



Pedagogical strategies for strengthening discipline and learning behavior in a religious school culture

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.65881/innovation.v1i1.35>

ARTICLE INFO

History:

Received: 02-11-2026

Revised: 03-08-2026

Accepted: 03-09-2026

Published: 03-10-2026

Keywords:

pedagogical strategies;
IRE teachers;
student discipline;
learning behavior;
religious habits.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: to examine the pedagogical strategies used by Islamic religious education (IRE) teachers to strengthen students' discipline and learning behavior at Salafiyah junior high school, Pekalongan city.

Method: this study used a qualitative field research design. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving the vice principal for student affairs, IRE teachers, and purposively selected seventh-grade students. Data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model, and validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation.

Findings: IRE teachers strengthen students' discipline and learning behavior through role modeling, guidance, value reinforcement, and consistent supervision integrated with religious habituation activities. A strong religious school culture supports the implementation, although some challenges arise from differences in students' self-discipline.

Implications: integrating pedagogical strategies with religious habituation can effectively strengthen students' discipline and learning behavior, highlighting the important role of teachers in creating a supportive and value-based learning environment.

Originality: linking Islamic religious habituation with teacher pedagogical strategies to strengthen student discipline and learning behavior, emphasizing the operational practices of teachers in a religious school context rather than focusing solely on rule enforcement.



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Introduction

Learning discipline among junior high school students is a crucial aspect of establishing an orderly learning process at school (Muda et al., 2024). Discipline is not only related to compliance with school regulations but also reflects students' ability to

consistently manage their learning behaviors (Cho et al., 2020), such as arriving on time, preparing themselves before lessons begin, participating in classroom activities in an orderly manner, and completing assignments according to requirements. In an educational context, discipline is understood as behavior that adheres to rules and directly impacts the organization of learning processes and classroom learning ethics. In practice, discipline goes beyond mere compliance with rules; it is a prerequisite for developing stable, sustainable learning habits (Putra et al., 2020).

Various studies have shown that discipline is closely related to students' learning achievement (Abror et al., 2025; Apriyanto & Fadli, 2025; Attakhidijah & Muhroji, 2022; Suyatmi et al., 2025). Discipline can be understood as students' ability to manage their study time, exercise self-control, and maintain consistent effort in learning (Krskova et al., 2019). Students with high levels of discipline tend to exhibit more structured, focused, and responsible learning patterns in completing academic tasks (Rino & Setiawan, 2025). Therefore, discussions of discipline cannot be separated from students' learning behaviors, as both are interrelated in shaping the quality of the learning process at school. Discipline combined with learning autonomy has been shown to improve student learning outcomes (Zurahmah & Isnaniah, 2023).

In schools with a strong religious culture, the reinforcement of discipline is often linked to habitual worship practices and structured religious routines (Supriyandi et al., 2025). Activities such as congregational prayers, dhuha prayers, and Qur'an recitation become part of a value-internalization mechanism that not only shapes students' religious character but also fosters time discipline, behavioral order, and social awareness. These religious habits indicate that the school environment can serve as a space for character development when the school provides consistent, systemic support and teachers actively guide students (Irbathy et al., 2024). In this context, discipline does not stand alone as an administrative rule but becomes an integral part of the school ecology, integrating rules, routines, and learning (Aufa et al., 2023).

The role of teachers, particularly Islamic religious education (IRE) teachers, is crucial in this process. IRE teachers occupy a strategic position in bridging normative values with students' daily practices (Srinio et al., 2026). In the learning process, IRE teachers not only deliver religious content but also perform guidance, exemplification, and value reinforcement through various pedagogical strategies that emphasize habituation, mentoring, and attitude strengthening in the classroom. Through these strategies, teachers can influence students' learning behavior, for example, by organizing learning routines, enhancing motivation, and fostering self-regulation during learning activities (Kurnia & Hadi, 2025).

Nevertheless, previous studies have tended to view school discipline as the enforcement of rules and the addressing of violations through regulations, habituation, or sanctions (Amelia et al., 2023; Nugraha et al., 2023; Tyas et al., 2026). This approach often views discipline as an issue of administrative compliance, thereby providing limited insight into how teachers' pedagogical practices in the classroom directly contribute to the formation of discipline linked to students' learning behavior. Some studies emphasize school control mechanisms through rules, routines, or sanctions as instruments for student regulation (Badawi, 2024; Cushing, 2021; M. F. Hasan, 2025). However, this approach does not fully explain how teachers' pedagogical strategies in the classroom play a role in fostering sustainable discipline that is directly linked to students' learning behavior, particularly in schools with strong religious traditions (Azizah et al., 2025; Falistya et al., 2025; Lestari & Yulyani, 2022).

Furthermore, studies that specifically link IRE teachers' pedagogical strategies with the reinforcement of discipline and students' learning behavior in junior high schools remain relatively limited and require more contextual analysis (Hanifah et al., 2024). The novelty of this study lies in its sharpened focus, shifting from merely examining the teacher's role to analyzing operational pedagogical strategies and connecting discipline with students' learning behavior within the context of a religious school culture. In this way, discipline is understood not merely as compliance with rules, but as a pedagogical process that contributes to the development of stable learning habits.

Theoretically, discipline in the educational context can be understood as part of the process of developing students' self-regulation, which evolves through the interaction of habitual practice, value reinforcement, and a structured learning environment (Khasanah & Kurniawan, 2026). Teachers' pedagogical strategies play a crucial role in this process, as they not only manage learning activities but also foster students' commitment to rules, guide appropriate behavior, and respond to violations in an educational manner (Aderibigbe et al., 2023). Within this framework, discipline is viewed as a social learning process that enables students to internalize the values of order and responsibility, which are then reflected in their everyday learning behavior (Mahfud & Zahriyah, 2025).

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the pedagogical strategies of IRE teachers in strengthening students' discipline and learning behavior at Salafiyah junior high school in Pekalongan. The study focuses on the pedagogical practices implemented by teachers, including modeling, habituation, guidance, value communication, and forms of reinforcement during learning activities and religious routines at school. The novelty of this research lies in sharpening the focus from merely examining the role of teachers to analyzing operational pedagogical strategies, as well as linking discipline with students' learning behavior within the context of a school with a strong religious culture. Accordingly, this study is expected to provide practical contributions for schools and teachers in designing discipline reinforcement that not only ensures compliance but also supports the development of stable learning habits. Furthermore, it is anticipated to enrich academic discourse on character education and IRE pedagogy, making them more sensitive to the context of habituation and the dynamics of students' learning behavior in schools.

Method

This study employed a qualitative, field-based design to gain an in-depth understanding of the pedagogical strategies of IRE teachers for strengthening students' discipline and learning behavior. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore teachers' pedagogical practices contextually, including teacher-student interactions, daily habituation, and classroom dynamics that shape discipline and learning order (Oktaviani et al., 2024). The study was conducted at Salafiyah junior high school in Pekalongan, a school with a strong culture of religious habituation that is relevant to the research focus. Data collection took place from November to December 2024, with primary attention on pedagogical practices observed in learning activities, guidance, modeling, value reinforcement, and teachers' responses to disciplinary violations.

The study focused on the pedagogical strategies of IRE teachers in fostering discipline and learning behavior among seventh-grade students, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of these strategies in the

school. Primary data were obtained from key informants directly involved in the discipline development process, including the vice-principal in charge of student affairs, IRE teachers, and seventh-grade students, who were the subjects of the learning experience. Secondary data were collected from school documents and supporting references, such as school regulations, habituation programs, teaching materials, and activity archives related to character development. Informants were selected purposively based on their involvement in practices aimed at strengthening discipline and learning behavior, ensuring that the collected data were relevant and contextual.

Data were collected through interviews, observations of learning and habituation activities, and documentation to strengthen contextual evidence. The researcher served as the primary instrument in this study, from designing the research focus and collecting data to interpreting the findings in the context of the research objectives (Oktaviani et al., 2024). The validity of the data was ensured through source and method triangulation, allowing information from teachers, students, and documents to corroborate one another, reduce bias, and enhance the credibility of the findings.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, through the stages of data condensation, data display, and interactive conclusion drawing until the findings reached saturation (Somantri, 2005). The entire analysis process was systematically documented through field notes, interview transcripts, and thematic matrices, ensuring that the interpretive process could be traced and accounted for. This methodological design enabled the study to comprehensively describe the pedagogical practices of IRE teachers while highlighting the factors that support or hinder the reinforcement of student discipline and learning behavior in a school with a religious culture.

Results and discussion

IRE teachers' pedagogical strategies in strengthening students' discipline and learning behavior

The results of the study indicate that discipline at Salafiyah junior high school, Pekalongan city, is manifested through orderly routines and the regulation of student behavior, which are developed through daily habituation. The school links discipline to adherence to schedules and earnest participation in activities that require focus and calm, such as morning assembly, tadarus, and congregational prayers. Information from the vice principal for student affairs and IRE teachers indicates that seventh-grade students are generally well-disciplined. However, violations still occur, such as late arrival to assemblies, lack of seriousness during tadarus, or attempts to avoid certain activities. This pattern is significant because such violations not only disrupt order but also interfere with the transition rhythm toward learning readiness. When the early part of the day is unstructured, the class becomes more easily distracted, and the establishment of learning focus is delayed. In this context, routine order often serves as a prerequisite for creating a conducive learning environment (Rudianti et al., 2025).

The most prominent strategy is direct supervision during moments when violations are most likely, particularly during transitions from informal activities to structured routines. IRE teachers not only provide reminders but also act as companions, ensuring that activities proceed according to schedule. Practices such as supervising dhuha, tadarus, and zuhur prayers, including serving as the imam, establish the teacher's pedagogical authority through active involvement rather than mere instructions. The presence of teachers at these critical points closes gaps that might lead

to procrastination and normalizes punctuality as a habit. At the level of learning behavior, this supervision helps reduce off-task behavior that typically arises when oversight is lax and transitions are unstructured. These findings emphasize the importance of classroom discipline management in fostering a positive learning climate (Wibisono et al., 2024).

Within this supervision, modeling emerges as the most “silent” yet effective strategy, as students perceive behavioral standards through repeated actions. IRE teachers do not treat routines as merely the students’ responsibility but demonstrate engagement as a model to be emulated. Such modeling is particularly relevant for seventh-grade students, who are still in an adaptation phase, making behavioral references easier to accept when they are concrete and consistent. When teachers carry out routines in an orderly manner, students understand that discipline is a norm lived by the school community, not merely a written rule (Welsh, 2024). Modeling also reduces the symbolic distance between the values taught and daily practice, enabling students to internalize the compliance reasons more effectively (Hamdi, 2026).

Advice and value reinforcement then function as a “bridge of meaning,” explaining why routines must be followed. Interview data indicate that IRE teachers more frequently provide situational guidance and reprimands, namely, close to moments of rule-breaking or when students begin to lose focus. This approach shifts discipline from mere control to guidance, encouraging students to understand the consequences and rationale behind expected behaviors. Situational strategies also allow teachers to differentiate violations caused by domestic factors from those triggered by peer influence or procrastination habits. When advice is given immediately in response to an incident, students can more easily connect their actions with the impact on the order of activities and readiness to learn. At this point, discipline is treated as a repetitive social learning process rather than a one-time judgment (Prayogi, Pujiono, et al., 2025).

Another finding highlights device regulation as a critical aspect, as the school permits mobile phone use while tadarus requires focused and active engagement. The vice principal of student affairs noted that during tadarus, teachers sometimes need to circulate and supervise because some students may “open the Qur’an without reading” or switch to chatting. This pattern reflects surface compliance, where students appear to participate but are not genuinely engaged. Teachers respond by managing attention, for instance, by closely monitoring students to reduce opportunities for distraction. Within the framework of learning behavior, attention management is crucial because focus is a prerequisite for engagement, and engagement is a prerequisite for learning (Bradbury, 2023). Furthermore, effective behavior management occurs when teachers establish clear routines, provide feedback, and proactively minimize opportunities for deviant behavior (Faisal, 2025).

Educational consequences represent another strategy that demonstrates how the school seeks to maintain firmness without resorting to punitive measures. The vice principal for student affairs explained that consequences tend to take the form of positive social sanctions, such as sweeping the schoolyard or watering plants for students who arrive late, thereby linking violations with responsibility. IRE teachers also implement consequences directly related to religious habituation, for example, by requiring students to complete tadarus under supervision or engage in reflective spiritual exercises. Although the forms of consequences vary, they share the same objective: to build awareness and prevent repeated violations. From a pedagogical perspective, educational consequences are effective when they are proportional,

consistent, and understood as part of social-emotional learning rather than as a form of humiliation (M. S. Hasan & Rusydiana, 2018).

Limitations in facilities and time have instead encouraged the development of system-based strategies that strengthen discipline through traceable mechanisms. Interview information from the vice principal for student affairs indicates that dhuha prayers are conducted in shifts due to limited space, and that the school uses control cards or recording systems to ensure activities are carried out. This system reduces reliance on memory or spontaneous reprimands while clarifying which students have completed the activities according to schedule. In practice, simple systems such as these help close the gray areas that students often use to delay or avoid activities. IRE teachers then reinforce the system through supervision and coordination so that rules function as habits rather than merely procedures. These findings are consistent with the emphasis on the need for organization, supervision, and environmental support to enable habituation to effectively shape disciplined character (Ayni et al., 2022).

Thus, the pedagogical strategies of IRE teachers operate as an integrated package that combines structure (supervision and systems), example (role modeling), meaning (value reinforcement), and boundaries (educational consequences). The available data indicate that Grade VII classes are relatively orderly, yet they remain vulnerable to peer influence, smartphone distractions, and procrastination habits during the transitional phase. This vulnerability highlights that discipline is not merely a matter of willingness or unwillingness, but rather the result of the interaction between activity design, consistency of supervision, and the social dynamics of the classroom. When strategies focus on only one aspect, minor violations tend to recur in different forms. Therefore, sustainable discipline is typically formed when students not only comply but also understand the reasons behind the rules and receive contextual support to practice the expected behaviors (Patel, 2021). At this point, religious habituation can be understood as a medium for developing self-regulation that supports students' daily learning behavior (Tiwuk et al., 2025).

The results of this study confirm that strengthening student discipline does not depend solely on the existence of rules or routines of religious habituation, but rather on a combination of pedagogical strategies consistently implemented by IRE teachers. These strategies include direct supervision during activity transitions, behavioral role modeling, reinforcement of value meaning through situational advice, attention management to distractions, and the implementation of constructive educational consequences. The findings indicate that discipline learning is formed through the integration of clear activity structures, active teacher involvement, and students' value internalization. Thus, religious habituation functions not merely as a routine activity but as a pedagogical mechanism that supports the development of students' self-regulation and learning engagement (Izza et al., 2026; Tiwuk et al., 2025).

The findings of this study are consistent with several previous studies, indicating that religious habituation and teachers' role modeling are important in the formation of students' disciplined character (Arto & Wakhudin, 2021; Hasibuan et al., 2023; Pohan et al., 2024). However, this study offers an additional perspective by demonstrating that the effectiveness of habituation does not depend solely on the ritual activities themselves, but also on the pedagogical management that accompanies them, particularly during transition phases. Direct teacher supervision, student attention management, and a consistent monitoring system have proven important factors in strengthening students' engagement in habituation activities. Thus, discipline does not merely emerge from compliance with rules, but from the interaction between activity

design, consistency of supervision, and social dynamics within the classroom (Badawi, 2024).

Supporting and inhibiting factors and implications of strengthening discipline as a learning behavior

The findings of this study indicate that a combination of student, family, and school organizational factors supports the strengthening of discipline. The vice principal for student affairs emphasized the roles of student motivation and parental support, while the homeroom teacher appears significant when regular communication is used to monitor absenteeism and early signs of violations. Within the framework of learning behavior, family support serves as external reinforcement, stabilizing habits, particularly regarding punctuality and readiness to leave for school. IRE teachers also noted variations in students' backgrounds that influence the flexibility of their adaptation to habituation practices. However, large and heterogeneous classes mean that guidance must always contend with behavioral variations that cannot be standardized. Literature on self-management and self-regulation suggests that learning discipline is more likely to develop when environmental support aligns with the practice of self-control at the individual level (Mashurin & Fadkhurosi, 2023).

Religious facilities appear as both a supporting factor and a vulnerable point that requires technical management. IRE teachers explained that adequate ablution facilities help reduce queues, allowing activities to begin more punctually. On the other hand, the limited capacity of the prayer room forces the school to implement a rotation system for the dhuhā prayer, making discipline dependent on clear scheduling and firm supervision. This indicates that discipline is shaped not only by students' willingness but also by conditions that enable them to carry out activities without technical obstacles. When technical factors are poorly managed, violations can easily turn into recurring excuses, particularly among students who already tend to procrastinate (Jayalakshmi & Punithavalli, 2024). Therefore, the aspect of facilities should be understood as part of the instructional design that influences behavior, rather than merely an issue of infrastructure. In this way, the provision of adequate facilities and consistent supervision becomes essential for ensuring that habituation practices effectively foster disciplined character (Hidayat et al., 2025).

The most prominent challenges arise from peer influence and distractions that disrupt students' focus during activities requiring calmness, particularly tadarus and the morning assembly. Students in the interviews stated that lateness or a lack of seriousness could be triggered by invitations from friends or by the habit of using smartphones before activities begin. These findings indicate that the informal norms within classroom peer groups strongly influence discipline in early adolescence. When group norms tolerate delays, minor violations tend to recur and easily spread among students. In this context, behavioral reinforcement becomes more effective when the school establishes rules that are mutually understood, applies logical consequences, and builds relationships that encourage students to follow norms without excessive pressure (Faisal, 2025).

Other obstacles are domestic and personal, such as lateness due to family matters or a lack of preparedness for worship equipment. These data indicate that not all violations stem from a refusal to follow rules; some arise from situational limitations that call for different pedagogical responses. The school tends to maintain disciplinary standards while also promoting guidance through communication and coordination, particularly when violations occur repeatedly. If the school does not provide basic

logistical support, situational constraints can quickly become habitual patterns that disadvantage students. At the level of learning behavior, repeated lateness disrupts focus, reduces mental readiness, and lowers the quality of engagement in learning activities (Prayogi, Nasrullah, et al., 2025). Therefore, strengthening discipline requires combining firm rules with measurable support mechanisms so that students do not fail due to obstacles that could be managed.

Limitations in supervision also emerge as a challenge when teachers are unable to accompany all activity points or when minor delays occur during critical time periods. IRE teachers and the vice principal for student affairs indicated that maintaining full supervision is difficult due to workload and the dynamics of school operations. When supervision becomes less strict, students who tend to procrastinate gain opportunities to avoid or slow down activity transitions, and the effects quickly become visible in the orderliness of the activities. In classroom management, consistency is a key indicator that students use to assess the seriousness of rules. Therefore, these findings point to the need for a more systematic division of roles among IRE teachers, homeroom teachers, counseling teachers, and student affairs staff so that supervision does not depend on a single actor. A positive classroom climate typically emerges from collective efforts and consistent practices rather than sporadic individual actions (Aufa et al., 2023).

Theoretically, the findings of this study reinforce the view that learning discipline arises from the interaction between the structure of the learning environment and students' internalization of values (Rijal et al., 2023). Religiously based routines, when accompanied by consistent pedagogical management, can serve as an effective means to develop students' self-regulation in learning activities. Practically, this study provides implications for IRE teachers and school authorities regarding the importance of managing transition moments in activities, modeling exemplary behavior, and applying proportional educational consequences to build student discipline. Additionally, coordination among IRE teachers, homeroom teachers, and student affairs staff is crucial to maintaining consistent supervision and fostering student behavior within the school environment (Impuesto, 2024).

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that strengthening student discipline at Salafiyah junior high school in Pekalongan city is a pedagogical process shaped by the interaction among religious routines, classroom management strategies, and support for the school environment. Discipline is understood not merely as compliance with rules, but as the development of self-regulation cultivated through daily learning experiences (Krskova et al., 2019). When religious routines are supported by teacher modeling, effective attention management, and a consistent supervision system, these activities can serve as an effective means to foster more focused and responsible learning behaviors.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that strengthening student discipline and learning behavior at Salafiyah junior high school in Pekalongan city is achieved through the integration of IRE teachers' pedagogical strategies, consistently implemented during religious routine activities. These strategies include direct supervision during activity transitions, teacher modeling of exemplary behavior, situational advice and value reinforcement, attention management to minimize distractions, and the application of constructive educational consequences. The combination of these strategies creates a learning environment that supports orderly routines while promoting the

internalization of discipline values among students. Thus, discipline is understood not merely as compliance with rules, but as a process of developing self-regulation through daily learning experiences and social interactions within the school environment.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the view that learning discipline results from interactions among the structure of the learning environment, teachers' pedagogical practices, and students' value internalization. Religious routines, when accompanied by consistently managed pedagogical practices, have proven effective in developing students' self-regulation and learning engagement. In practice, this study provides insights for IRE teachers and school administrators on the importance of managing transition moments, modeling exemplary behavior, and applying proportional educational consequences to foster student discipline. Furthermore, coordination among IRE teachers, homeroom teachers, and student affairs staff is crucial for maintaining consistent supervision and creating a conducive learning climate that supports the development of disciplined behavior in students.

This study has limitations: it was conducted at only one school and focused solely on seventh-grade students, so the findings cannot be generalized to other school contexts. Additionally, most of the data were collected from the perspectives of teachers and school staff, leaving students' experiences, as the primary participants in these routines, underexplored. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the study's location and participants, and to more comprehensively involve students' perspectives through extended observations or longitudinal studies. Further studies could also examine in greater depth the relationship between religious routines, self-regulation, and the development of students' learning behaviors across various educational contexts.

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