

Analysis of the Principal's Leadership Strategy in Overcoming the Decline in Discipline of State Elementary School

Siti Kholizah¹

¹²Universitas Ahmad Dahlan University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Email : 2408052033@webmail.com

Article history

Received October 5, 2025
Revised December 3, 2025
Accepted December 28, 2025

Keywords: Leadership
Strategy, Principal's Role,
Student Discipline,
Elementary Education

ABSTRACT

The principal's leadership strategy plays an important role in shaping a culture of discipline in the elementary school environment. In the face of the phenomenon of declining student discipline, school principals are required to apply a leadership style that is appropriate, collaborative, and responsive to the dynamics of students. This study aims to analyze the principal's leadership strategy in overcoming the decline in student discipline. This study uses a descriptive approach. Data collection methods with observation, interviews and documentation. The data analysis techniques are data reduction, data display, and data verification. The results of the study show that the leadership style strategy of the principal of SDN 0723 Parmainan uses democratic leadership, namely by providing examples or examples, giving advice, awards or sanctions. Participate in activities to provide guidance, supervision and direction. The level of discipline of students arriving on time was 47.30% while the level of discipline in dressing was 65.75%. In this case, the level of discipline based on the democratic leadership style is the right standard in overcoming the decline in discipline of public elementary school students 0723 Parmainan.

I. INTRODUCTION

In an effort to improve education management, the problem of student discipline is getting more and more important attention. In regular schools, the learning process generally goes well. However, different conditions are often found in schools that are less organized than schools that already have good governance. This situation is difficult to fix because violations are often considered commonplace. Therefore, there is a need for collaboration from various parties to encourage change with school principals playing a key role in fostering student discipline.[1]

Principal leadership is an effort made by school leaders to influence various parties including teachers, administrative staff, students, and stakeholders through communication to realize school goals. Leadership indicators can be seen from their ability to motivate school residents to carry out their duties and responsibilities effectively and efficiently. Thus, the leadership of the principal can be interpreted as the skills of school leaders in influencing, guiding, and directing teachers, employees, students, and all school residents to realize the goals that have been set.[2]

The same opinion says that "Leadership style is the way or approach chosen and applied by the principal in influencing the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors of the members

of the organization.[3]. The principal's leadership style greatly influences the extent to which discipline can be embedded and carried out properly by all school residents. A visionary, communicative, and inclusive principal will be able to build a harmonious relationship with teachers, students, and parents, so that discipline coaching can be carried out comprehensively and continuously. In addition, school principals must also be able to be motivators who inspire teachers and students to uphold disciplinary values not because of coercion, but because of a deep awareness and understanding of the importance of this attitude in life.

In another study, it is said that the leadership of a successful school principal is shown through various main characteristics, one of which is the ability to set a real example. School principals are required to be exemplary figures in terms of time discipline, compliance with regulations, and consistency in upholding professional ethics. Punctual attendance, neatness in dressing, friendly attitude, and commitment to honesty shown by the principal indirectly instill the value of integrity and responsibility to all school residents.[4]

Student discipline is an important aspect that contributes greatly to the progress of the school. An orderly school environment will support the implementation of optimal teaching and learning activities, while schools that are less orderly tend to face conditions that are far different from schools that have high discipline. The behavior of violations that are left will be difficult to correct, so it takes hard work from all parties to overcome them, especially the principal who has a major role in instilling and enforcing student discipline.[5]

In the framework of education management, the principal plays a strategic role as a leader as well as a manager in the management of discipline in schools. The principal's duties are not only in the administrative field, but also as a supervisor in fostering a constructive discipline culture in the school environment. The effective application of discipline will provide a conducive learning atmosphere and encourage students to develop optimally. This view emphasizes how important the principal's skills are in realizing a school environment that supports the creation of discipline.[6]

Based on the results of initial observations at SDN 0723 Parmainan, it shows that student discipline is still low, such as coming to school not on time, where many students come after the morning apple starts or even when the learning process is taking place, and there are still students who wear uniforms that are not in accordance with the rules that have been agreed upon, as well as incomplete attributes. In addition, the disciplinary violations found by the researcher at the time of initial observation, namely that there were still students who were absent during class hours, this shows the weak supervision of teachers, and there are still many students who fight in the school environment. The same thing was expressed during the initial

interview of the researcher with teacher "B" regarding disciplinary violations committed by students as follows: "students today are difficult to regulate, most students came after we started KBM activities, and the worst thing is that students like to fight even though the problem is trivial"

The same thing was also conveyed by student "A" regarding students who skipped school, which were as follows: "Many of my friends skipped school when studying buk, they said the lessons were boring". Based on these problems, it is necessary to improve teacher performance and professionalism because teachers are the center of initiatives in the learning process. To support the improvement of teacher performance, school principals are required to have good managerial skills as leaders of educational institutions. Therefore, a school principal is needed who has a strong, clear and directed vision and mission. If managerial competence is carried out properly, teachers will be encouraged to play an active role in achieving school goals. Therefore, school principals need to have adequate competence and ways of working so that they can act proactively, be committed, and have a strong encouragement in order to optimize the quality of teacher performance in schools to the maximum.

The decline in discipline of elementary school students can cause disruptions in the learning process so that the quality of learning outcomes also decreases. Teachers also have difficulty in achieving learning goals because they have to regulate the behavior of students who violate the rules more than delivering material. In addition, weak discipline also has an impact on the character building process, because disciplinary habits that are not immediately addressed have the potential to develop into negative behavior and a decrease in student discipline affects the image of the school in the eyes of the public and can reduce the level of parental trust in the school. The application of discipline in schools aims to make students have their own awareness and willingness to obey all the rules that have been set. Therefore, a head of the group is needed who has personality, managerial, supervisory and social competence.[7]

Many studies have examined the leadership of school principals. One of the relevant studies was conducted by Gagaramusu which examined the leadership style of school principals in fostering teacher and student discipline at SD Negeri 1 Sindue. Data was collected through hands-on classroom observation and in-depth interviews. The results of his research show that the principal at SDN 1 Sindue applies a democratic leadership style. The characteristics are that decisions and policies are determined through deliberation, leaders are directly involved in various actions, have full responsibility, provide direction, conduct supervision and evaluation, and lead by example.

In line with that, Yayuk Setiyowati's research reviews the role of school principals in improving student discipline at the elementary school level. The findings of the study revealed that the Principal of SDN Burengan 2 Kediri City was quite successful in improving student discipline through a habituation program that was carried out every Monday to Friday before the start of teaching and learning activities. This program has been proven to have a positive impact on improving student discipline at the school. The same thing was expressed by Tri Wahyuni researching the leadership role of school principals at SD Negeri 29 Banyuasin I: In the context of student discipline. The results of the study show that school principals have an important role in influencing their students. This is because discipline is used as a benchmark for success in school management. To achieve this success, school principals and teachers need to cooperate in implementing various strategies like parents for students. In this context, the Principal of SD Negeri 29 Banyuasin I tries to use various methods to form and grow disciplined character.

Although there have been many studies that have examined the leadership of school principals in improving student discipline, this study has a novelty that distinguishes it from previous studies. The research of Gagaramusu, Yayuk Setiyowati, and Tri Wahyuni focuses more on leadership styles, the role of school principals, and general strategies for the formation of discipline. Meanwhile, this research comes with a different focus, namely analyzing the principal's leadership strategy in overcoming the decline in student discipline at SDN 0723 Parmainan. This means that this study not only looks at the effectiveness of leadership in forming discipline, but also examines in depth how school principals respond to real conditions in the form of declining student discipline, the factors that cause it, and the strategies applied to overcome it. From this explanation, it can be concluded that the leadership style of the principal has a contribution to student discipline. Therefore, departing from the problems and results of previous research, this research needs to be carried out to find out how the principal's leadership strategy in overcoming the decline in discipline of students of the 0723 Parmainan State Elementary School.

II. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. This approach is carried out to explore and describe the principal's strategy in overcoming the decline in student discipline. Meanwhile, the subjects in the study include school principals, teachers, and students. The selection of subjects was carried out by purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a technique for determining a sample of data sources based on certain

considerations. These considerations include choosing people who are considered to have the most understanding of what is to be researched or have authority, so that researchers can more easily trace the object or social situation being studied.[8]

Data collection techniques through interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews are conducted based on guidelines that have been compiled and become a primary source of data. The purpose of the interview was to obtain information by asking questions related to the principal's leadership in improving student discipline at school. The informants in this study consisted of school principals, teachers, and students.

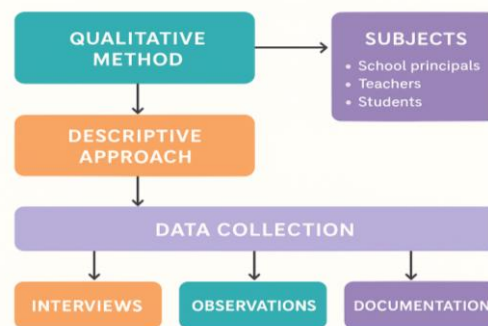


Figure 1. A series of research methods

Second, observations were made to collect information about the strategies implemented by school principals in dealing with declining student discipline. Third, the documentation method. The documents to be studied are texts and photos of SDN 0723 Parmainan activities. The texts are in the form of school profile archives, and other documents related to discipline. Meanwhile, visual materials such as photos and recordings show the real form of the principal's leadership in dealing with the problem of declining student discipline. The analysis was done using the Miles and Huberman models. According to Widyanto, qualitative data analysis is carried out continuously and interactively until the data is considered saturated. The analysis stage includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. The three processes are interconnected and run simultaneously.[9]

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that the efforts made by the principal of SDN 0723 Parmainan in overcoming the decline in discipline by providing coaching, training and habituation to students. Practice and discipline habituation are crucial aspects that cannot be ignored. Discipline does not arise spontaneously, but is formed from a consistent and continuous process. Rosid and Alfaruq stated that habituation must involve the entire environment of children, families, schools, and communities so that they are formed in an organized atmosphere. The lack of habits in carrying out routines regularly causes students to have difficulty adapting to the rules of discipline at school. Mulyasa said that school

principals are the main managers at the education unit level and are at the forefront of school administration. The success of the implementation of school-based management is influenced by the role of the principal, because the principal is required to have professional managerial skills and adequate competence so that the vision, mission, and goals of the school can be achieved optimally. In this case, the principal of SDN 0723 Parmainan has carried out his duties as a school manager by enforcing school regulations that must be obeyed by all school residents.

In addition, the role of the principal as an example for students is realized through providing real examples in attitudes and actions. Sasti Ragina's research in disciplining students is carried out by school principals as leaders in educational institutions not only giving orders but showing attitudes and actions that can be imitated by all school residents. Because discipline is often used as a measure of the principal's success in leading, to achieve it, various strategies are needed that are carried out by the principal and teachers as guardians of students in schools.



Figure 2. Result

In this case, the principal of SDN 0723 Parmainan showed an example by arriving earlier than the students, and welcoming them at the school gate by shaking hands. In line with the view of Kaish, it is stated that one of the steps that can be taken by the principal as a leader in improving student discipline is to discipline yourself first as an example and example for students. In accordance with the principal's duties as a leader, the principal has an important role in building the school's identity, one of which is through exemplary discipline by showing attitudes and behaviors that reflect the expected values. For example, being present on time, maintaining ethics, and establishing polite interactions with all school residents.[10]

In addition to providing examples and examples, other factors that influence and support the success and progress of schools are the attitudes, behaviors and actions of the principal in carrying out their leadership. According to Luqman, school principals in improving teacher performance use a *delegating* leadership style that aims to increase teachers' responsibilities as the center of learning initiatives. In this case, the principal of SDN 0723 Parmainan shows a responsible attitude in every aspect related to school activities such as being open to external assessments and receiving suggestions to improve the quality of work. The principal is also responsive to various reports from teachers. In line with the opinion of Rini, the principal has an important role in upholding discipline in the school environment, so he is required to be an example and set an example for all school staff.

Based on the results of observations, interviews and documentation, it was found that the principal consistently evaluated, directed and guided every morning apple. The evaluation was carried out to review the forms of disciplinary violations committed that day. Whether it is in the form of delays in students coming to school or incomplete in the use of attributes, especially on Mondays. This is in line with Rismawati's research in terms of disciplining students, it is necessary to conduct an evaluation to overcome student discipline violations. The evaluation is carried out by the principal to assess the effectiveness of the strategies that have been implemented in improving student discipline. This evaluation is an important part of the principal's managerial process so that the efforts made are not just a formality, but are able to bring changes in student behavior. Evaluation is an integral part of education, so the planning, preparation, and implementation process must be integrated with the entire educational program.[11]

In this case, the principal of SDN 0723 Parmainan held a weekly meeting with teachers as a form of evaluation of the direction, guidance, and sanctions given to students every day. This meeting aims to find out the extent of changes in student behavior in terms of discipline. The principal also routinely conveys direction and guidance to all students. This is in line with the opinion of Chan Out stating that one of the techniques in disciplining students is to constantly remind them of the importance of discipline, with the aim of forming a better person.

The principal has an important role in realizing the success of the school lies in his ability to foster and direct school residents to be able to develop so that the values of discipline can grow, develop, and take root in the school environment. The principal also provides reprimands, directions, and punishments for students who do not obey the rules. As conveyed to the researcher, students who arrive late or do not wear a complete uniform will first be reprimanded, then given sanctions, for example cleaning the school environment. In addition, at the end of each semester, the principal will provide rewards for students who are never late to school as a form of motivation for other students to be encouraged to compete in kindness such as coming to school on time. One way to cultivate discipline character in elementary school students is through the provision of rewards (appreciation) and punishment (sanctions) by teachers.[12]

The level of student discipline from observations, interviews and documentation shows that as many as 47.30% of students come to school on time, while the level of discipline in dressing is 65.75% where students wear complete attributes such as wearing hats and ties during the flag ceremony. According to Hasan, school principals have an important role in instilling discipline in students, both in terms of dress, behavior and punctuality. However, the responsibility in disciplining students is not only the job of the principal as a leader but also involves the active role of teachers. In line with Ayni's view, discipline is the obligation of every student, both in studying, obeying rules, and staying away from bad behavior. This opinion is also reinforced by Hariadi who states that discipline in schools is not only the responsibility of principals and teachers, but also students. Thus, students are expected to be able to make the best use of their time in order to achieve learning goals optimally.

Teacher discipline is also the key to success in creating a productive and effective school climate for students. Quality principal leadership can have a great influence on teachers' morale and motivation, which is basically related to student learning achievement. School principals have an important role in improving teacher performance and discipline. To achieve this, school principals need to have certain competencies, one of which is strong leadership in order to inspire and motivate teachers to work optimally and maintain discipline. There are several problems faced by school principals in overcoming the decline in discipline, namely the number of students who are not aware of the importance of discipline. As a result, students continue to violate the rules that have been mutually agreed. In line with Yusuf's view, discipline is an important means in education as an effort to build students' character and personality. Therefore, discipline not only supports the learning process, but also plays a role in shaping children's character and personality.

Another problem faced by school principals in overcoming the decline in discipline comes from the background of the students themselves. Some students still have a low level of discipline, so they tend to follow negative behaviors so that they become a bad example for their friends[13]. In line with the view of Slameto, students need to have a disciplined attitude, both at school and at home, in order to be able to learn optimally.

The factors that affect student discipline consist of internal and external factors. Internal factors are factors that come from within the students themselves, for example lack of motivation. Meanwhile, external factors are factors that come from outside such as the living conditions of students. If students live in an environment that is less disciplined, then they can slowly be affected and follow this behavior. In addition, daily social factors also affect students' behavior and conditions. If students associate with students who obey the rules, it will have a positive impact. On the other hand, if you associate with students who do not obey the rules, it will have a negative impact. In line with the opinion of Sardiman, learning discipline can be influenced by two factors, namely internal and external.

Internal factors in the form of self-awareness are one of the important foundations in shaping disciplined behavior in students. If students have motivation from within and the willingness to follow the rules, then the process of instilling discipline will run more effectively. On the other hand, without personal awareness, it will be difficult for external efforts to yield results. Self-awareness is the basis for character formation, including discipline. In addition, the physical and psychological condition of students also influences. Late sleep habits, tiredness, and emotional stress can cause delays and irregularities in participating in school activities. Students who experience fatigue are more prone to breaking rules due to difficulty in controlling emotions and maintaining concentration.[14]

Discussion

The results of this study emphasize that the success of the principal of SDN 0723 Parmainan in improving student discipline cannot be separated from the consistency of guidance, training, and habituation processes. This finding supports the idea that discipline is not an innate trait but rather the

result of structured and continuous efforts. The involvement of all school elements principals, teachers, students, and even parents creates a holistic environment where discipline can grow naturally. This aligns with Rosid and Alfaruq's perspective that habituation must involve the entire ecosystem around students to ensure that discipline becomes a collective culture, not just a rule to be obeyed.

Furthermore, the principal's exemplary leadership style plays a crucial role in shaping student discipline. By arriving earlier than students, greeting them warmly, and maintaining consistent attendance, the principal not only enforces rules but also models them. This practical example demonstrates transformational leadership in education, where the leader inspires others through personal conduct rather than commands. The principal's approach reflects Mulyasa's theory that effective school leadership requires managerial and moral competence. Leadership by example strengthens students' respect and trust, which in turn enhances their internal motivation to be disciplined.

The practice of regular evaluation and reflection also contributes significantly to the sustainability of discipline-building efforts. Through daily and weekly evaluations, the principal ensures that discipline strategies remain effective and responsive to student behavior. This process fosters a feedback culture between the principal, teachers, and students, allowing immediate corrective action when discipline violations occur. As noted by Rismawati, evaluation in education should be an ongoing process to measure behavioral changes and adjust approaches as needed. Such consistent supervision ensures that disciplinary actions are not merely punitive but also educational. Another important aspect revealed by the study is the balance between rewards and punishments. The principal's strategy of giving reprimands or sanctions for violations and rewards for consistent punctuality reflects a behavioral reinforcement model that shapes long-term character. Students who are rewarded for good discipline become motivators for their peers, fostering a positive competitive spirit. This aligns with the concept of character education in schools, where discipline is cultivated through appreciation, not fear. The presence of motivation both internal and external acts as a strong driver in developing self-discipline among students.

Lastly, the findings highlight that challenges in enforcing discipline are influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors such as motivation, awareness, and emotional stability must be nurtured through counseling and mentoring programs. Meanwhile, external factors like peer influence and family background require collaborative solutions involving parents and communities. The principal's ability to recognize and address these multidimensional challenges demonstrates adaptive leadership, essential in maintaining school discipline as a shared responsibility. Therefore, strengthening collaboration among teachers, parents, and school management becomes vital to sustaining a culture of discipline that supports academic success and character formation.

IV. CONCLUSION

The principal's leadership strategy in overcoming the decline in elementary school students' discipline plays an important role in creating an orderly and conducive learning climate. The principal applies various strategic approaches that reflect the democratic leadership style, among others, by building effective and collaborative communication with all school citizens, including teachers, students, in forming a common awareness of the importance of discipline, being an example in disciplinary behavior, such as punctual attendance and obedience to regulations, so as to influence the overall culture of discipline, implementing a positive reinforcement system for students who are demonstrate disciplined behavior and conduct a coaching approach for students who commit violations. Creating a safe, friendly, and fun learning environment, as part of a preventive strategy for students to feel comfortable and motivated to behave in an orderly manner. With the right and consistent strategy, the principal is able to reduce the number of student discipline violations and form the character of students who are responsible, orderly, and respect the rules. Therefore, the leadership role of the principal is very important in realizing a sustainable culture of discipline in the elementary school environment.

REFERENCES

- [1] S. Regina, S. Rizana, and A. A. Saputra, "Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah dalam Membentuk Karakter Disiplin Peserta Didik di SD Negeri 157 Palembang," *Wahana Karya Ilmiah Pendidikan*, vol. 7, no. 01, pp. 12–19, Jun. 2023, doi: 10.35706/wkip.v7i01.9217.
- [2] B. Setiyadi and V. Rosalina, "Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja Guru," *Edunesia : Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 75–84, Jan. 2021, doi: 10.51276/edu.v2i1.81.
- [3] S. Rismawati and Ashari, "Strategi Kepala Sekolah dalam peningkatan kedisiplinan peserta didik di SMP Negeri 2 Plandaan Jombang," *Bhinneka: Jurnal Bintang Pendidikan dan Bahasa*, vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 92–103, 2023, doi: 10.59024/bhinneka.v1i4.373.
- [4] M. Marpaung, M. Sianipar, S. Sihombing, P. Pasaribu, and A. Sinaga, "Peran Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Sifat Displin Siswa," 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://publisherqu.com/index.php/pediaqu>
- [5] F. Kurniasih and H. Wijaya, "Peran Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Kedisiplinan Siswa Di Sdn Embung Tangar Kecamatan Praya Barat", [Online]. Available: <http://ejournal.mandalanursa.org/index.php/JUPE/index>
- [6] R. B. Priambodo and M. Ripin Ikhwandi, "Peran Kepala Sekolah dalam Meningkatkan Kedisiplinan Peserta Didik di SDN Sumpat Sidoarjo," *JOECIE*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2024, [Online]. Available: <https://journal.stai-muafi.ac.id>
- [7] U. Islam, N. Raden, and F. Palembang, "Strategi Kepala Sekolah Dalam Menumbuhkan Kedisiplinan Siswa Di Mts Nurul Muhajirin Dahliah." [Online]. Available: <https://e-journal.undikma.ac.id/index.php/visionary>
- [8] S. Haryanti, A. Fathoni, M. Pendidikan Dasar, and U. Muhammadiyah Surakarta, "Strategi Kepala Sekolah Dalam Membangun Karakter Disiplin Guru Di Sekolah Dasar".
- [9] B. Sintasari, N. Lailiyah, A. Rozaq, S. Al-Urwatul, and W. Jombang, "Evaluasi Strategi Guru PAI dalam Meningkatkan Kedisiplinan Siswa," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*, vol. 2, pp. 43–53, doi: 10.59373/ngaos.

- [10] R. B. Priambodo and M. Ripin Ikhwandi, "Peran Kepala Sekolah dalam Meningkatkan Kedisiplinan Peserta Didik di SDN Sumpat Sidoarjo," *JOECIE*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2024, [Online]. Available: <https://journal.stai-muafi.ac.id>
- [11] Y. Setiyowati, A. A. Hunaifi, S. Sahari, U. Nusantara, and P. Kediri, "Peran Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah dalam Meningkatkan Kedisiplinan Siswa Sekolah Dasar."
- [12] F. Kurniasih and H. Wijaya, "Peran Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Kedisiplinan Siswa Di SDN Embung Tangar Kecamatan Praya Barat", [Online]. Available: <http://ejournal.mandalanursa.org/index.php/JUPE/index>
- [13] Silvia Rismawati and Ashari Ashari, "Strategi Kepala Sekolah dalam peningkatan kedisiplinan peserta didik di SMP Negeri 2 Plandaan Jombang," *Bhinneka: Jurnal Bintang Pendidikan dan Bahasa*, vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 92–103, Oct. 2023, doi: 10.59024/bhinneka.v1i4.373.
- [14] D. Kartika Datu, A. Nggilu, A. W. Wantu, P. Studi Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan, F. Ilmu Sosial, and U. Negeri Gorontalo, "Strategi Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Kedisiplinan Siswa Di Sma Negeri," vol. 5, no. 3, 2025, [Online]. Available: <https://jurnalp4i.com/index.php/strategi>