

# The Role of School Principals in Improving Student Discipline through School-Based Management in Elementary Schools

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the role of school principals in improving student discipline through the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM) at An-Nisaa Elementary School, South Tangerang. Student discipline is a crucial aspect of character education and significantly influences the effectiveness of the learning process. However, many schools still face challenges in maintaining consistent student discipline due to managerial, environmental, and individual factors. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation involving the principal, teachers, and students. Data analysis was conducted using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques. The findings indicate that the principal plays a strategic role as a leader, manager, supervisor, motivator, and innovator in strengthening student discipline through SBM. The principal's strategies include enforcing school regulations consistently, fostering teacher discipline as role models, strengthening collaboration with parents, and implementing reward and punishment systems. Supporting factors include strong school culture, teacher commitment, and parental involvement, while inhibiting factors involve students' diverse backgrounds and external environmental influences. The study concludes that effective principal leadership through SBM significantly contributes to improving student discipline and creating a conducive school climate.

**Keywords:** principal leadership, student discipline, school-based management, elementary school, character education

## INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in developing human potential, shaping character, and preparing individuals to contribute positively to society. Schools, as formal educational institutions, are responsible not only for academic achievement but also for fostering students' moral values and discipline. Student discipline is an essential component of character education that influences learning effectiveness, school climate, and students' future behavior [1].

In recent years, issues related to student discipline have become a significant concern in elementary schools. Problems such as tardiness, non-compliance with school rules, lack of responsibility, and inappropriate behavior often disrupt the learning process and hinder educational goals [2]. These challenges highlight the need for effective school leadership, particularly the role of the principal in managing and improving student discipline.

The principal is a key figure in determining school success. As an educational leader, the principal is responsible for planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating school programs, including discipline policies [3]. Effective principal leadership can create a positive school culture, encourage teacher professionalism, and promote disciplined student behavior [4].

One management approach that emphasizes school autonomy and participatory decision-making is School-Based Management (SBM). SBM grants schools greater authority to manage resources, involve stakeholders,

and develop policies tailored to their specific needs [5]. Through SBM, principals can design discipline strategies aligned with the school's vision, values, and community context.

Previous studies have shown that SBM contributes to improving school effectiveness, teacher performance, and student outcomes [6]. However, research focusing specifically on the role of principals in improving student discipline through SBM at the elementary school level, particularly in the Indonesian context, remains limited. Many studies emphasize academic achievement rather than character and discipline development.

This research addresses this gap by exploring how principals implement SBM to enhance student discipline. The study focuses on An-Nisaa Elementary School in South Tangerang, which has implemented SBM principles in its management practices. The research aims to (1) analyze the role of the principal in improving student discipline through SBM, (2) identify strategies employed by the principal, and (3) examine supporting and inhibiting factors in implementing discipline policies.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Principal Leadership

The principal is defined as a functional teacher assigned to lead and manage a school where teaching and learning processes take place [7]. Principal leadership involves influencing, guiding, and motivating teachers, staff, students, and parents to achieve educational goals [8]. Effective principals demonstrate instructional leadership, managerial competence, and visionary leadership [9].

According to Mulyasa, principals perform multiple roles, including educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator [10]. These roles enable principals to create a conducive learning environment and foster discipline within the school community.

### Student Discipline

Student discipline in schools is closely related to the effectiveness of human resource management and educational administration. Effective discipline requires systematic planning, clear organizational structures, and consistent implementation involving teachers and school staff. Human resource management plays an important role in shaping disciplined behavior through role modeling, supervision, and evaluation mechanisms [11]. In addition, educational management ensures that school regulations, disciplinary policies, and character education programs are implemented in a structured and sustainable manner [12].

Hurlock emphasizes that discipline involves self-regulation and respect for time and rules [13]. Effective discipline strategies include consistent rule enforcement, positive role modeling, and balanced reward and punishment systems [14].

### School-Based Management

School-Based Management is a decentralized management approach that provides schools with autonomy in decision-making, resource management, and program implementation [15]. SBM emphasizes participation, transparency, accountability, and collaboration among stakeholders [16].

Research indicates that SBM enhances school effectiveness by empowering principals and teachers, increasing parental involvement, and improving school accountability [17]. Through SBM, schools can design discipline policies that align with local values and student needs.

### Relevant Studies

Previous studies have shown that principal leadership significantly affects student discipline and school climate [18]. Schools with strong leadership and consistent discipline policies demonstrate higher levels of student compliance and academic engagement [19]. However, limited research has examined the integration of principal leadership and SBM in promoting student discipline, particularly in elementary schools.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the role of the principal in improving student discipline through SBM. The research was conducted at An-Nisaa Elementary School, South Tangerang.

Table 1 summarizes the key components of the research methodology.

Component	Description
Research Design	Qualitative descriptive
Location	An-Nisaa Elementary School, South Tangerang
Participants	Principal, teachers, students
Data Collection	Interviews, observation, documentation
Data Analysis	Miles & Huberman model

This study employed a qualitative research approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of leadership practices, discipline strategies, and school management processes related to the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM). A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to explore participants' perspectives, experiences, and contextual factors that influence the implementation of student discipline in natural school settings [20]. Through this approach, the study was able to capture the complexity of interactions between school leadership, teachers, students, and institutional culture.

The participants of this study included the school principal, several teachers, and selected students at An-Nisaa Elementary School. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their direct involvement and relevance to school discipline and management activities. The principal was chosen due to their central role in decision-making and leadership, while teachers and students were included to provide diverse perspectives on the implementation and impact of discipline policies within the school.

Data were collected through multiple techniques to ensure data credibility and triangulation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal and teachers to explore leadership roles, discipline strategies, and managerial practices. Observations were carried out to directly examine daily school activities, teacher–student interactions, and the implementation of discipline practices in the natural school environment. In addition, documentation was reviewed, including school regulations, discipline records, and relevant policy documents, to support and validate findings obtained from interviews and observations.

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative data analysis techniques, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying relevant information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. The reduced data were then systematically organized and presented to facilitate interpretation and pattern identification. Finally, conclusions were drawn and continuously verified throughout the research process to ensure accuracy and consistency. This analytical procedure followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman [21].

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study regarding the role of the principal in improving student discipline through School-Based Management.

Table 2 presents a summary of the main findings of the study.

Aspect	Description
Role of Principal	Leader, manager, supervisor, motivator, and innovator in discipline management

Discipline Strategies	Enforcement of school rules, teacher role modeling, character education integration, parent collaboration
Supporting Factors	Strong school culture, teacher commitment, parental involvement
Inhibiting Factors	Students' diverse backgrounds, external environmental influences

The findings of this study reveal that the principal plays a central and strategic role in improving student discipline through the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM). As a school leader, the principal is responsible for formulating clear school rules and discipline policies that are aligned with the school's vision, mission, and values. These regulations serve as formal guidelines that shape students' behavior and create order within the school environment. Consistent enforcement of school rules by the principal ensures that discipline is not merely symbolic but becomes an integral part of daily school life. This consistency also helps students understand the consequences of their actions and encourages the development of self-discipline.

In the managerial role, the principal coordinates teachers and school staff to ensure that discipline policies are implemented effectively and uniformly. The principal actively involves teachers in planning and evaluating discipline programs, fostering shared responsibility and commitment. Through regular meetings, supervision, and communication, the principal ensures that all teachers apply discipline rules consistently, thus preventing discrepancies that could undermine students' respect for school regulations. This managerial coordination reflects the principles of SBM, which emphasize participation, collaboration, and shared decision-making in school management.

Furthermore, the principal's strategies in improving student discipline extend beyond formal regulations. One key strategy identified in this study is fostering teacher discipline as a form of role modeling. Teachers are expected to demonstrate punctuality, responsibility, and adherence to school rules, as students tend to imitate the behavior of adults within the school environment. This finding supports the view that discipline is most effectively cultivated through example rather than coercion. When teachers consistently model disciplined behavior, students are more likely to internalize these values and apply them in their daily activities.

Another important strategy implemented by the principal is the integration of character education into daily school activities. Discipline is not treated as a separate program but is embedded in classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, and routine school practices. This integration enables students to understand discipline as a moral value and a personal responsibility rather than merely a set of external rules. In addition, the principal strengthens collaboration with parents to reinforce discipline both at school and at home. Regular communication with parents, meetings, and shared agreements regarding student behavior help create consistency between school expectations and family practices. These findings align with previous studies emphasizing the importance of role modeling and stakeholder involvement in effective discipline management [22].

The study also identifies several factors that support the successful implementation of student discipline through SBM. A strong school culture that prioritizes order, responsibility, and mutual respect plays a significant role in shaping students' disciplined behavior. Teacher commitment and cooperation further strengthen discipline practices, as teachers consistently support school policies and actively participate in monitoring student behavior. Parental support also contributes positively, particularly when parents reinforce school discipline rules at home and collaborate with teachers in addressing student behavior issues.

However, despite these supporting factors, the study reveals several inhibiting factors that challenge the implementation of student discipline. Students' diverse backgrounds, including differences in family upbringing, social environment, and personal characteristics, influence their ability to adapt to school discipline rules. Additionally, external environmental influences, such as peer pressure and community norms outside the school, sometimes conflict with the discipline values promoted within the school. These challenges require the principal and teachers to continuously adapt discipline strategies and provide individualized guidance to students. These results are consistent with prior research highlighting the significant impact of socio-environmental factors on student discipline [23].

Overall, the findings demonstrate that effective principal leadership through SBM creates a structured yet supportive environment that promotes student discipline. The combination of clear policies, consistent implementation, role modeling, character education integration, and stakeholder collaboration contributes to the development of disciplined student behavior and a positive school climate.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that principal leadership through the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM) plays a vital and strategic role in improving student discipline in elementary schools. The findings demonstrate that effective principals are able to formulate clear discipline policies, ensure consistent implementation, and foster collaboration among teachers, students, and parents. Through strong leadership, principals create a positive school culture that emphasizes responsibility, order, and mutual respect, which in turn supports the development of disciplined student behavior.

The study also implies that strengthening principal leadership capacity and optimizing the implementation of SBM can significantly enhance character education outcomes. When discipline is integrated into daily school activities and supported by role modeling from teachers, students are more likely to internalize disciplined behavior as part of their character rather than merely complying with rules. Furthermore, collaboration with parents reinforces discipline values beyond the school environment, creating consistency between home and school expectations.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. The research was conducted in a single elementary school, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. In addition, the qualitative approach relies on participants' perspectives, which may be influenced by subjective experiences. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve multiple schools with diverse characteristics to provide broader insights. Employing mixed-method approaches that combine qualitative and quantitative data may also strengthen the validity of findings and offer a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between principal leadership, School-Based Management, and student discipline.

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