits are built.

Within the educational context, discipline encompasses timely behavior, adherence to rules, and accountability for one's actions. Daryanto (2020) elaborates that "discipline is not merely about compliance, but reflects commitment to personal goals and standards," which ultimately fosters academic achievement. Complementing this view, Prihastanti et al. (2023) and (Telaumbanua et al., 2024) categorize discipline into several domains, including self-discipline, social, academic, emotional, moral, and physical discipline, all of which are essential for holistic student growth.

The role of teachers extends far beyond academic instruction. They serve as mentors, facilitators, and behavioral models who significantly influence students' moral and personal development. (Ayu et al., 2021) assert that teachers shape discipline through consistent classroom management, daily interaction, and the learning strategies they employ. Furthermore, Martinez and Thompson (2023) underscore that educators contribute to students' cognitive, social, and emotional growth, particularly when they model ethical conduct and discipline in educational settings.

English teachers, in particular, possess a distinctive capacity to instill discipline because they operate in both cognitive and affective domains. Through collaborative projects, classroom discussions, and responsibility-based tasks, they can foster students' values such as punctuality, respect, and accountability (Ayu et al., 2021). These soft skills, although often considered secondary, are essential in developing a well-rounded student character.

However, the literature remains limited in its focus on how English teachers specifically contribute to character formation under the Kurikulum Merdeka. Most studies concentrate on broader pedagogical roles or cover other subject areas. (Letuma, 2024) notes a gap in contextual and qualitative research that examines real-life teacher practices through observation and interview-based approaches.

Therefore, this research seeks to address this gap by exploring the contribution of English teachers to character education particularly discipline at SMP Negeri 3 Bawolato. Theoretically, the research enriches academic discussions on character-based instruction aligned with the Kurikulum Merdeka. Practically, it offers insights for educators to develop effective classroom strategies that reinforce student discipline while supporting broader educational reforms.

2. METHOD

This research employed a qualitative descriptive design to examine the factors influencing student indiscipline and the role of English teachers in addressing these issues at SMP Negeri 3 Bawolato. A qualitative approach enables researchers to understand social phenomena in their natural settings through non-numerical data such as observations and interviews.

The descriptive method was chosen for its effectiveness in exploring real-life classroom contexts and capturing the strategies implemented by teachers. The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Bawolato and involved participants from the seventh-grade level, including one English teacher. Data were collected using two main instruments: classroom observation sheets and semi-structured interviews.

Observational data focused on student behaviors related to discipline such as punctuality, assignment completion, adherence to rules, and engagement as well as the teacher's disciplinary practices. The teacher's role was evaluated using the conceptual framework of Maemunawati et al. (2020), which outlines three core functions: educator, disciplinary role model, and behavioral enforcer.

In addition to observation, interviews were conducted face-to-face to obtain comprehensive insights regarding disciplinary challenges and teacher interventions. Thematic questions were structured around students' habits, classroom climate, and the teacher's influence.

The data analysis was carried out using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes three stages: (1) data reduction, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing and verification. This systematic procedure provided a holistic view of classroom dynamics and helped to describe the teacher's role in shaping student discipline within the *Kurikulum Merdeka* framework.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Bawolato, utilizing observation and interviews with seventh-grade English students and their teacher. The findings were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model as cited in cited (Medica et al., 2020), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

3.1 Result

3.1.1 The Result of Students' Observation

The following table is the results of observations conducted by the researcher in the seventh grade of SMP Negeri 3 Bawolato during two sessions in each class.

Table
The result of students' observation

No.	Dicipline Indicators	Students	
		Class A (31 Students)	Class B (33 Students)
1.	Arriving on time	All students attend on time	All students attend on time
2.	Bringing school equipments	Mostly students brought school supplies, some students did not.	No data
3.	Completing assignments on time and honestly	Mostly students completed assignments on time; some students were late.	All students completed their assignments on time.
4.	Not skipping class and attending lessons properly	All students are attending classes.	All students are attending classes.
5.	Comply with teacher's rules and instructions	All students adhered to the set rules.	All students adhere to the set rules.
6.	Wearing a neat and appropriate uniform	Mostly students wore neat uniform, some student did not.	All students wear neat uniforms.
7.	Be polite and respectful to teachers and friends	All students polite and respectful to teachers and friends	Some students were noisy when the teacher gave instructions to form discussion groups,
8.	Use break time properly	Some students in were still outside the classroom when the bell rang.	All students use break time properly

9.	Not using handphone during lessons without permission	All students not using handphone during lessons without permission	All students not using handphone during lessons without permission
10.	Actively participate in learning	Mostly students tended to be silent. But some students actively participated.	Mostly students actively participated; some students tended to be silent.

3.1.2 The Result of Teacher Observation

The following are the results of the observation sheet regarding the role of English teachers in the classroom, which was conducted during four meetings by the researcher.

Table 2
The result of teacher's observation

No.	Indicators	Yes	No
1.	Guide and foster mature attitudes in students.	√	
2.	Demonstrates responsibility in words and actions.	√	
3.	Demonstrates authority by maintaining integrity and credibility.	√	
4.	Resolves problems among students independently and wisely.	√	
5.	Maintains discipline by keeping promises and obeying rules.	√	
6.	Acts as a positive role model for students.	√	
7.	Demonstrates behavior that is aligned with character values.	√	
8.	Encourages students to adopt ethical values and norms.	√	
9.	Sets a positive example in daily interactions.	√	
10.	Reflects values and norms that are beneficial to students	√	

3.1.3 The Result of Teacher's Interview

The following are the results teacher's interview regarding the role of English teachers in the classroom.

Table 3
The result of teacher's interview

No.	Interview questions	Answer questions	Direct Quote
1.	What role do teachers play in forming student discipline?	Being role models, giving instructions, choosing appropriate learning models	"I always think about the material and methods to motivate students."
2.	How do teachers deal with students who arrive late?	Remind them and refer to the class agreement; do not extend the time limit because the teacher on duty has already taken action.	"I just remind them of the class rules again."
3.	What causes students to arrive late?	Lack of discipline at home, waking up late, lack of parental attention	"They are used to waking up late, and their parents rarely remind them."
4.	How to deal with students who do not bring school supplies (dictionaries)?	Reminder: depending on the teaching method, no punishment will be given.	"Depending on the situation and method, sometimes it is not mandatory to bring them."
5.	What are the reasons students do not bring their supplies?	They have not purchased them, they are not required, and they do not feel they are necessary.	"They have not purchased them, or they do not consider them important."
6.	How to deal with students who do not do their homework?	Verbal reminders, no punishment.	"I don't punish them (student), I just remind them because it's for their own good."
7.	What causes students not to do their homework?	Forgetfulness, lack of encouragement from parents, environmental influences.	"They forget, or they play with their friends. Parents don't play enough of a role."
8.	How to deal with students who do not follow the teacher's instructions?	Give consequences according to class agreements.	"I give consequences according to class agreements."
9.	What causes students to not follow instructions?	Habit of breaking rules, lack of understanding, teachers limited by student protection rules.	"Sometimes students do like to break the rules, and we are limited."
10.	How to deal with students who do not wear the complete uniform?	Reminded, no discrimination, usually reprimanded by the teacher on duty.	"I just remind them that everyone is equal, no one is different."
11.	What are the reasons students don't wear uniforms?	Waking up late, rushing, lack of parental attention, peer influence.	"Sometimes they rush, or their parents don't pay attention."
12.	How to deal with students who are rude or disruptive?	Remind them and redirect them to the class rules.	"I refer to the consequences in the class rules."
13.	How do teachers deal with students who are not active in learning?	Using a personal approach, group discussions, icebreaking.	"I ask them directly, creating discussions to boost their enthusiasm."
14.	What causes students to be inactive in learning?	Lack of English language skills, lack of motivation, dislike of the subject.	"They don't like English, so I make it more interesting."

3.2 Discussion

The observations indicate that student discipline is relatively good in punctuality and compliance, but challenges remain in classroom participation and consistent study habits. The English teacher played a proactive role in managing behavior, modeling discipline, and encouraging ethical student conduct.

These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing the teacher's dual role as educator and role model (Jumatullailah et al., 2024); (Nurul et al., 2022). Moreover, by applying active learning strategies such as group work and student engagement, the teacher fostered a more participatory environment an approach also supported by Burke et al. (2024) and Selvan & Ramnath.

3.2.1 The Factor Influencing Students' Indiscipline

Indiscipline remains a significant issue in educational institutions and often hinders academic development. Smith (2003), as cited in (Blandina & Leandry, 2021), states that student misbehavior is a serious social problem with implications for both learning outcomes and personal development. The result of this research identified four primary contributing factors influencing students' discipline:

1. **Lack of Parental Supervision**
Parental involvement plays a crucial role in shaping a student's discipline. When parents fail to monitor their child's behavior or academic responsibilities, students often feel free to act without accountability. As revealed through interviews, students are accustomed to waking up late, and many receive little to no encouragement from their families. (Ryan & Deci, 2020) emphasize that character formation is significantly affected by parental guidance. Similarly, (Verma, 2024) identifies poor parenting as a central cause of indiscipline. The absence of consistent routines and reminders at home often translates into tardiness, unpreparedness, and a lack of responsibility at school.
2. **The Influence of Environmental Peers**
The surrounding environment and peer relationships can either support or hinder students' behavioral development. Students who are immersed in an unsupportive or disruptive environment may adopt negative habits. (Gopalakrishnan, 2024) explains that learners influenced by toxic surroundings often show lower engagement and discipline. The same pattern was seen during classroom observations, where students tended to mirror the behavior of their friends especially during group activities. This suggests that peer culture significantly shapes individual discipline.
3. **Lack of Motivation and Interest in Learning**
Many students showed low enthusiasm toward English lessons, often perceiving them as difficult or irrelevant. This demotivation manifests in passive behavior during class and failure to complete tasks. by (Bekkering & Ward, 2021) note that student interest directly impacts classroom behavior and academic effort. Through interviews, the teacher acknowledged that not all students enjoy English, which contributes to reduced engagement. However, the teacher expressed a willingness to adapt the learning process to make the subject more approachable and enjoyable.
4. **Weak Study Habits and Frequent Forgetfulness**
Repeated patterns such as forgetting to bring dictionaries or not completing assignments reflect a lack of structured learning habits. According to of (Alam at al., 2024) and (Ginting, 2023), student discipline is often shaped by routines formed at home and school. Without consistent reinforcement, students may fail to develop personal responsibility. Furthermore, low internal motivation exacerbates these issues, as students do not perceive the long-term value of completing school tasks. (Yulianti et al., 2024) emphasize that a lack of motivation is one of the most critical internal factors affecting discipline.

3.2.2 The Role of English Teacher to Overcome the Students' Indiscipline

Teacher are people who teach in schools and responsible for imparting knowledge to students as well as advising and directing them towards better behavior. The role of a teacher in forming students' character has a significant impact on them. Besides teaching, teacher play an important role in forming students' character, especially in terms of student discipline. Based on the results of the research conducted, the researcher found two roles that the teacher has performed at school, focusing on the role of an English teacher in addressing the indiscipline behavior of students in the classroom.

1. **Teacher as Role Models**
The teacher demonstrated punctuality, consistent dress code, respectful communication, and clear values—serving as a visible example for students to emulate. According (Nurul et al., 2022), students internalize values through observation and imitation, especially from authority figures. As to (Arto & Wakhudin, 2021) mention, when teachers embody discipline, students are more likely to replicate those behaviors. The teacher's modeling extended beyond surface behavior to include showing responsibility in preparation and execution of lessons.
2. **Teacher as Effective Classroom Managers and Enforcers of Educational Rules**

The classroom environment was shaped through mutually agreed rules and clearly defined consequences. Rather than relying on punishment, the teacher adopted a participatory approach where students were part of establishing the expectations. This aligns with Burden & Byrd (2019) in in (Hång et al., 2022),, who argue that student involvement in rule-making increases adherence. The teacher stated: “*I impose consequences according to the class agreement,*” indicating fairness and consistency. This method builds a climate of respect and responsibility.

3. Teachers as Motivators and Mentors (Learning Facilitators)

To boost participation, the teacher used student-centered approaches, such as group discussions, personalized interactions, and icebreaking activities. Sardiman (2019) stresses that teachers must create a positive atmosphere to spark student motivation. The teacher described efforts to make English more relatable and less intimidating, thereby nurturing students’ confidence and engagement. This aligns with (Arto & Wakhudin, 2021), who point out that motivation and discipline are interconnected elements within character education. Instead of penalizing students for being inactive or unprepared, the teacher redirected them with reminders and motivational strategies.

Based on the results of this research, affirm that the English teacher fulfilled a crucial and multifaceted role in addressing discipline issues. By acting as a role model, rule enforcer, and motivator, the teacher supported the character development goals of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The approach emphasizes persuasion over punishment, creating a more humanistic and effective path toward behavioral change. The study recommends replicating such character-based teaching strategies across other subjects to foster comprehensive discipline in schools.

4. CONCLUSION

The result of this research highlight the multifaceted role of English teachers in promoting student discipline at SMP Negeri 3 Bawolato. Based on observations and interviews, the research identified four primary factors contributing to student indiscipline: lack of parental supervision, peer/environmental influence, low learning motivation, and poor study habits. These issues manifested in student behavior such as lateness, incomplete assignments, and low participation during class activities.

In response, the English teacher demonstrated three significant roles that contribute to fostering discipline: (1) teacher as role models, (2) teacher as effective classroom managers and enforcers of educational rules, and (3) teachers as motivators and mentors (learning facilitators). These roles were carried out not through punitive actions, but through persuasive approaches that emphasized responsibility and student self-awareness.

Overall, this research emphasizes that the successful implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* depends heavily on how teachers embody character education, particularly discipline. The teacher's ability to integrate values into classroom routines, build trust, and motivate students plays a pivotal role in shaping disciplined learners. It is recommended that similar character-oriented strategies be applied consistently across other subjects to further enhance holistic student development.

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