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Strengthening Teacher Work Culture through Positive Discipline Strategy at SD Negeri 004 Balikpapan City

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Abstract

This study aims to describe strategies for strengthening positive discipline in improving teachers' work culture at SD Negeri 004 Balikpapan City. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed. The participants consisted of the vice principal and teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and analyzed using an interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that positive discipline is implemented through leadership role modeling, continuous supervision, effective communication, habituation of a positive work culture, and teachers' professional development programs. These strategies contribute to improving teachers' motivation, professionalism, collaboration, and sense of responsibility in performing their duties. Although several challenges were identified, including resistance to change among some teachers and high administrative workloads, the school consistently implemented guidance and strengthened internal communication to support improvement. Overall, the study concludes that positive discipline is an effective managerial strategy for fostering a professional, collaborative, and conducive teacher work culture in elementary schools.

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Introduction

Primary education represents a critical stage in shaping students' academic abilities and character development. At this level, learners undergo rapid developmental growth, where values, attitudes, and habits internalized during this period significantly influence their future behavior (Tohari et al., 2022). In addition, primary school students are at the concrete operational stage, characterized by logical thinking that is still closely tied to real-life experiences (Piaget, 1964, as cited in Lelan & Nurunnisa, 2025). Therefore, primary education serves as a strategic phase for strengthening students' character formation.

Education plays a fundamental role in improving human resource quality through the development of knowledge, character, and professional work culture. Schools function not only as learning institutions but also as organizations that cultivate discipline, responsibility, and commitment among all school members. Accordingly, the success of education is strongly influenced by the quality of school management and the leadership role of principals in fostering a positive organizational culture (Nurochmah et al., 2019).

Improving educational quality requires schools to adopt effective and adaptive management systems. Pragista et al. (2026) emphasize that strategic management provides a foundation for designing effective and sustainable school programs. In this regard, principals are expected to perform planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising functions in an integrated manner to create a professional and conducive working environment (Mukti et al., 2026). Transformational and visionary leadership is therefore essential in fostering a collaborative, adaptive, and quality-oriented school culture.

Teacher work culture is a key determinant of educational effectiveness. A positive work culture is reflected in discipline, responsibility, professionalism, and commitment to task execution. Selvia et al. (2024) highlight the important role of principals in strengthening teacher work culture through discipline reinforcement, collaboration, and professionalism. Similarly, Badaruddin (2023) found that work culture significantly influences teacher performance, indicating that it is a strategic component in improving educational quality.

One of the essential elements of teacher work culture is discipline. However, disciplinary practices in schools are often still dominated by formal control mechanisms based on rewards and punishments. Although such approaches may improve short-term compliance, they do not necessarily foster sustainable professional awareness (Fitriani, 2024). In practice, teacher discipline is often limited to administrative compliance such as attendance, teaching hours, and documentation completion. Saputra (2023) further argues that discipline based solely on punishment and rewards tends to weaken intrinsic motivation.

As an alternative, positive discipline emphasizes the development of awareness, responsibility, and self-regulation through communication, role modeling, and consistent habituation (Sukamti & Widiastuti, 2022). This approach is considered more effective in creating a healthy and productive work environment. Nurzakiyah (2024) found that positive discipline improves interaction quality and reduces negative behaviors in educational settings. In the context of teacher work culture, positive discipline can serve as a managerial strategy that fosters collective awareness, professional responsibility, and sustainable work commitment. Rofiq et al. (2025) further emphasize that its

implementation requires a transformational managerial perspective that prioritizes responsibility and accountability within school organizational culture.

Nevertheless, existing studies on positive discipline have predominantly focused on students rather than teacher work culture. In addition, limited research has examined how principals integrate positive discipline into the strengthening of teacher work culture. This gap indicates the need for further investigation, particularly in the context of school management strategies. At SD Negeri 004 Balikpapan City, strengthening teacher work culture is an essential component of improving educational quality. Schools require management strategies that go beyond administrative compliance and instead foster responsibility, commitment, and professionalism through a positive discipline approach. This study offers novelty by focusing on positive discipline not for students, but as a managerial strategy for strengthening teacher work culture in primary education settings.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to describe strategies for strengthening positive discipline in improving teacher work culture at SD Negeri 004 Balikpapan City. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of educational management studies, particularly in relation to school leadership, positive discipline, and teacher work culture.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to examine strategies for strengthening positive discipline in improving teacher work culture at SD Negeri 004 Balikpapan City. A qualitative approach was adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in its natural school setting. The case study design was selected to enable a comprehensive exploration of the planning, implementation, and evaluation of positive discipline strategies within a specific institutional context (Sulistyo, 2023).

The research was conducted at SD Negeri 004 Balikpapan City in 2026. The site was selected purposively due to its active implementation of teacher work culture strengthening through positive discipline practices aligned with the focus of this study. The school was also considered suitable because it has various programs related to coaching, role modeling, and habituation of professional work culture, allowing for rich and in-depth data collection. The participants consisted of the vice principal and teachers selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement and understanding of the implementation of positive discipline in the school. The vice principal was selected due to their role in coordinating and supervising school programs, while teachers were chosen as the main implementers of daily professional practices and school work culture formation.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to explore strategies for implementing positive discipline and teacher work culture. Observations were used to examine daily activities, interactions, and habitual practices within the school environment, while documentation was used to support the data in the form of school programs, regulations, activity records, and related documents (Sugiyono, 2013). Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation by comparing interview, observation, and documentation data across participants.

Results

Teachers' Understanding of Positive Discipline in School Work Culture

This study involved two key informants, namely the vice principal and teachers at SD Negeri 004 Balikpapan City. The vice principal was selected due to their role in school policy management and teacher work culture development, while teachers were chosen because of their direct involvement in implementing positive discipline in daily teaching and professional activities. The informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct engagement in the implementation of positive discipline in the school.

Based on the interview findings, both informants viewed positive discipline not merely as compliance with school regulations, but as self-awareness and professional responsibility in carrying out teaching duties. Positive discipline is understood as an effort to build a work culture that emerges from intrinsic awareness rather than fear of punishment or reprimand from superiors. The vice principal explained that positive discipline goes beyond punctual attendance or formal rule compliance. It is closely related to teachers' moral responsibility as role models for students.

“In my view, positive discipline is not simply about being afraid of being reprimanded by the principal or just arriving on time. It is more about teachers' self-awareness in carrying out their duties. Teachers are role models for students and must demonstrate exemplary behavior.”

In addition, teachers stated that positive discipline contributes to a more comfortable work atmosphere and supports teaching quality improvement.

“When the work environment is positive and supportive, teachers become more motivated to teach. Discipline is not forced, but arises from self-awareness.”

These findings indicate that positive discipline at SD Negeri 004 Balikpapan City is interpreted as a professional work culture emphasizing self-awareness, responsibility, and teacher role modeling within the school environment.

Strategies for Strengthening Positive Discipline in the School Environment

The findings show that the school implements several strategies to strengthen positive discipline among teachers, including leadership role modeling, shared values, coaching and supervision, and the creation of a conducive work environment. The vice principal emphasized the importance of leadership as a key factor in implementing positive discipline:

“Teachers are more likely to follow when they see direct examples from leaders. It is not just about instructing discipline, but the principal must also demonstrate it through attitude and responsibility.”

In addition to role modeling, the school develops a shared culture through agreed values and “school beliefs” established collaboratively between leaders and teachers.

“We have school beliefs that are agreed upon together. So, the rules are not only from the principal but are built collectively so that everyone feels ownership.”

The school also applies coaching and supervision as a form of teacher support through dialogic communication and collaborative problem-solving.

“When problems arise, they are discussed in a constructive way. Teachers are not immediately blamed but are helped to find solutions together.”

Teachers also reported that training, appreciation, and institutional support are provided to enhance motivation.

“The school often provides training and appreciation for teachers. This makes us feel valued and more motivated in our work.”

Overall, these findings indicate that positive discipline strategies emphasize developmental and supportive approaches rather than punitive control.

Implementation of Positive Discipline in Teacher Work Practices

The implementation of positive discipline is reflected in teachers’ daily professional activities, including punctuality, responsibility, communication, and collaboration. The vice principal noted a gradual shift in teacher behavior:

“Initially, some teachers worked because they felt monitored. However, over time this shifted into self-awareness of their professional responsibilities.”

Teachers also described the habituation of positive behaviors in daily school practices:

“We usually greet students with smiles and greetings every morning. Small habits like this help create a comfortable learning atmosphere.”

Teachers also manage classroom interactions more positively and constructively.

“When issues arise with students, they are first resolved through a positive approach so that students feel comfortable and not afraid to learn.”

Furthermore, collaboration among teachers has improved, leading to more open discussions and shared problem-solving.

“Teachers now more frequently discuss and share experiences. If there are learning difficulties, solutions are sought together.”

These findings show that positive discipline not only affects individual teacher behavior but also fosters a collaborative and supportive work culture.

Impact of Positive Discipline on Teacher Motivation and Professionalism

The findings indicate that positive discipline positively influences teacher motivation, professionalism, and performance. The vice principal stated:

“Teachers are now more aware of their responsibilities. They work not because of fear of reprimand, but because they want to provide the best for students.”

Teachers also expressed that they feel more valued and supported:

“When teachers feel appreciated, their motivation increases. They become more confident and comfortable in teaching.”

In addition, professional development programs contribute to teacher growth:

“Through training and institutional support, teachers become more developed and better prepared to face instructional challenges.”

In terms of performance, teachers demonstrate greater reflection, collaboration, and focus on instructional quality.

“Teachers are now more open to self-evaluation and improving their weaknesses. Changes are clearly visible in daily work practices.”

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The implementation of positive discipline is supported by leadership role modeling, open communication, teacher commitment, and a conducive work environment. The vice principal emphasized:

“When leaders consistently set good examples, teachers are more likely to follow.”

However, several challenges remain, including resistance to change among some teachers and high administrative workloads.

“Some teachers still need time to adjust to changes in work culture.”

“Administrative workload is sometimes heavy, dividing teachers’ focus between teaching and administrative tasks.”

To address these challenges, the school conducts continuous training, reflection sessions, communication strengthening, and teacher appreciation programs.

Sustainability of Positive Discipline as Teacher Work Culture

The findings show that positive discipline is continuously developed to become an embedded work culture among teachers. The vice principal noted:

“Positive discipline cannot be formed instantly. It is still in the process of building awareness so that teachers act based on responsibility rather than fear of punishment.”

Teachers also expressed expectations for sustainability:

“We hope positive discipline will continue and become a permanent habit, not just a temporary program.”

These findings indicate that positive discipline plays a key role in fostering a more conscious, professional, and collaborative teacher work culture.

Discussion

Based on interviews with the vice principal and teachers, the strengthening of positive discipline at SD Negeri 004 Balikpapan City is implemented through various strategies aimed at developing a more conscious, professional, and collaborative teacher work culture. These strategies include leadership role modeling, habituation of positive work culture, coaching, communication strengthening, and teacher professional development.

The implementation of positive discipline is not limited to rule compliance but emphasizes the development of teachers’ intrinsic awareness in fulfilling their professional responsibilities. The findings are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Strategies for Strengthening Positive Discipline in Improving Teacher Work Culture

No	Strategy	Implementation	Impact on Teacher Work Culture
1	Leadership role modeling	Principal demonstrates discipline and responsibility	Increased teacher awareness and discipline
2	Shared values and agreements	Collective school rules and values	Strengthened commitment and ownership
3	Coaching and supervision	Dialogic mentoring and reflection	Reflective and open work culture
4	Training and development	Teacher professional development programs	Improved professionalism and competence
5	Appreciation system	Recognition of teacher performance	Increased motivation and morale
6	Positive habituation	Greetings, communication, collaboration	Supportive and positive work environment
7	Teacher learning community	Peer discussion and experience sharing	Enhanced collaboration and solidarity
8	Open communication	Dialogic leader-teacher communication	Harmonious and conducive relationships

Based on the findings of this study, the understanding of teachers and the vice principal regarding positive discipline at SD Negeri 004 Balikpapan Kota indicates a paradigm shift from a control- and punishment-oriented approach toward a more

humanistic and self-awareness-based approach. This finding aligns with Nelsen (as cited in Tekyi-Arhin, 2024), who asserts that positive discipline is not oriented toward punishment but rather toward the development of self-control and responsibility rooted in individuals' internal awareness. Teachers no longer interpret discipline merely as compliance driven by fear of sanctions, but rather as a form of moral and professional responsibility in carrying out their duties as educators. In this context, positive discipline becomes part of an ongoing internalization process that shapes teachers' work behavior sustainably.

Furthermore, the findings show that positive discipline in the school is implemented through dialogic, supportive, and collaborative approaches. The principal and vice principal prioritize open communication, coaching, and guidance rather than repressive measures. This finding is consistent with the concept of positive discipline proposed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2022), which emphasizes humanistic relationships, mutual respect, and educational communication in fostering positive behavior. This approach also reflects democratic leadership practices, where teachers are involved in shaping school beliefs and work culture, thereby fostering a sense of ownership toward the rules and values implemented.

Leadership role modeling is one of the key strategies in strengthening positive discipline at SD Negeri 004 Balikpapan Kota. The principal is viewed as a central figure influencing teachers' work culture through exemplary behavior in discipline, responsibility, and work consistency. This finding supports Juniarti et al. (2020), who emphasize that principals play a strategic role as educational leaders in building school culture through role modeling and the reinforcement of positive values. The presence of consistent and actively engaged leadership also strengthens an orderly and conducive work climate, thereby encouraging teachers to perform their duties more professionally.

The findings also indicate that the implementation of positive discipline contributes to the development of a more collaborative and reflective teacher work culture. Teachers become more open to discussion, experience-sharing, and mutual assistance in addressing instructional challenges. This condition aligns with the characteristics of work culture proposed by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2018), particularly in terms of integration, communication patterns, and teacher collaboration. A work culture built through positive discipline not only emphasizes procedural order but also strengthens solidarity and professional relationships among teachers within the school environment. In addition, positive discipline also enhances teachers' motivation and professionalism. Teachers feel more valued through training, recognition, and institutional support, which fosters intrinsic motivation to perform better. This finding supports Liu et al. (2024), who state that positive discipline can enhance self-efficacy, confidence, and consistency in professional practice. Within a supportive work environment, teachers perform not only out of administrative obligation but also from an internal commitment to provide optimal educational services to students.

Moreover, this study demonstrates that positive discipline is closely linked to the formation of a professional teacher work culture. Values such as responsibility, openness, mutual respect, and cooperation become integral components of the school's work culture. This is in line with Dauhan (2020), who defines work culture as a system of values and habits that guide organizational members' behavior in performing their duties. Thus,

positive discipline not only shapes individual teacher behavior but also creates a more harmonious, productive, and quality-oriented educational work system.

However, the study also identifies several challenges in the implementation of positive discipline, such as teachers' resistance to change and high administrative workloads. These conditions indicate that changes in work culture require a gradual and continuous process. This finding aligns with Murdianah and Hidayat (2025), who explain that work culture is not formed instantly but through habituation, value reinforcement, and consistent environmental support. Therefore, schools need to continuously strengthen coaching, reflective practices, and communication to ensure the optimal implementation of positive discipline.

Overall, the findings show that strengthening positive discipline at SD Negeri 004 Balikpapan Kota contributes to the development of a more conscious, professional, and collaborative teacher work culture. Positive discipline functions not only as a behavioral control strategy but also as an effort to build teachers' intrinsic awareness in performing their roles as educators. Through a humanistic, dialogic, and supportive approach, positive discipline creates a conducive working environment and supports the continuous improvement of educational quality. These findings reinforce the view that integrating positive discipline into teacher work culture is a strategic step toward enhancing professionalism and the quality of education in elementary schools.

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