

PRINCIPAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING TEACHER DISCIPLINE IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN SOUTH ACEH

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Abstract

Teacher discipline remains a persistent challenge in many junior high schools and demands systematic management from school principals. This study explores principal management strategies for improving teacher discipline in public junior high schools in South Aceh Regency, Indonesia. Employing a descriptive qualitative case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, field observations, and document analysis (e.g., attendance records, school regulations, and supervision notes). Participants were purposively selected to ensure information-rich perspectives and included two principals, six teachers, and two administrative staff from SMP Negeri 3 Trumon and SMP Negeri 4 Trumon Timur (N = 10). Data were analyzed thematically using an interactive process of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with trustworthiness strengthened through triangulation and member checking. The findings show that principals enact three interrelated strategies: (1) establishing and consistently enforcing clear disciplinary regulations (attendance, morning assembly, learning administration, and professional ethics); (2) applying a balanced reward–sanction system to reinforce compliance and responsibility; and (3) conducting continuous supervision through reminders, attendance monitoring, classroom observation, and periodic evaluation followed by coaching. These strategies were facilitated by effective communication, collaborative work culture, and supportive school policies, while limited resources and low teacher participation emerged as key constraints. Overall, integrated principal management contributes to a more orderly professional culture and supports improved school effectiveness in resource-constrained contexts.

Keywords: principal management, teacher discipline; junior high school, supervision, reward and punishment, South Aceh

Introduction

Education plays a central role in developing high-quality human resources, and the effectiveness of school-based education is strongly influenced by the leadership and managerial capacity of the principal. As the highest authority within the school organization, principals are responsible not only for administrative management but also for creating a professional climate that supports teachers' performance, commitment, and discipline. Effective principal management is therefore widely recognized as a key determinant of school quality and organizational effectiveness.

One critical aspect of school effectiveness is teacher discipline. Teacher discipline reflects professional responsibility manifested through punctual attendance, compliance with institutional regulations, consistency in instructional planning, and ethical conduct in daily practice. Disciplined teachers contribute positively to instructional quality, classroom order, and students' academic and behavioral outcomes. Conversely, low levels of discipline—such as tardiness, incomplete learning

administration, absenteeism, and inconsistent professional behavior—can undermine instructional effectiveness and weaken overall school performance (An, 2022). Thus, teacher discipline is not merely a personal attribute but an organizational issue closely linked to leadership and management practices.

Empirical conditions in many junior high schools indicate that teacher discipline remains a persistent challenge. Schools frequently encounter problems related to time discipline, administrative compliance, and adherence to professional norms. These issues highlight the need for systematic and consistent principal management strategies that balance firmness with support. This challenge is particularly salient at the junior high school level, where teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' academic habits, character development, and learning discipline during a critical transitional stage of adolescence.

In the context of South Aceh Regency, these challenges are further intensified by contextual constraints such as limited resources, geographical remoteness, and varying levels of teacher commitment. Schools operating in such environments require principals who are capable of managing discipline not only through formal rules but also through adaptive leadership, supervision, and motivation. Consequently, principal management becomes a strategic mechanism for sustaining teacher discipline and ensuring school effectiveness under resource-constrained conditions.

Previous studies have extensively examined the relationship between principal leadership and teacher discipline, particularly through the lenses of leadership style and general managerial influence. Research consistently shows that effective principal leadership contributes positively to teacher discipline, work motivation, and performance (Daheri, 2023; Istarina et al., 2021; Rosidin, 2022). Other studies emphasize that supportive work climates and strong managerial practices foster teacher compliance with institutional regulations (Noorhapizah et al., 2023; Nurhayati, 2023). Specifically, transformational leadership has been shown to enhance teacher discipline by strengthening motivation and role modeling (Putriningsih et al., 2023), while academic supervision conducted by principals improves teachers' discipline in planning and implementing instruction (Imamah & Churrahman, 2022; Sari et al., 2025). Additionally, principals who cultivate a strong organizational culture can reinforce discipline through shared norms and collective responsibility (Pisriwati et al., 2024).

Despite this growing body of literature, existing studies tend to focus predominantly on leadership styles—such as transformational, participatory, or instructional leadership—without sufficiently examining how concrete principal management strategies are systematically implemented in daily school operations. In particular, limited attention has been given to how core management functions—planning, organizing, implementing, supervising, and evaluating—are integrated with reward and sanction mechanisms to build a sustainable culture of teacher discipline. Moreover, empirical studies specifically examining junior high schools in South Aceh remain scarce, leaving a contextual gap in understanding how principal management operates within this unique educational setting.

Addressing this gap, the present study examines principal management strategies for improving teacher discipline in junior high schools in South Aceh. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on principal management as an integrated and systematic process rather than on leadership style alone. By analyzing how principals combine regulatory enforcement, exemplary leadership, supervision, and reward–sanction systems, this study offers a more comprehensive perspective on sustainable discipline management in secondary education.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the role of principals as managers and educational leaders in improving teacher discipline in junior high schools. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) identify principal management strategies used to strengthen teacher discipline; (2) examine the

implementation of supervision, exemplary leadership, and reward–sanction systems; and (3) explore the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the effectiveness of teacher discipline management. Based on these objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do principals implement management strategies to improve teacher discipline in junior high schools in South Aceh?
2. What forms of supervision, role modelling, and reward–sanction systems are applied to support teacher discipline?
3. What factors support and hinder the effectiveness of principal management in improving teacher discipline?

Literature Review

This literature review presents the key theoretical and empirical foundations relevant to the present study. It focuses on three interrelated constructs: principal management, teacher discipline, and the junior high school context. Together, these concepts provide a conceptual framework for understanding how principals, as educational leaders and managers, influence teacher discipline through managerial functions, organizational culture, and supervisory practices, particularly within the contextual realities of South Aceh.

Principal management

Principal management refers to the systematic process through which principals plan, organize, lead, and supervise school resources to achieve educational goals effectively and efficiently. In contemporary educational leadership theory, principals are no longer viewed merely as administrators, but as strategic managers and instructional leaders who shape school climate, teacher behavior, and organizational culture (Duhoe & Segbefia, 2023; Fahra & Syukri, 2025). From a managerial perspective, principal management encompasses core functions such as planning, organizing, directing, and controlling educational activities to ensure institutional effectiveness (Khotimah et al., 2024; Mariani et al., 2024).

Several scholars emphasize that effective principal management requires the integration of managerial and leadership roles. Jain et al. (2022) conceptualize principal management as a strategic process that combines planning, implementation, motivation, and control to ensure organizational sustainability. Similarly, Lailiana (2021) argues that principals must align planning, execution, and evaluation processes to optimize both human and material resources. This view positions principals as key agents who translate policies into daily practices through systematic management and supervision.

From an organizational behavior perspective, principal management also plays a critical role in shaping teachers' attitudes, motivation, and adherence to institutional norms. By setting clear expectations, enforcing regulations consistently, and providing continuous supervision, principals can foster a disciplined and collaborative work environment (Attsaury et al., 2024; Estiani & Hasanah, 2022). Empirical studies confirm that principals who apply consistent management practices—such as structured supervision and transparent decision-making—are more effective in guiding teachers toward professional responsibility and compliance (Hamka, 2023; Indajang et al., 2021).

In this sense, principal management can be understood as an integrated leadership and managerial process that mobilizes, directs, and controls educational resources to achieve school goals and improve educational quality (Hidayat et al., 2023; Pisriwati et al., 2024). This

conceptualization provides the foundation for examining how principals influence teacher discipline through systematic management strategies rather than leadership style alone.

Teacher discipline

Teacher discipline is widely recognized as a core indicator of teacher professionalism and organizational effectiveness in schools. Discipline refers to teachers' willingness and ability to perform their professional duties in accordance with institutional rules, ethical standards, and social norms, while simultaneously serving as role models for students (Dirsa et al., 2022). It is reflected in punctual attendance, compliance with administrative requirements, consistency in instructional implementation, and responsible professional conduct (Afriani, 2025).

Beyond observable behavior, teacher discipline also encompasses internal awareness, moral responsibility, and professional commitment. Ningrum et al. (2025) emphasize that disciplined teachers demonstrate not only compliance with regulations but also intrinsic motivation to fulfill their professional obligations. From an organizational perspective, discipline represents consistency in adhering to written and unwritten rules that govern school operations and professional interactions (Guo et al., 2025; Kropáč et al., 2023).

Moreover, teacher discipline is closely linked to organizational culture and leadership practices. Studies show that discipline is more sustainable when it is supported by clear regulations, fair enforcement, and a positive school climate (Gningue et al., 2022; Sanchez et al., 2022). Daheri (2023) further argues that discipline should be viewed not merely as external control but as an internalized professional value shaped through leadership example, supervision, and ethical guidance.

Thus, teacher discipline can be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing behavioral compliance, internal motivation, and moral responsibility (Indrayani, 2022; Turnadi et al., 2021). This understanding highlights the importance of principal management in fostering discipline through both structural mechanisms (rules and supervision) and cultural mechanisms (values and professional norms).

Junior High School context

Junior high school (Sekolah Menengah Pertama/SMP) represents a critical stage in Indonesia's formal education system, bridging elementary and senior secondary education. Students at this level are typically in early adolescence, a developmental period characterized by significant cognitive, emotional, and social changes (Gupta et al., 2024; Li, 2023). Consequently, SMP plays a strategic role in shaping students' academic habits, discipline, and character development.

At the institutional level, junior high schools are responsible not only for academic instruction but also for cultivating discipline, responsibility, and ethical behavior among students. Teachers at this level serve as key role models whose discipline directly influences students' attitudes toward learning and school norms (Gunadi et al., 2022; Rahmawati & Utomo, 2024). Therefore, maintaining high levels of teacher discipline is essential for creating an orderly and effective learning environment.

Furthermore, junior high schools often operate within diverse contextual conditions, including resource limitations and geographic challenges, particularly in regions such as South Aceh. These conditions demand adaptive and effective principal management to ensure that teacher discipline is maintained despite external constraints. Research indicates that strong school leadership and management are particularly crucial in such contexts to sustain professional standards and organizational effectiveness (Habibulloh et al., 2024; Warlim et al., 2025).

In summary, the junior high school context amplifies the importance of principal management and teacher discipline. The interaction between leadership practices, organizational culture, and contextual challenges underscores the need for integrated management strategies that are responsive to local conditions.

Based on the reviewed literature, it is evident that principal management, teacher discipline, and the junior high school context are deeply interconnected. While prior studies have highlighted the influence of leadership styles and supervision on teacher discipline, fewer studies have examined principal management as a comprehensive and integrated process encompassing regulation, reward–sanction systems, and supervision. This gap is particularly apparent in studies focusing on junior high schools in resource-constrained and geographically challenging contexts such as South Aceh. Therefore, the present study positions itself to contribute to the literature by examining principal management strategies as a systematic and contextualized approach to improving teacher discipline.

Methodology

Research design and approach

This study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive case study approach. The qualitative approach was selected to obtain an in-depth understanding of how principals implement management strategies to improve teacher discipline within their natural school settings. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for exploring social processes, meanings, and practices as they are experienced by participants rather than for testing predetermined hypotheses (Creswell, 2017; Johnson & Christensen, 2024).

A descriptive case study design was adopted because it allows researchers to examine contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident. In this study, principal management strategies and teacher discipline are closely intertwined with school culture, organizational practices, and contextual constraints. Therefore, this design enabled a holistic exploration of principal management practices as they are enacted in junior high schools.

Research site and participants

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Trumon and SMP Negeri 4 Trumon Timur, located in South Aceh Regency, Indonesia. These schools were purposively selected because they represent public junior high schools operating in geographically remote areas with limited resources and distinct managerial challenges. Such conditions require principals to adopt adaptive and effective management strategies to maintain teacher discipline and ensure school effectiveness. Examining these sites provided a contextualized understanding of how principal management functions in resource-constrained educational environments.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a common strategy in qualitative research aimed at identifying information-rich cases relevant to the research objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The inclusion criteria were: (1) principals who were directly responsible for managing teacher performance and discipline, (2) teachers with direct experience of school discipline policies and daily instructional practices, and (3) administrative staff involved in attendance monitoring and school administration.

A total of ten participants were involved in this study, consisting of two principals, six teachers, and two administrative staff members. This composition allowed for triangulation of perspectives

across different roles within the school organization, thereby enhancing the depth and credibility of the data.

Data collection

Data were collected using three complementary qualitative techniques: semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations regarding principal management strategies and teacher discipline. This interview format allowed flexibility while ensuring that key issues relevant to the research questions were consistently addressed.

Observations were carried out to capture principals' managerial practices, supervisory behavior, and manifestations of teacher discipline in everyday school activities. These observations provided contextual data that complemented interview findings and enabled the researcher to examine actual practices rather than relying solely on self-reported information.

Document analysis involved reviewing relevant school documents, including attendance records, disciplinary regulations, supervision reports, and meeting minutes. These documents were used to corroborate interview and observation data and to provide objective evidence of discipline management practices. The use of multiple data sources strengthened the study's methodological rigor through data triangulation (Miles & Huberman, 2013).

Instrument development and validation

Interview guidelines and observation protocols were developed based on relevant literature on principal management and teacher discipline. To ensure content validity and clarity, the instruments were reviewed by experts in educational leadership and qualitative research. Revisions were made based on their feedback to align the instruments with the research objectives.

Pilot interviews were conducted prior to the main data collection to refine question wording, sequence, and clarity. This process helped ensure that the instruments effectively captured the intended data and were understandable to participants. These procedures are consistent with qualitative instrument validation practices recommended by Creswell and Poth (2016).

Data analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (2013), which consists of three interrelated processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction involved selecting, coding, and organizing raw data to focus on themes related to principal management strategies and teacher discipline. Coding was conducted inductively, allowing patterns and categories to emerge from the data.

Data display was carried out through descriptive narratives and thematic matrices to facilitate comparison and interpretation across cases and participant groups. Finally, conclusions were drawn through systematic interpretation of the data and continuously verified by returning to the data sources. This iterative and cyclical process ensured analytical rigor and coherence throughout the study.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the study was ensured through several strategies aligned with qualitative research standards, including credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility

was enhanced through data triangulation by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected participants to confirm the accuracy of the findings.

Dependability and confirmability were supported through detailed documentation of the research procedures and analytic decisions. Prolonged engagement in the research sites also enabled the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the context and reduce potential misinterpretations. These strategies are consistent with established criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research (Almusaed et al., 2025).

Findings

This section presents the findings of the study based strictly on the research aims, namely: (1) identifying principal management strategies for improving teacher discipline, (2) examining the implementation of supervision, exemplary leadership, and reward–sanction systems, and (3) exploring the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the effectiveness of teacher discipline management. The findings are organized thematically and presented in a systematic order to ensure clarity and coherence.

The thematic analysis yielded three major themes; each directly aligned with the aims of the study. These themes represent the core principal management strategies used to improve teacher discipline in junior high schools in South Aceh.

Table 1. *Thematic analysis of principal management strategies for improving teacher discipline*

No	Research Aim	Theme	Sub-Themes	Evidence Sources
1	Identify principal management strategies	Regulation-Based Discipline Management	Attendance rules, learning administration, professional ethics	Interviews, documents, observations
2	Examine supervision and reward–sanction systems	Motivation and Behavioral Control Strategies	Rewards, sanctions, supervision, role modeling	Interviews, observations
3	Explore supporting and inhibiting factors	Contextual Enablers and Constraints	Communication, school culture, resources, teacher participation	Interviews, docu

Theme 1: Regulation-based discipline management

Sub-Theme	Description	Verbatim Interview Evidence	Informant
Attendance regulation	Principals enforce punctuality through attendance rules and monitoring systems	“Teachers are required to arrive before learning hours start. Attendance is checked every day, and lateness is immediately recorded.”	Principal, SMP N 3 Trumon
Learning administration	Discipline is reinforced through compulsory lesson planning and teaching journals	“All teachers must prepare lesson plans and teaching journals. These documents are checked regularly, not only at the end of the semester.”	Vice Principal
Professional ethics	Teachers are required to remain in class and follow professional conduct	“Teachers are not allowed to leave the classroom without permission. This rule is clearly stated in the school regulations.”	Principal, SMP N 4 Trumon Timur
Regulation formulation	Teacher involvement differs across schools	“The rules are discussed together during school meetings, so teachers understand and accept them.”	Teacher (T4)

This theme explains how principals employ formal school regulations as a core management strategy to improve teacher discipline. The findings show that discipline is primarily constructed through clearly defined rules governing attendance, instructional administration, and professional ethics. These regulations function as a structural framework that guides teachers' daily professional behavior and establishes clear expectations regarding responsibility and accountability.

As illustrated in Table 1, attendance regulation emerges as a central component of discipline management. Principals in both schools emphasize punctuality by requiring teachers to arrive before learning activities begin and by implementing routine attendance monitoring. This practice signals that time discipline is considered a non-negotiable professional obligation. Consistent monitoring reinforces teachers' awareness that attendance is not merely administrative compliance, but an essential element of professional conduct that affects school order and learning continuity.

In addition to attendance, discipline is strengthened through strict requirements related to learning administration. Teachers are required to prepare lesson plans, teaching journals, and instructional materials in accordance with school regulations. Regular checking of these documents indicates that discipline is extended beyond physical presence to include responsibility for instructional preparation. This finding suggests that principal management frames discipline as a holistic concept encompassing both behavioral and professional dimensions of teaching.

Professional ethics also form an integral part of regulation-based discipline management. Rules requiring teachers to remain in class during instructional hours and to adhere to professional conduct standards reflect the principal's role in maintaining educational integrity. These regulations function to prevent behaviors that may disrupt the learning process and to ensure that teachers consistently model professional responsibility for students.

The findings further reveal differences in how regulations are formulated and implemented across schools. At SMP Negeri 3 Trumon, discipline management follows a more formal and compliance-oriented pattern, characterized by written rules and structured enforcement mechanisms. In contrast, SMP Negeri 4 Trumon Timur adopts a participatory approach, involving teachers in the formulation and socialization of disciplinary regulations through deliberative meetings. Teacher involvement in rule-making fosters a sense of shared ownership and enhances acceptance of disciplinary standards.

Analytically, these findings indicate that the effectiveness of regulation-based discipline management depends not only on the clarity of rules but also on the process through which they are developed and communicated. Regulations that are consistently enforced and perceived as fair tend to strengthen teachers' internalization of discipline norms. Therefore, principal management of teacher discipline through regulations operates most effectively when structural control is balanced with participatory practices that promote collective responsibility.

Theme 2: Motivation and behavioral control through reward, sanction, and supervision

Theme 2 is supported by two sets of empirical evidence presented in Table 2 (Reward and Sanction Strategies) and Table 3 (Supervision Practices). Each table highlights a distinct but interconnected mechanism through which principals manage teacher discipline.

Table 2. *Reward and sanction strategies supporting teacher discipline*

Sub-Theme	Description	Verbatim Interview Evidence	Informant
Reward system	Disciplined teachers receive recognition	“Teachers who are never absent are mentioned during meetings. This makes others more motivated to be disciplined.”	Teacher (T2)
Non-material rewards	Moral recognition and trust-based roles	“Some teachers are trusted to become activity coordinators because they are disciplined.”	Principal
Gradual sanctions	Sanctions are applied progressively	“First, there is a personal warning. If it continues, a written warning is given.”	Administrative Staff
Fair enforcement	Sanctions are applied proportionally	“The principal always explains the reason before giving sanctions, so it feels fair.”	Teacher (T5)

Table 2 presents findings related to the implementation of reward and sanction mechanisms as instruments for motivating teachers and regulating disciplinary behavior. The data indicate that principals apply rewards as a form of positive reinforcement to acknowledge teachers who consistently demonstrate disciplined behavior, particularly in terms of attendance, punctuality, and professional responsibility.

The findings show that rewards are predominantly non-material in nature, including public recognition during meetings, expressions of appreciation, and trust-based assignments such as leadership roles in school activities. These forms of recognition serve to strengthen teachers’ motivation while simultaneously signaling expected standards of discipline to the wider teaching staff. By highlighting disciplined teachers publicly, principals create informal role models that encourage peer-driven compliance.

In parallel, sanctions are implemented as corrective measures aimed at addressing disciplinary violations. The data reveal that sanctions follow a gradual and proportional pattern, beginning with personal or verbal warnings and escalating to written warnings only when violations persist. This staged approach reflects an emphasis on behavioral correction rather than punishment. Teachers perceive this process as fair when principals communicate the reasons for sanctions clearly and apply them consistently across staff members.

Analytically, the findings suggest that reward and sanction mechanisms function effectively when they are balanced and transparent. Rewards encourage voluntary compliance, while sanctions reinforce boundaries and accountability. Together, these mechanisms contribute to the development of a disciplined professional environment without generating fear or resistance among teachers.

Table 3. *Supervision practices in supporting teacher discipline*

Sub-Theme	Description	Verbatim Interview Evidence	Informant
Attendance monitoring	Supervision through daily attendance checks	“Attendance is checked every day, and the vice principal monitors it directly.”	Administrative Staff
Classroom supervision	Monitoring teaching implementation	“The principal observes classes to see whether teachers follow their schedules and lesson plans.”	Teacher (T3)

Sub-Theme	Description	Verbatim Interview Evidence	Informant
Coaching approach	Supervision as guidance	“Supervision is not meant to punish us, but to remind us of our responsibilities.”	Teacher (T1)
Evaluation meetings	Periodic discipline evaluation	“Teacher discipline is discussed during semester evaluation meetings.”	Principal

Table 3 focuses on supervision practices employed by principals to ensure the consistent implementation of disciplinary standards. The findings indicate that supervision is conducted through routine attendance monitoring, classroom observation, and periodic evaluation meetings.

Attendance monitoring emerges as a daily supervisory practice that reinforces time discipline and accountability. Principals and vice principals regularly check attendance records, either manually or digitally, to ensure that teachers comply with established schedules. This practice signals that discipline is continuously observed rather than enforced only during formal evaluations.

Classroom supervision further supports discipline by monitoring teachers’ adherence to teaching schedules, lesson plans, and instructional responsibilities. Observations are conducted periodically and are followed by feedback, allowing principals to identify disciplinary issues related to instructional practice.

Evaluation meetings provide a formal space for reviewing teachers’ disciplinary performance over a specific period, such as a semester. During these meetings, principals discuss attendance records, supervisory observations, and follow-up actions. Importantly, the findings indicate that supervision is framed as guidance and coaching rather than as surveillance. Teachers perceive supervisory activities as reminders of professional responsibility rather than punitive control.

From an analytical perspective, supervision functions as a mechanism that sustains discipline over time. By combining monitoring, feedback, and evaluation, principals ensure that reward and sanction systems are applied consistently and that disciplinary expectations remain clear. Supervision thus strengthens the effectiveness of motivational and behavioral control strategies by embedding discipline management into routine school practices.

Taken together, Tables 2 and 3 demonstrate that reward–sanction mechanisms and supervision operate as complementary components of a unified discipline management system. While rewards and sanctions regulate behavior through motivation and correction, supervision ensures continuity, consistency, and follow-up. This integration enables principals to balance control and support in managing teacher discipline, directly fulfilling the second aim of the study.

Theme 3: Contextual enablers and constraints in teacher discipline management

Table 4. *Supporting and inhibiting factors affecting teacher discipline management*

Factor Type	Sub-Theme	Verbatim Interview Evidence	Analytical Note
Supporting	Communication	“Problems are discussed openly in meetings, so teachers know what is expected.”	Strengthens responsibility shared

Factor Type	Sub-Theme	Verbatim Interview Evidence	Analytical Note
Supporting	School culture	“Discipline has become a habit because everyone reminds each other.”	Builds collective discipline
Inhibiting	Limited resources	“Not all systems can be digital because facilities are limited.”	Structural constraint
Inhibiting	Teacher participation	“Some teachers are still less active in discipline programs.”	Affects consistency

This theme explains the contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of principal management strategies in improving teacher discipline. As presented in Table 4, the findings identify both supporting and inhibiting factors that shape how discipline management strategies are implemented and sustained in junior high schools in South Aceh. These factors operate at organizational and contextual levels and directly affect the consistency and outcomes of principal management practices.

Supporting factors

The findings indicate that effective communication between principals and teachers is a key enabling factor in teacher discipline management. Open communication channels, such as regular meetings and informal discussions, allow principals to clearly convey disciplinary expectations and address emerging issues promptly. This communication fosters shared understanding and reduces ambiguity regarding professional responsibilities, thereby supporting consistent discipline practices.

A collaborative school culture also emerges as a significant supporting factor. The findings show that when discipline is embedded as a shared norm within the school, teachers are more likely to remind and support one another in maintaining professional conduct. This collective approach reduces reliance on formal sanctions and encourages self-regulation among teachers. Discipline, in this context, becomes part of the school’s everyday work culture rather than an externally imposed control mechanism.

Clear and supportive school policies further strengthen discipline management. Written regulations, supervision guidelines, and evaluation procedures provide principals with a legitimate framework for implementing disciplinary actions. These policies help ensure consistency and fairness, which in turn enhance teachers’ acceptance of discipline management practices.

Inhibiting factors

Despite these enabling conditions, the findings also reveal several constraints that limit the effectiveness of principal management strategies. Limited resources, particularly in relation to infrastructure and monitoring systems, pose significant challenges. For example, not all schools are able to implement digital attendance or supervision systems, which can reduce the efficiency and consistency of discipline monitoring.

Another inhibiting factor is uneven teacher participation in discipline-related initiatives. Some teachers demonstrate lower levels of engagement or commitment to agreed-upon disciplinary standards, which affects the overall consistency of discipline enforcement. This variation in participation makes it more difficult for principals to apply management strategies uniformly and can weaken collective discipline norms.

Analytical interpretation

Analytically, these findings demonstrate that the success of principal management strategies depends not only on managerial competence but also on contextual conditions within the school environment. Supporting factors such as communication, school culture, and policy clarity enhance the effectiveness of discipline management, while resource limitations and variable teacher participation constrain its sustainability. This theme highlights that discipline management is a context-sensitive process that requires principals to adapt strategies to organizational realities. By identifying these supporting and inhibiting factors, the findings directly address the third aim of the study and provide a comprehensive understanding of the conditions under which teacher discipline management can be effectively implemented.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine how principal management strategies contribute to improving teacher discipline in junior high schools in South Aceh. The findings demonstrate that teacher discipline is shaped through an integrated management approach encompassing regulation-based management, reward–sanction systems combined with supervision, and context-sensitive leadership practices. This section discusses these findings in relation to existing literature and highlights their theoretical and practical implications.

Regulation-based management as a structural foundation for teacher discipline

The findings indicate that clearly formulated and consistently enforced regulations serve as a fundamental mechanism for strengthening teacher discipline. This result supports previous studies emphasizing that discipline is more effectively sustained when institutional rules provide clear behavioral boundaries and professional expectations (Pisriwati et al., 2024; Turnadi et al., 2021). However, the present study extends existing literature by demonstrating that the *process* of regulation formulation is as important as the regulations themselves.

While prior research often focuses on regulatory enforcement as a managerial function (Indajang et al., 2021; Hamka, 2023), the findings of this study show that participatory regulation—where teachers are involved in rule-making—enhances acceptance and internalization of discipline norms. This suggests that discipline is not solely the result of external control but also emerges from shared organizational values. In this sense, principal management operates not only as an administrative mechanism but also as a cultural process that aligns institutional rules with teachers' professional identity.

Reward, sanction, and supervision as integrated discipline management mechanisms

The findings further reveal that reward–sanction systems and supervision function as complementary mechanisms for reinforcing teacher discipline. This aligns with previous studies indicating that balanced reinforcement strategies contribute to improved teacher performance and discipline (Putriningsih et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2025). Rewards motivate disciplined behavior

through positive reinforcement, while sanctions establish clear consequences for violations, ensuring accountability.

Notably, this study highlights the importance of proportional and transparent sanctions, supporting arguments by [Saldanha et al. \(2022\)](#) that fairness and clarity are essential to maintaining trust in institutional governance. Unlike studies that portray sanctions as punitive tools, the present findings suggest that sanctions are perceived as corrective when accompanied by explanation and guidance. This reinforces the view that effective discipline management relies on ethical leadership rather than authoritarian control.

Supervision plays a critical role in sustaining these mechanisms over time. Consistent with [Imamah and Churrahman \(2022\)](#), the findings show that supervision strengthens discipline when it is conducted as coaching and professional guidance. The emphasis on humanistic supervision observed in this study extends earlier research by demonstrating that supervision can simultaneously serve monitoring and developmental functions. Thus, principal management integrates control and support, fostering discipline while promoting professional growth.

Contextual enablers and constraints in discipline management

The findings also indicate that the effectiveness of principal management strategies is shaped by contextual factors such as communication, school culture, resource availability, and teacher participation. This supports prior research emphasizing that leadership effectiveness is context-dependent ([Duhoe & Segbefia, 2023](#); [Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021](#)). Open communication and collaborative culture strengthen collective responsibility for discipline, reducing reliance on formal sanctions.

Conversely, limited resources and uneven teacher participation constrain the sustainability of discipline management. This finding resonates with studies highlighting challenges faced by schools in resource-limited and geographically remote contexts ([Habibulloh et al., 2024](#)). The present study contributes to the literature by showing how principals adapt discipline strategies to contextual realities, balancing formal regulation with interpersonal engagement. Theoretically, this study contributes to educational leadership literature by framing teacher discipline as an outcome of integrated principal management rather than leadership style alone. By combining managerial functions, motivational strategies, and contextual adaptation, the study advances a holistic understanding of discipline management in secondary education. Practically, the findings suggest that principals should adopt participatory regulation, fair reward–sanction systems, and humanistic supervision to foster sustainable teacher discipline. Policymakers and educational authorities are encouraged to support principals through leadership development programs that emphasize ethical management, communication skills, and contextual responsiveness, particularly in resource-constrained settings.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that principal management plays a decisive role in improving teacher discipline in junior high schools in South Aceh through an integrated and context-sensitive approach. Teacher discipline is not achieved solely through the enforcement of formal rules but emerges from the systematic interaction of regulation-based management, balanced reward–sanction mechanisms, and continuous supervision implemented as professional guidance.

The findings demonstrate that clear and consistently enforced regulations provide a structural foundation for discipline, particularly in relation to attendance, instructional

administration, and professional conduct. However, discipline becomes more sustainable when teachers are involved in the formulation and socialization of these regulations, as participatory processes foster ownership and internalization of professional norms. This indicates that effective discipline management extends beyond administrative control to encompass shared organizational values.

Furthermore, the study shows that reward–sanction systems and supervision function as complementary mechanisms that reinforce disciplined behavior. Rewards serve as motivational instruments that encourage compliance and professional responsibility, while proportional and transparent sanctions establish accountability without generating resistance. Supervision, when framed as coaching rather than surveillance, strengthens teachers’ awareness of discipline and supports continuous professional improvement.

The effectiveness of these management strategies is influenced by contextual conditions within the school environment. Supportive communication, collaborative school culture, and clear policy frameworks enhance the implementation of discipline management, whereas limited resources and uneven teacher participation constrain its sustainability. These findings highlight that principal management strategies must be adaptive and responsive to local school realities, particularly in resource-constrained and geographically challenging contexts.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of teacher discipline by positioning it as an outcome of integrated principal management rather than leadership style alone. Practically, the findings suggest that school principals should balance managerial consistency with participatory and humanistic leadership practices to foster sustainable teacher discipline. Future research is encouraged to extend this inquiry to broader contexts, employ longitudinal or mixed-methods designs, and explore perspectives from additional stakeholders to deepen understanding of discipline management in secondary education.

Based on the findings, school principals are recommended to manage teacher discipline through an integrated approach that combines clear regulations, fair reward–sanction systems, and continuous supervision framed as professional coaching. Involving teachers in the formulation of disciplinary rules is encouraged to strengthen ownership and internalization of discipline norms.

Educational authorities should support principals through leadership development programs and adequate policy frameworks, particularly for schools in resource-constrained contexts. Future research is recommended to involve broader contexts, larger samples, and longitudinal or mixed-methods designs to examine the sustainability of discipline management practices.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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