

# POAC-Based Character Education Strategies for Fostering Student Discipline and Responsibility

Doris Aviani<sup>1</sup>, Dinny Mardiana<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Universitas Islam Nusantara, Bandung, Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse character education strategies in improving students' discipline and responsibility at SMP Al-Falah and SMP Kemah Indonesia 4 in Bandung. Employing a qualitative case study design, the research explores how character education is managed through the functions of planning, organising, actuating, and controlling (POAC). Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, and students, and document analysis. The findings indicate that both schools have implemented character education initiatives oriented toward discipline and responsibility; however, their effectiveness remains limited. Character education planning tends to be general and lacks problem-based strategies; coordination among school actors is inconsistent; implementation relies mainly on routine habituation activities; and supervision emphasises sanctions rather than reinforcement of positive behaviour. These conditions hinder the internalisation of discipline and responsibility as intrinsic values among students. The study highlights the importance of systematic, integrated character education management, emphasising the principal's role in fostering collaborative practices and balanced supervision to strengthen positive character development in secondary schools.

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## Corresponding Author:

Doris Aviani

Graduate School, Doctoral Program in Educational Sciences, Universitas Islam Nusantara

Email: [dorisaviani@uinus.ac.id](mailto:dorisaviani@uinus.ac.id)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In responding to social and moral challenges in the era of globalisation, education is not only oriented toward academic achievement but also toward the formation of students' character [1]–[3]. Character education has become a fundamental element in developing a generation characterised by integrity, independence, and responsibility[4]. Among various character values, discipline and responsibility are two core values that play a crucial role in shaping orderly, consistent student behaviour and fostering moral awareness in fulfilling obligations both within the school environment and in society [5]. Discipline helps students

comply with rules and manage time effectively, while responsibility cultivates awareness of carrying out tasks earnestly and accepting the consequences of one's actions [6]–[8].

Junior high school (SMP), as a transitional phase in students' development, holds a strategic role in instilling these character values [9]. At this stage, students are in a period of identity formation and are highly susceptible to both positive and negative environmental influences. Therefore, well-planned, systematic character education strategies are urgently needed to ensure that discipline and responsibility are internalised sustainably. School principals and teachers bear significant responsibility in managing character education through policies, role modelling, and consistent habituation within the school environment [10]–[12].

Nevertheless, the implementation of character education in Indonesian schools, including at the junior high school level, continues to face various challenges [13]. Numerous studies indicate that weak role modelling by educators, suboptimal supervision of student behaviour, and limited parental involvement are major factors contributing to low levels of student discipline and responsibility [14]. These conditions have resulted in increased violations of school rules, tardiness, and low student awareness in completing academic and non-academic tasks. Such situations reflect a gap between the ideal goals of character education and the realities of practice in the field.

Efforts to enhance student discipline and responsibility cannot be separated from the application of effective educational management. In this context, Terry's management theory, with its Planning, Organising, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC) framework [15], provides a relevant framework for systematically managing character education. Through careful planning, clear organisation, consistent implementation, and continuous supervision, character education can be carried out in a directed and measurable manner. Furthermore, Lickona's theory of character education emphasises that character formation must encompass moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions to ensure that students genuinely internalise values such as discipline and responsibility.

Several previous studies have shown that systematically managed character education can foster positive student behaviour. Research by Odik demonstrates that integrating school management with character education improves student discipline and responsibility [16]. However, most of these studies focus on character education implementation in general or adopt a normative approach, without in-depth analysis of character education strategies within the framework of Terry's management model (POAC) as implemented by school principals.

Accordingly, a significant research gap remains, particularly in qualitative studies that provide in-depth analyses of strategies for developing discipline and responsibility as character values, as managed by school principals in two schools with different characteristics. Comparative analyses of character education practices across different school contexts are expected to yield more comprehensive insights into the challenges, solutions, and key factors that determine the success of student character development.

Based on this background, the present study is guided by the following main research question: How are character education strategies implemented to enhance student discipline and responsibility at SMP Al-Falah and SMP Kemah Indonesia 4 in Bandung City? This

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study aims to analyse the application of Terry's management framework (POAC) in character education strategies and to identify supporting and inhibiting factors in their implementation at both schools.

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive approach, integrating Terry's management theory with character education theory to examine strategies for fostering student discipline and responsibility. This research not only highlights general character education practices but also systematically analyses how school principals apply the functions of planning, organising, actuating, and controlling in real-world contexts at two junior high schools with different characteristics. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of effective and sustainable character education strategies at the junior high school level.

## **2. METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because it enables an in-depth understanding of character education strategies for enhancing student discipline and responsibility by interpreting meanings, experiences, and practices within the natural school context [17], [18]. A case study design was applied to comprehensively examine contextual and complex character education phenomena, particularly when the boundaries between educational practices and the school's social environment are not clearly distinguishable [19], [20].

The study was conducted at two junior high schools: SMP Al-Falah Bandung and SMP Kemah Indonesia 4, both in Bandung City. The research sites were selected purposively because both schools exhibit different characteristics and character education strategies, allowing the researcher to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges, solutions, and determining factors in fostering student discipline and responsibility. The research was carried out over two months, from August to September 2025.

The research participants consisted of principals, teachers, and students from each school. Principals were selected as key informants to explore policies, planning, and management of character education strategies. Teachers were selected as supporting informants due to their direct involvement in implementing character education in classrooms and school activities. Students were included as informants to gain insights into their experiences with discipline and the development of responsibility. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement in and relevance to the study's focus.

Data were collected through methodological triangulation, including observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observations were conducted to directly examine character education practices, the enforcement of school rules, and students' disciplinary and responsible behaviours in both instructional activities and broader school contexts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals, teachers, and students to gather information on the planning, implementation, and evaluation of character education strategies. Document analysis involved examining school rules, activity schedules, student

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violation reports, and other supporting documents relevant to the implementation of character education [21]–[23].

In this qualitative study, the researcher served as the primary instrument (human instrument), directly involved in data collection and analysis [24]. To ensure clarity and systematic data collection, supporting instruments were employed, including observation protocols, interview guides, and documentation checklists aligned with the research focus.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification [25]. Data reduction involved selecting and focusing on information relevant to character education strategies for student discipline and responsibility. Data were presented in the form of descriptive narratives, thematic tables, and interview excerpts. Conclusions were drawn inductively and continuously verified throughout the research process.

Data trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation was achieved by comparing data obtained from principals, teachers, and students, while methodological triangulation involved comparing findings from observations, interviews, and document analysis. These strategies were applied to enhance the credibility and reliability of the research findings, ensuring that the results are scientifically accountable.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1. Planning of Character Education Strategies to Enhance Student Discipline and Responsibility**

Based on research findings at SMP Kemah Indonesia 4 and SMP Al-Falah in Bandung City, the planning stage of character education has focused on fostering students' discipline and responsibility through both intracurricular and extracurricular activities. This planning reflects the school's awareness of the importance of character education as an integral part of the educational process. However, the level of systematisation and the depth of planning differ between the two schools.

At SMP Kemah Indonesia 4, character education planning is primarily manifested in general habituation activities, such as enforcing school rules, conducting routine school activities, and cultivating discipline and responsibility through students' daily practices. Although the direction of planning aligns with the objectives of character formation, the programs have not yet been articulated in detailed planning documents that specify strategies, indicators, and measurable evaluation mechanisms. This condition was expressed by the principal as follows:

*“Teachers have not fully designed learning strategies that integrate character values, so the implementation tends to be less systematic.”* (Principal of SMP Kemah Indonesia 4, interview)

These findings indicate that character education planning at SMP Kemah Indonesia 4 remains at a conceptual level and has not been fully integrated into teachers' instructional planning. Consequently, the implementation of character education tends to rely on habitual

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practices and individual teacher initiatives, resulting in less consistent efforts to foster student discipline and responsibility.

In contrast, at SMP Al-Falah, character education planning has been more structured, referring to the formulation of school rules, the preparation of routine activity schedules, and efforts to integrate character values into the teaching and learning process. The principal stated that character education planning is carried out as part of school policy to shape students' discipline and responsibility, as reflected in the following interview excerpt:

*“Planning is carried out through the regulation of school rules, routine activity schedules, and the integration of character values into instruction.”*(Principal of SMP Al-Falah, interview)

Nevertheless, the findings also reveal that planning at SMP Al-Falah remains relatively general and has not been fully complemented by specific strategies that directly address recurring disciplinary issues, such as student tardiness and classroom rule violations. Planning that is not grounded in a thorough problem analysis limits the responsiveness of character education initiatives to the dynamics of student behaviour.

Overall, the findings at the planning stage indicate that both schools demonstrate a commitment to developing character education focused on discipline and responsibility. However, the absence of detailed, measurable, and problem-based planning constitutes a major challenge in enhancing the effectiveness of character education strategies. This suggests the need to strengthen systematic planning to ensure that character education implementation is more targeted and sustainable at the junior high school level.

### **3.2. Organising Character Education Strategies to Enhance Student Discipline and Responsibility**

Based on research findings from SMP Kemah Indonesia 4 and SMP Al-Falah in Bandung City, the organisation of character education has involved various school stakeholders in a collective effort to foster student discipline and responsibility. Principals at both institutions serve as the primary directors, assigning tasks to teachers, homeroom teachers, and other educational staff based on their roles and functions.

At SMP Kemah Indonesia 4, the principal involves teachers, homeroom teachers, and educational staff in implementing character education. Teachers are primarily responsible for monitoring student discipline in the classroom, while homeroom teachers serve as liaisons between the school and parents to address student behavioural issues. This was expressed by the principal as follows:

*“Teachers’ tasks are mainly directed toward monitoring discipline in the classroom, while homeroom teachers serve as a link with parents.”*(Principal of SMP Kemah Indonesia 4, interview)

Although an organisational structure has been established, the findings indicate that teacher coordination has not yet functioned optimally. Limited communication and a lack of shared understanding have resulted in inconsistent implementation of discipline and responsibility values across classrooms. This condition has led to variations in rule enforcement among classes, preventing students from receiving uniform and sustainable character development.

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In contrast, at SMP Al-Falah, the organisation of character education involves teachers, homeroom teachers, and extracurricular activity supervisors. Teachers serve as mentors and role models in the learning process, while homeroom teachers monitor student discipline during daily school activities. The principal explained this arrangement in the following interview:

*“Teachers act as mentors and role models in instruction, while homeroom teachers monitor students’ daily discipline.”*(Principal of SMP Al-Falah, interview)

Despite the clear division of roles, the findings reveal that stakeholder coordination has not been entirely consistent. Discipline monitoring tends to be concentrated among certain parties, resulting in limited active, sustained involvement by all teachers in character development efforts. This indicates that the organisation of character education still requires strengthened coordination and collective commitment to ensure more effective implementation.

Overall, the findings from the organising stage demonstrate that both schools have established role-distribution structures for character education. However, weak coordination and inconsistency among implementers remain the primary challenges affecting the effectiveness of fostering student discipline and responsibility.

### **3.3 Implementation of Character Education Strategies to Enhance Student Discipline and Responsibility**

Character education has been implemented at SMP Kemah Indonesia 4 and SMP Al-Falah through various habituation activities integrated into daily school routines. These activities include flag ceremonies, collective prayers, classroom duty schedules, and the enforcement of school rules to foster student discipline and responsibility.

At SMP Kemah Indonesia 4, character education is implemented through routine activities such as flag ceremonies, collective prayers, and classroom duty assignments. Teachers also seek to instil a sense of responsibility by assigning individual and group tasks during classroom instruction. However, the findings indicate that these practices have not yet fully cultivated strong disciplinary habits among students. This was expressed by the principal as follows:

*“Teachers also try to instil responsibility through individual and group assignments. However, students are still frequently found arriving late, committing minor rule violations, and showing a lack of seriousness in completing assignments.”*(Principal of SMP Kemah Indonesia 4, interview)

These findings suggest that although habituation activities are conducted routinely, their implementation is inconsistent and lacks continuous reinforcement, resulting in suboptimal behavioural change among students.

Similarly, at SMP Al-Falah, character education is implemented through routine habituation activities such as flag ceremonies, congregational prayers, prayers before lessons, and classroom duty schedules. Teachers also provide guidance and advice to students regarding the importance of responsibility in completing academic tasks. Nevertheless, the findings reveal that disciplinary issues remain prevalent. The principal stated:

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*“Teachers also provide guidance and advice regarding responsibility in completing assignments. However, in reality, many students still arrive late to school, do not fully comply with school rules, and fail to complete tasks on time.”* (Principal of SMP Al-Falah, interview)

These conditions indicate that the implementation of character education in both schools has not yet achieved optimal outcomes. The habituation practices employed have not been fully effective in consistently internalising the values of discipline and responsibility among students. This highlights the need for more focused, consistent implementation strategies, supported by continuous supervision, to ensure that character education has a greater impact on student behaviour.

### **3.4 Monitoring and Evaluation of Character Education Strategies to Enhance Student Discipline and Responsibility**

Based on the research findings at SMP Kemah Indonesia 4 and SMP Al-Falah in Bandung City, the monitoring and evaluation stage of character education was implemented to regulate student behaviour and ensure the effective implementation of strategies to foster discipline and responsibility. In both schools, supervision was carried out through formal mechanisms, including documenting rule violations, receiving reports from teachers and homeroom teachers, and discussing them in teachers’ council meetings.

At SMP Kemah Indonesia 4, character education monitoring was conducted through the recording of disciplinary violations, teacher reports on student behaviour, and evaluations discussed during teachers’ council meetings. The principal explained that sanctions are imposed on students who violate school rules as a means of enforcing discipline, as stated in the following interview:

*“Sanctions are imposed on students who violate the rules, although a reward system for positive behaviour has not yet been optimally implemented.”* (Principal of SMP Kemah Indonesia 4, interview)

The findings indicate that the evaluation of character education at SMP Kemah Indonesia 4 still emphasises controlling violations rather than reinforcing positive behaviour. This predominantly corrective supervision pattern leads students to comply with rules primarily out of fear of sanctions, rather than from internalised awareness of the importance of discipline and responsibility.

Similarly, at SMP Al-Falah, character education monitoring is conducted through comparable mechanisms, including teachers’ council meetings, documentation of student violations, and routine reports from homeroom teachers. The principal stated that sanctions remain the primary instrument for enforcing student discipline, as reflected in the following interview:

*“Sanctions are imposed on students who violate the rules, but rewards for disciplined and responsible behaviour are still rarely given.”* (Principal of SMP Al-Falah, interview)

These findings indicate that the evaluation of character education at SMP Al-Falah also remains oriented toward punitive measures, while systematic efforts to reinforce positive student behaviour have not yet been fully developed. This condition suggests that

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the monitoring function has not been fully utilised as a reflective and developmental tool for character building, but continues to focus primarily on control and rule enforcement.

Overall, the findings at the monitoring and evaluation stage demonstrate that both schools have established clear mechanisms for regulating student behaviour. However, an approach that emphasises sanctions over rewards poses a challenge for fostering students' intrinsic motivation to behave in a disciplined and responsible manner. These findings complement previous studies that primarily identified problems in character education by showing that, behind these challenges, there are managerial opportunities for improvement through strengthening a more balanced supervision function that integrates both corrective measures and appreciation of positive behaviour.

Thus, the character education supervision strategies implemented at SMP Al-Falah and SMP Kemah Indonesia 4 align with the POAC management framework but still require further development to be more oriented toward sustained character development and reinforcement. The integration of reflective and appreciative supervision approaches is believed to enhance the effectiveness of character education in shaping student discipline and responsibility at the junior high school level.

### **3.5 Discussion**

The findings of this study indicate that character education strategies aimed at enhancing student discipline and responsibility at SMP Al-Falah and SMP Kemah Indonesia 4 have been implemented through the management stages of planning, organising, actuating, and controlling (POAC). However, the effectiveness of implementation at each stage continues to face various limitations that affect the successful internalisation of character values among students.

At the planning stage, both schools have demonstrated a commitment to strengthening character education focused on discipline and responsibility. Nevertheless, planning that remains general and is not based on specific analyses of student-related problems indicates weaknesses in strategic planning. This finding is consistent with Terry's view that effective planning must be oriented toward clear objectives, measurable strategies, and specific indicators of success. In the context of character education, planning that is not integrated into teachers' instructional strategies tends to result in inconsistent implementation and reliance on individual educator initiatives. This reinforces Lickona's assertion that character education can be effective only when systematically designed and integrated across all school activities [26], [27].

The organising function in both schools demonstrates the involvement of various school stakeholders, including teachers, homeroom teachers, and educational staff, in student character development. However, suboptimal coordination among implementers has led to inconsistent application of discipline and responsibility values across classrooms. This condition indicates that the organisation of character education has not fully reflected principles of collective work and distributed leadership. Hallinger emphasises that the success of character education is highly dependent on role consistency and collaboration among educators in fostering a school culture that supports student character formation [28].

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At the implementation stage, character education strategies in both schools are predominantly realised through routine habituation activities, such as flag ceremonies, collective prayers, classroom duty schedules, and enforcement of school rules. While these activities are important mechanisms for habit formation, the findings show that implementation without reflective reinforcement and consistent role modelling has limited the optimal internalisation of discipline and responsibility values. This aligns with Lickona's character education theory, which emphasises that character formation must involve not only moral action but also moral knowing and moral feeling. Without the simultaneous integration of these three dimensions, character education tends to become formalistic and less effective in driving meaningful behavioural change among students [29].

Meanwhile, the monitoring and evaluation function in both schools remains dominated by a corrective approach, with sanctions imposed for rule violations. The limited use of reward systems for disciplined, responsible behaviour suggests that supervision has not yet been fully leveraged as a positive reinforcement mechanism for character development. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that disciplinary systems overly focused on punishment may foster superficial compliance rather than students' internal moral awareness. From the perspective of POAC management, the controlling function should not only focus on correcting deviations but also provide feedback and support continuous improvement to reinforce positive behaviours [30].

Overall, this study extends the discourse on character education by demonstrating that challenges in fostering student discipline and responsibility lie not merely in the lack of activities but in the weak integration of management functions in their implementation. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on problem identification, this research emphasises that applying POAC-based character education management offers opportunities for more systematic and sustainable managerial solutions. The integration of strategic planning, strong coordination, consistent implementation, and balanced supervision that combines sanctions with rewards emerges as a key determinant of success in character education at the junior high school level.

The implications of these findings highlight the crucial role of school principals as managers of character education, not only in formulating policies but also in cultivating a school culture that supports the internalisation of values of discipline and responsibility. Accordingly, character education strategies managed systematically and collaboratively have the potential to serve as effective instruments for shaping students with integrity and responsibility amid increasingly complex social challenges.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that character education strategies managed through the POAC framework play an important role in supporting the development of student discipline and responsibility at the junior high school level. The findings indicate that the effectiveness of character education is not determined solely by the presence of routine activities, but by how systematically and integratively principals manage planning, coordination, implementation, and supervision. These results imply that school leaders need to reposition character education as a strategic managerial process that emphasises collaboration, consistency, and

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positive reinforcement to foster internalised character values rather than surface-level compliance.

This research is limited to a qualitative case study conducted in two junior high schools within a single urban context, which may restrict the transferability of the findings to other educational settings. Future research is recommended to involve broader school contexts, adopt mixed or quantitative approaches, and examine the relationship between POAC-based character education management and measurable student behavioural outcomes. For the general public, this study contributes by highlighting the critical role of school leadership in strengthening character education as a foundation for forming disciplined, responsible citizens better prepared to face social and moral challenges in contemporary society.

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