Cultivating Disciplinary Character Through Structured Assignment Management: A Comparative Case Study in Elementary Education

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Abstract
Discipline formation in elementary education faces challenges from inadequate instructional planning, limited parental involvement, and adverse socioeconomic conditions. This study examines the effectiveness of structured assignment management through the POAC (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling) framework in cultivating disciplinary character among elementary students. A qualitative case study was conducted at two elementary schools in West Jakarta involving school principals (n=2), teachers (n=8), and students (n=24). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, systematic observations, and documentary analysis, then analyzed inductively with triangulation procedures to ensure credibility. Findings revealed significant implementation variations between schools. Comprehensive POAC application—characterized by systematic planning, coordinated organization, consistent execution, and rigorous evaluation—effectively enhanced student discipline, manifested through improved assignment completion rates, punctuality, and rule compliance. Conversely, partial implementation yielded suboptimal outcomes. Unexpectedly, institutional support mechanisms partially compensated for socioeconomic disadvantages when systematically delivered. Structured assignment management operationalized through POAC constitutes an effective strategy for disciplinary character development, with implementation fidelity determining intervention success. Findings contribute empirical evidence bridging educational management theory and character education practice, informing policy regarding resource allocation, professional development, and family-school partnerships necessary for sustained disciplinary cultivation.

INTRODUCTION

Education serves as a fundamental pillar in advancing national civilization and preparing future generations to face increasingly complex societal challenges (Tang et al., 2023; Harahap, 2024). In the contemporary era of globalization, Indonesian education confronts multifaceted obstacles characterized by profound social diversity, potential intercultural conflicts, and escalating moral deviance across various demographic segments (Zai et al., 2024). These circumstances necessitate systematic and comprehensive efforts to instill character values from early childhood, ensuring that students develop not merely academic excellence but also moral integrity, disciplined behavior, and robust social responsibility (Sasana, 2025; Safitri , 2018). The prevalence of moral deviations among children, adolescents, and adults underscores the critical importance of strengthening character formation from the foundational stages of education, encompassing family environments, educational institutions, and broader community contexts (Tilaar, 2012).

The Indonesian government has demonstrated institutional commitment to addressing these challenges through regulatory frameworks, notably Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which explicitly mandates that education must cultivate individuals who embody faith, devotion, discipline, and social accountability. This legislative foundation has been further

reinforced through Permendikbud Number 23 of 2025 concerning Character Building and Permendikbud Number 20 of 2018 concerning Strengthening Character Education, both emphasizing the imperative of embedding character values through systematic, structured, and continuous pedagogical approaches within educational institutions (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020; Faizah, 2025). Among the core character traits requiring cultivation from early educational stages, discipline emerges as paramount due to its intrinsic correlation with academic achievement, personality development, and readiness to navigate future challenges (Lickona, 2014; Baumann & Krskova, 2016). Despite this policy emphasis, the practical implementation of disciplinary enhancement initiatives continues to encounter substantial obstacles that impede their effectiveness.

Empirical observations at SDN Tanah Sereal 01 and SDN Tanah Sereal 02 in West Jakarta revealed three fundamental impediments to effective character education implementation. First, inadequate instructional planning fails to support structured assignment programs, resulting in frequent delays in task submission and the non-achievement of learning objectives. Second, students demonstrate insufficient awareness regarding the significance of learning, manifested through diminished interest, minimal test preparation, and academic dishonesty behaviors. Third, limited parental cooperation, evidenced by chronic tardiness, rule violations, and absenteeism, further compounds these challenges. Qualitative interviews with students and educators indicated that socioeconomic factors specific to the Tambora area of West Jakarta significantly influence educational outcomes (Vadivel, 2023; Sirin, 2005). Population density, constrained learning spaces, reduced parental supervision due to economic pressures, and elevated community mobility collectively contribute to compromised educational quality, with research demonstrating that family socioeconomic status represents one of the most robust predictors of academic achievement across international contexts (Banerjee, 2016; Mulyasa, 2017). Consequently, character knowledge remains inadequately internalized within students' behavioral repertoires, despite recognition that all school activities play instrumental roles in character formation.

Existing literature on character education has extensively documented various pedagogical strategies, including values clarification (Lickona, 2014), social learning theory applications (Bandura, 1997), and cognitive-developmental approaches (Piaget, 1972). However, a critical knowledge gap persists regarding the systematic application of management principles to structure learning tasks specifically for disciplinary character development in elementary education contexts. While educational management theories have been well-established, their practical integration with structured assignment methodologies remains underexplored, particularly within the unique socioeconomic landscape of urban Indonesian elementary schools (Bhakti, 2017). Furthermore, limited empirical evidence exists concerning how the POAC (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling) management framework can be operationalized to foster discipline through assignment management systems, despite recognition of POAC's effectiveness in enhancing educational coordination and monitoring mechanisms (Anugrah et al., 2025; Rosa & Hidayat, 2019). This research addresses these gaps by investigating the implementation and effectiveness of structured assignment management as a mechanism for cultivating disciplinary character among elementary school students.

Elementary schools occupy a strategically pivotal position as the initial formal educational tier responsible for establishing disciplinary culture (Muttaqin, 2020). One viable solution lies in structured assignment management, defined as the systematic administration of student tasks through clearly delineated schedules, focused objectives, measurable outcomes, and consistent supervisory mechanisms. This strategic approach cultivates responsibility, autonomy, and habitual discipline among students (Bhakti, 2017; Wibowo, 2019). The primary objective of this research is to implement and critically examine the effectiveness of structured assignment management in cultivating disciplinary character among elementary school students through the POAC management framework. Specifically, this study seeks to analyze the planning, organization, implementation, and supervisory dimensions of structured assignment programs and their respective contributions to discipline formation. The findings are anticipated to yield substantial contributions to national education policy

discourse, particularly in producing students who demonstrate both academic competence and exemplary disciplinary character. Furthermore, this research aims to provide actionable recommendations for educational practitioners seeking to integrate management principles with character education initiatives, thereby advancing the theoretical understanding of how systematic assignment structures can serve as effective vehicles for character development in elementary education contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study methodology with a descriptive approach to investigate the implementation and effectiveness of structured assignment management in cultivating disciplinary character among elementary school students. Case study methodology was selected as it enables researchers to conduct intensive, holistic examinations of contemporary phenomena within their real-world contexts, particularly when boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly delineated (Yin, 2014; Stake, 1995). This methodological approach proved particularly appropriate for exploring the complex interrelationships among structured assignments, student discipline, teacher practices, and institutional management processes in their natural educational settings (Creswell, 2013; Hyett et al., 2014).

The research was conducted at two purposively selected elementary schools in West Jakarta: SDN Tanah Sereal 01 and SDN Tanah Sereal 02. These institutions were chosen based on specific criteria including their active implementation of structured assignment programs, geographical proximity facilitating comprehensive data collection, institutional willingness to provide unrestricted research access, and their representativeness of urban elementary schools facing socioeconomic challenges in the Tambora area. The research participants comprised school principals (n=2), classroom teachers (n=8), and students from grades 4-6 (n=24), selected through purposive sampling to ensure information-rich cases that could illuminate the research questions comprehensively (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002).

Data collection employed multiple methods to ensure comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon. Primary data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, and students to capture diverse perspectives on structured assignment implementation and its impact on discipline formation. Systematic non-participant observations were conducted during classroom instruction, assignment distribution processes, and supervisory activities to document actual practices and student behaviors in naturalistic settings. Documentary analysis of school policies, assignment schedules, student work samples, and assessment records provided contextual information and triangulation sources. This multi-method approach aligned with established qualitative research protocols emphasizing the necessity of diverse data sources in case study investigations (Stake, 1995; Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Data validity and credibility were established through methodological triangulation, combining multiple data collection techniques (interviews, observations, and documentation) to cross-validate findings and enhance trustworthiness (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Patton, 2015). Source triangulation was achieved by gathering information from different stakeholder groups (administrators, teachers, and students) to compare and corroborate perspectives. Time triangulation involved collecting data across different periods throughout the academic semester to capture temporal variations and developmental patterns. Member checking procedures were implemented whereby participants reviewed preliminary findings to verify accuracy and provide clarifications, thereby strengthening the study's credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Candela, 2019).

Data analysis followed an inductive approach characteristic of qualitative inquiry, wherein specific observations were systematically coded and categorized to generate broader patterns and themes (Merriam, 2009; Sugiyono, 2018). The analytical process involved open coding of raw data, axial coding to identify relationships among categories, and selective coding to develop overarching themes related to structured assignment management and disciplinary character development. This

iterative analytical procedure enabled the emergence of findings grounded in empirical data while maintaining theoretical sensitivity to relevant educational management and character education frameworks. The entire research process adhered to ethical principles including informed consent, confidentiality assurance, and voluntary participation, ensuring protection of participants' rights and dignity throughout the investigation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

The findings of this study reveal critical insights into the implementation of structured assignment management across two elementary schools in West Jakarta, highlighting both the successes and challenges encountered in fostering disciplinary character among students. Student discipline emerged as a fundamental yet complex construct influenced by multifaceted internal and external factors. Internal factors identified through systematic observations and interviews included students' insufficient awareness regarding the significance of disciplinary behaviors, manifested through chronic tardiness, rule violations, delayed assignment completion, and academic dishonesty practices. These behavioral patterns suggested that discipline had not been adequately internalized as an integral component of students' self-regulatory systems, aligning with contemporary research indicating that self-awareness and intrinsic motivation constitute essential prerequisites for disciplinary development (Thompson et al., 2025).

External factors contributing to disciplinary challenges proved equally significant, encompassing inadequate instructional planning, limited school-family partnerships, and adverse socioeconomic environmental conditions characteristic of the Tambora area. Interviews with educators revealed that inconsistent learning schedules and insufficiently structured assignment protocols impeded the establishment of predictable routines necessary for habit formation. Furthermore, parental involvement—widely recognized as a critical determinant of student discipline and homework completion (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Li et al., 2024)—remained suboptimal in many cases due to economic pressures requiring extensive parental work commitments. This finding resonates with international research demonstrating that family socioeconomic status significantly predicts both academic achievement and behavioral outcomes (Sirin, 2005; Banerjee, 2016). An unexpected finding emerged regarding the differential impact of socioeconomic constraints: while resource limitations negatively affected learning facilities and parental availability, they simultaneously fostered resilience and adaptive problem-solving capacities among certain students, particularly when teachers provided compensatory support and encouragement. This nuanced outcome suggests that socioeconomic adversity's effects are mediated by institutional support mechanisms, opening new perspectives on educational equity interventions.

To systematically compare implementation effectiveness across research sites, Table 1 presents a comprehensive analysis of structured assignment management practices through the POAC framework. The comparative data illuminate substantial variations in implementation quality and organizational capacity between the two schools, providing empirical evidence for the differential outcomes observed in disciplinary character development.

The comparative analysis presented in Table 1 demonstrates that SDN Tanah Sereal 01 implemented a substantially more systematic and comprehensive approach to structured assignment management, characterized by robust planning, coordinated organization, consistent execution, and rigorous evaluation. Conversely, SDN Tanah Sereal 02 exhibited implementation gaps across all POAC dimensions, particularly in organizational coordination and supervisory consistency. These differences manifested in observable variations in student disciplinary behaviors, with SDN Tanah Sereal 01 students demonstrating superior assignment completion rates, punctuality, and rule compliance compared to their counterparts at SDN Tanah Sereal 02. This finding corroborates research linking systematic management approaches to enhanced educational outcomes (Anugrah et al., 2025) while

highlighting that POAC framework effectiveness depends critically on comprehensive implementation rather than partial adoption.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Structured Assignment Management Implementation Using POAC Framework

POAC Component	SDN Tanah Sereal 01	SDN Tanah Sereal 02
Planning	Comprehensive routine assignment program incorporating daily and weekly schedules; clearly articulated objectives aligned with character education goals; adequate resource allocation including technological tools (digital scheduling systems, assignment tracking applications); systematic needs assessment procedures considering student abilities and socioeconomic contexts.	Basic assignment program with limited variation and inadequate differentiation; insufficient alignment between assignment design and character development objectives; constrained resources including outdated materials and limited technological infrastructure; minimal systematic planning protocols resulting in ad hoc assignment distribution.
Organizing	Equitable task distribution among teaching staff; effective coordination mechanisms including regular pedagogical meetings; integrated support systems connecting classroom teachers, homeroom teachers, and parents; well-maintained facilities supporting structured assignment implementation; clear role delineation and accountability structures.	Uneven workload distribution creating teacher burnout and inconsistency; suboptimal inter-teacher coordination limiting collaborative approaches; fragmented communication channels between school and families; inadequate facility maintenance affecting program sustainability; ambiguous role definitions reducing organizational efficiency.
Actuating	Consistent assignment delivery with predictable routines facilitating habit formation; explicit communication of expectations and deadlines; regular motivational strategies including verbal praise, symbolic recognition, and achievement celebrations; adaptive instruction responding to individual student needs; sustained teacher-student engagement fostering trust and accountability.	Inconsistent assignment implementation undermining routine establishment; unclear expectations causing student confusion; minimal motivational reinforcement resulting in reduced engagement; limited instructional adaptation to diverse student needs; sporadic teacher-student interactions insufficient for relationship building necessary for discipline development.
Controlling/ Evaluation	Daily monitoring through systematic assignment checking; constructive feedback provided both formatively and summatively; balanced application of sanctions (logical consequences) and rewards (recognition systems); transparent evaluation criteria communicated to students and parents; data-driven adjustments to instructional strategies based on evaluation outcomes; regular parent communication regarding student progress.	Irregular monitoring lacking systematic procedures; perfunctory feedback insufficient for guiding improvement; sanctions implemented without corresponding reward structures; opaque evaluation criteria generating student anxiety; limited data utilization for instructional refinement; infrequent parent communication hindering home-school continuity.

Note: Data derived from classroom observations, teacher interviews, document analysis, and student focus groups conducted throughout the 2024-2025 academic semester.

Discussion

The findings of this study affirm that structured assignment management, when implemented systematically through the POAC framework, constitutes an effective mechanism for cultivating disciplinary character among elementary school students, thereby addressing the research objective. This conclusion aligns with educational management theory emphasizing that systematic planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation are essential for achieving instructional goals (Fattah, 2008). More specifically, the differential outcomes between the two research sites provide empirical evidence that implementation quality—rather than mere programmatic existence—determines intervention effectiveness, supporting contemporary research on educational program fidelity (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). The superior disciplinary outcomes at SDN Tanah Sereal 01 can be attributed to the school's comprehensive application of each POAC component, creating an integrated system wherein

planning informed organization, organization enabled effective actuation, and controlling mechanisms provided feedback for continuous improvement.

The planning dimension proved foundational for program success, as evidenced by SDN Tanah Sereal 01's strategic approach to assignment design. By incorporating clear objectives, differentiated tasks accommodating diverse learner abilities, and realistic deadlines, teachers created conditions conducive to discipline development through achievable challenges rather than overwhelming demands. This finding resonates with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and contemporary research on homework effectiveness, which demonstrates that well-designed assignments promoting autonomy and competence foster intrinsic motivation and persistence (Dettmers et al., 2010; Xu, 2018). Conversely, the ad hoc planning observed at SDN Tanah Sereal 02 generated confusion and inconsistency, undermining habit formation—a critical mechanism for discipline development emphasized by behaviorist learning theories (Skinner, 1953) and character education frameworks (Lickona, 2014). The unexpected resilience exhibited by some students from disadvantaged backgrounds at SDN Tanah Sereal 01 suggests that systematic instructional support can partially compensate for socioeconomic constraints, challenging deficit-oriented perspectives that view poverty primarily as an impediment rather than recognizing potential protective factors including compensatory institutional mechanisms.

Organizational coordination emerged as a critical mediating factor linking planning to implementation. SDN Tanah Sereal 01's integrated approach—involving classroom teachers, homeroom teachers, administrative staff, and parents in coordinated efforts—exemplifies the collaborative structures necessary for sustained behavioral change. This finding supports family-school partnership research demonstrating that coordinated home-school efforts yield superior outcomes compared to isolated interventions (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Hill & Tyson, 2009). However, the quality of parental involvement requires nuanced consideration, as international meta-analyses reveal that not all forms of parental homework assistance benefit children equally. Intrusive or controlling parental involvement can undermine student autonomy and achievement (Patall et al., 2008; Dumont et al., 2014; Núñez et al., 2015), whereas autonomy-supportive involvement characterized by encouragement, resource provision, and emotional support enhances both motivation and performance (Gonida & Cortina, 2014; Li et al., 2024). The present study's findings align with this literature, as effective parental involvement at SDN Tanah Sereal 01 emphasized monitoring and encouragement rather than controlling supervision, facilitating rather than supplanting student responsibility.

The actuating and controlling dimensions proved inseparable in practice, with consistent implementation and systematic evaluation forming a mutually reinforcing cycle. SDN Tanah Sereal 01's balanced use of extrinsic motivators (praise, symbolic rewards) and logical consequences (sanctions) gradually fostered intrinsic discipline as students internalized behavioral expectations through repeated practice and reinforcement. This progression from external regulation to self-regulation reflects developmental trajectories described in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997) and moral development frameworks (Piaget, 1972). The provision of constructive feedback—emphasizing process as well as product—enabled students to identify improvement strategies, supporting metacognitive development essential for self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2002). These findings extend previous research by demonstrating how POAC-based management operationalizes theoretical principles from behaviorism, social learning theory, and constructivism into coherent instructional practices, addressing the identified knowledge gap regarding practical integration of management frameworks with character education methodologies.

Despite these promising findings, several limitations warrant consideration. The study's focus on two schools within a specific urban context limits generalizability to diverse educational settings, particularly rural or better-resourced schools where implementation conditions differ substantially. The cross-sectional data collection, while incorporating temporal triangulation, cannot definitively establish causal relationships between structured assignment management and disciplinary outcomes;

longitudinal designs would strengthen causal inference. Additionally, while triangulation enhanced validity, reliance on qualitative data means findings reflect interpretive rather than quantitative assessments of disciplinary improvement. Future research should employ mixed-methods approaches incorporating standardized behavioral assessments, extend investigations to diverse contexts, and examine long-term effects on character development beyond elementary years.

Theoretical implications include validation of POAC framework applicability to character education domains, demonstrating that management principles transcend administrative contexts to inform pedagogical practices directly influencing student development. Practically, findings suggest that effective discipline cultivation requires comprehensive systemic approaches rather than isolated interventions, emphasizing professional development supporting teachers' capacity to systematically design, implement, and evaluate structured assignments. Educational policymakers should prioritize resource allocation enabling systematic implementation, including technological infrastructure, planning time, and ongoing professional learning opportunities. Most significantly, this research illuminates structured assignments' dual function as both academic tools and character development vehicles, challenging artificial distinctions between cognitive and affective educational objectives while advancing understanding of how systematic task management serves as effective scaffolding for internalized self-discipline essential for lifelong learning and citizenship.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that structured assignment management, operationalized through the POAC (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling) framework, constitutes an effective pedagogical strategy for cultivating disciplinary character among elementary school students. The research contributes to educational management literature by providing empirical evidence bridging the gap between management theory and character education practice, specifically demonstrating how systematic task administration serves as a vehicle for internalizing self-regulatory behaviors essential for academic success and moral development. The comparative analysis revealed that implementation fidelity—characterized by comprehensive planning, coordinated organization, consistent execution, and systematic evaluation—determines intervention effectiveness more significantly than programmatic existence alone. These findings carry important theoretical implications for understanding discipline formation as a developmental process requiring sustained, systematic scaffolding rather than sporadic interventions. Practically, results inform educational policy by emphasizing the necessity of institutional support systems enabling teachers to design, implement, and monitor structured assignments effectively, including adequate resources, professional development opportunities, and family-school partnership mechanisms. However, several limitations constrain generalizability, including the study's focus on urban contexts, reliance on qualitative methodologies, and cross-sectional design precluding causal inference. Future research should employ mixed-methods longitudinal designs examining sustained effects across diverse educational settings, investigate moderating variables influencing implementation success, and explore technology-enhanced assignment management systems' potential for scaling effective practices. Ultimately, this research affirms that structured assignments function dually as academic tools and character development instruments, challenging false dichotomies between cognitive and affective educational objectives while advancing understanding of systematic pedagogical approaches fostering disciplined, responsible, and self-regulated learners prepared for lifelong success.

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