



Teachers' Strategies for Fostering Student Discipline Character in Islamic Primary Education During Emergency Remote Learning: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to explore teachers' strategies in fostering students' discipline character within Islamic primary education during emergency remote learning. The abrupt transition from face-to-face instruction to distance learning created significant challenges for character education, particularly in maintaining student discipline, which traditionally relies on direct supervision and daily routines. This research seeks to understand how teachers adapted their pedagogical practices to sustain discipline character formation under constrained learning conditions.

Methods: A qualitative research design was employed using a descriptive approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom-related documentation, and observations adapted to the remote learning context. Participants consisted of Islamic primary school teachers who were actively involved in distance learning implementation during the emergency period. Data analysis followed an interactive model involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to ensure credibility and analytical rigor.

Findings: The findings reveal that teachers implemented a combination of instructional, behavioral, and communicative strategies to foster discipline character. These strategies included structured online routines, integration of discipline values into learning materials, continuous monitoring through digital communication platforms, and collaboration with parents as co-educators at home. Despite technological and environmental limitations, teachers demonstrated adaptive practices that helped sustain students' discipline, although inconsistencies in student participation and parental support remained significant challenges.

Significance: This study contributes to contemporary educational discourse by highlighting the role of adaptive teacher strategies in character education during crisis-driven remote learning. The findings provide practical insights for educators and policymakers on sustaining discipline character in emergency contexts, particularly within value-based educational settings. The study also extends discussions on character education by situating it within the realities of emergency remote learning, offering implications for future resilient and inclusive educational practices.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid transition to emergency remote learning has significantly transformed educational practices across the world, particularly in contexts where schooling traditionally relies on direct supervision and face-to-face interaction. Character education, especially discipline character, has been widely recognized as a foundational component of primary education because it shapes students' learning habits, moral development, and social responsibility. However, the implementation of discipline character education becomes increasingly complex when learning activities shift to remote settings that limit teachers' control

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over students' daily routines. Several studies have emphasized that discipline is not merely a behavioral outcome but a continuous process fostered through structured interaction, modeling, and reinforcement within school culture (Hasanah et al., 2024). In emergency learning contexts, these mechanisms are often disrupted, raising concerns about the sustainability of character education practices. Teachers are therefore required to redesign instructional and managerial strategies to maintain discipline beyond the physical classroom. This situation highlights the urgency of examining how teachers adapt their roles in fostering discipline character during crisis-driven educational disruption. Understanding these adaptive practices is essential for strengthening character education in contemporary educational systems.

Islamic primary education presents a distinctive context for character education because moral and disciplinary values are deeply embedded within religious teachings and daily school practices. Previous research has shown that Islamic schools emphasize discipline as part of religious observance, social ethics, and personal responsibility (Akhyar et al., 2024; Islamic et al., 2024). During emergency remote learning, however, the integration of religious values into instructional practices faces substantial challenges due to reduced interaction and reliance on digital platforms. Teachers must negotiate between academic demands, moral instruction, and parental involvement within students' home environments. Studies conducted in Indonesian Islamic schools suggest that teacher identity and institutional culture play a critical role in sustaining character education under changing conditions (Rahman & Azzahra, 2024; Rochim & Khayati, 2022). Despite this recognition, empirical evidence focusing specifically on discipline character during emergency remote learning remains limited. Many existing studies address character education in normal classroom settings rather than crisis situations. Consequently, investigating teachers' strategies in Islamic primary education during emergency remote learning is both timely and academically significant.

The rationale of this study is grounded in the growing need to understand how teachers respond to unprecedented educational disruptions while maintaining essential educational values. Emergency remote learning differs fundamentally from planned online education because it is implemented abruptly, often without sufficient preparation, infrastructure, or pedagogical adjustment. In such contexts, teachers are not only instructors but also mediators between institutional expectations and home-based learning environments. Prior research has indicated that teacher-led character education strategies are highly context-dependent and shaped by institutional norms, parental engagement, and cultural values (Kucera et al., 2025, Pandis 2025). However, limited attention has been given to how these strategies are reconfigured during emergency conditions. This study is therefore motivated by the need to capture teachers' lived experiences and adaptive practices in fostering discipline character when conventional disciplinary structures are weakened. By focusing on Islamic primary education, the study also addresses value-based education settings that are underrepresented in international discourse. The findings are expected to inform both theory and practice by illuminating how character education can remain resilient during educational crises.

Previous studies on character education have consistently highlighted the central role of teachers in shaping students' moral and disciplinary development. Aningsih et al., (2022) demonstrated that character education in Indonesian elementary schools is most effective when integrated into daily learning routines and supported by consistent teacher modeling. Similarly, Arifuddin et al., (2023) emphasized that early character formation requires structured guidance and continuous reinforcement, particularly for discipline-related behaviors. Research conducted

by Ikhrām et al., (2023) in Islamic traditional schools further revealed that discipline character is closely linked to religious practices and institutional culture. Tohirin et al., (2025) explored teachers' narratives and found that moral instruction is often shaped by teachers' personal beliefs and professional realities. These studies collectively suggest that discipline character education is a dynamic process influenced by pedagogical, cultural, and institutional factors. However, most of these investigations were conducted in face-to-face learning environments. As a result, their findings may not fully capture the complexities introduced by emergency remote learning. This limitation underscores the need for context-specific research.

More recent studies have begun to examine character education within broader social and technological contexts. Kotten et al., (2025) highlighted the importance of teacher identity and institutional transformation in culturally embedded character education practices. Nizariah et al., (2025) demonstrated that community-based initiatives can support character development when formal schooling faces limitations. Tadege et al., (2022) provided evidence that teachers' values and beliefs significantly influence how character education is enacted under constrained conditions. Herman et al., (2024) examined disciplinary practices from an Islamic law perspective, revealing tensions between normative expectations and practical implementation. Cavaletto & Miglietta, (2024) showed that cooperative learning environments can enhance character-related outcomes beyond formal classroom instruction. Although these studies contribute valuable insights, they do not specifically address how discipline character is fostered during emergency remote learning at the primary level. Therefore, there remains a lack of empirical understanding regarding teacher strategies in this unique educational context.

Despite the growing body of literature on character education and teacher strategies, several critical gaps remain. First, most existing studies focus on character education in stable, face-to-face learning environments rather than crisis-driven remote learning situations. Second, research addressing discipline character often treats it as a general outcome without examining the specific strategies teachers employ to sustain it under constrained conditions. Third, studies situated within Islamic primary education contexts tend to emphasize religious values broadly, leaving discipline character underexplored as a distinct construct. Fourth, the voices and experiences of teachers navigating emergency remote learning remain insufficiently documented. Finally, limited research integrates pedagogical, communicative, and parental collaboration strategies within a single analytical framework. These gaps indicate the need for a qualitative investigation that foregrounds teachers' adaptive strategies in fostering discipline character during emergency remote learning.

The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze teachers' strategies for fostering students' discipline character in Islamic primary education during emergency remote learning. This research seeks to identify the instructional, behavioral, and communicative approaches employed by teachers under constrained learning conditions. It aims to examine how teachers integrate discipline values into remote learning practices while managing limited supervision and varied home environments. The study also investigates the role of parental collaboration in supporting discipline character formation. By adopting a qualitative approach, this research captures teachers' perspectives and lived experiences in navigating emergency educational contexts. The findings are expected to contribute to contemporary discussions on character education resilience. Additionally, the study provides practical insights for educators and policymakers seeking to strengthen discipline character in future emergency learning scenarios.

Ultimately, this research enhances understanding of value-based education within rapidly changing educational landscapes.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach to explore teachers' strategies in fostering student discipline character during emergency remote learning. A qualitative design was selected because the research aimed to understand teachers' experiences, perceptions, and adaptive practices within a specific educational context. Qualitative inquiry is appropriate for examining complex social and pedagogical phenomena that cannot be adequately captured through numerical data alone (Lim, 2025; Mulisa, 2022). The descriptive orientation allowed the study to present participants' perspectives in a naturalistic and contextualized manner. Emergency remote learning constitutes an atypical educational situation that requires in-depth exploration rather than hypothesis testing. This design enabled the researcher to capture how discipline character was negotiated and enacted under constrained conditions. The study was conducted within Islamic primary education to reflect value-based instructional settings. Overall, the research design aligned with the study's objective of generating contextual and practice-oriented insights.

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of Islamic primary school teachers who were actively involved in implementing emergency remote learning. Teachers were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that participants had direct experience in managing discipline character during remote instruction. This sampling strategy is commonly used in qualitative research to obtain information-rich cases relevant to the research focus (Chepp, 2024; Villamin et al., 2025). The participants represented varying teaching experiences and responsibilities within the school context. All participants had engaged in remote teaching for an extended period during the emergency learning phase. Their involvement provided insights into instructional decision-making and character education practices beyond formal classroom supervision. Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining informed consent prior to data collection. Participant anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process.

Instrument

Data were collected using semi-structured interview guides, document analysis, and observational notes adapted to the remote learning context. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore teachers' strategies, challenges, and reflections related to discipline character education. This instrument allowed flexibility while ensuring that core research themes were consistently addressed (Basak & Das, 2025; El-Emam et al., 2024). Supporting documents, such as lesson plans, communication records, and school guidelines, were analyzed to triangulate interview data. Observational notes focused on teacher–student interactions mediated through digital platforms. The combination of instruments enhanced data credibility through methodological triangulation (Dzwigol, 2022; Schlunegger et al., 2024). The interview guide was developed based on the study objectives and relevant literature on character education. All instruments were reviewed to ensure clarity and alignment with the research focus.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis followed an interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. This analytical framework enabled systematic interpretation of qualitative data while maintaining analytical rigor (Felner & Henderson, 2022; Harley & Cornelissen, 2022). Interview transcripts and documents were coded to identify recurring patterns related to discipline character strategies. Codes were then grouped into categories representing instructional, behavioral, and communicative approaches. Data displays, including matrices and thematic tables, were used to organize and compare findings across participants. Conclusions were drawn through iterative reflection and constant comparison of emerging themes. To enhance trustworthiness, member checking and peer debriefing were conducted during the analysis process. This analytical approach ensured that findings were grounded in participants' perspectives and supported by empirical evidence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results indicate that teachers employed structured instructional strategies to foster students' discipline character during emergency remote learning. Teachers consistently designed clear daily schedules and learning routines to maintain students' sense of responsibility. Discipline values were embedded within lesson objectives and learning instructions delivered through digital platforms. Teachers emphasized punctuality in online attendance and timely submission of assignments as indicators of discipline. These routines functioned as substitutes for face-to-face classroom control that was absent during remote learning. Despite technological limitations, teachers reported that structured routines helped reduce student disengagement. However, the effectiveness of these strategies varied depending on students' access to devices and internet connectivity. Overall, instructional structuring emerged as a foundational strategy in sustaining discipline character.

Behavioral monitoring strategies were also identified as central to discipline character formation during emergency remote learning. Teachers monitored student behavior through regular online check-ins and digital communication channels. Feedback was provided promptly to reinforce disciplined behavior and correct rule violations. Teachers reported using reminders and warnings rather than punitive measures due to limited authority in home settings. This approach reflected a shift from direct discipline enforcement to persuasive behavioral guidance. Some teachers also used reward-based strategies, such as verbal appreciation, to motivate disciplined participation. Nevertheless, inconsistent student responsiveness remained a challenge. These findings demonstrate that behavioral discipline during remote learning relied heavily on communication and trust rather than physical supervision.

Parental involvement emerged as a crucial supporting factor in fostering student discipline character. Teachers actively communicated with parents to align expectations regarding learning schedules and behavioral rules. Parents were encouraged to supervise learning activities and reinforce discipline at home. Teachers noted that discipline character was more consistently maintained when parents actively collaborated. Conversely, limited parental engagement often resulted in irregular student participation. This reliance on parents transformed discipline education into a shared responsibility between school and family. Teachers acknowledged that not all parents possessed equal capacity to support learning at home. As a result, discipline outcomes varied across students based on family contexts.

Table 1. Teachers' Strategies for Fostering Discipline Character during Emergency Remote Learning

Strategy Category	Description	Implementation Context
Instructional structuring	Establishing routines, schedules, and task deadlines	Online classes and learning platforms
Behavioral monitoring	Monitoring participation and responsiveness	Messaging apps and virtual meetings
Communicative reinforcement	Providing feedback and reminders	Teacher–student communication
Parental collaboration	Engaging parents as discipline supervisors	Home-based learning environments

Table 1 presents a systematic overview of teachers' strategies for fostering discipline character during emergency remote learning. The table categorizes strategies into instructional structuring, behavioral monitoring, communicative reinforcement, and parental collaboration to highlight their functional roles within remote learning contexts. Instructional structuring reflects teachers' efforts to maintain discipline through clear routines, schedules, and task deadlines delivered via digital platforms. Behavioral monitoring illustrates how teachers adapted supervision practices by relying on student participation indicators and responsiveness rather than physical presence. Communicative reinforcement emphasizes the role of continuous feedback, reminders, and motivational messages in sustaining disciplined behavior. Parental collaboration represents an essential extension of discipline supervision into home-based learning environments. By organizing these strategies into distinct yet interconnected categories, the table clarifies how discipline character education was operationalized during emergency conditions. Overall, Table 1 enhances analytical clarity by translating qualitative findings into a concise and accessible format for international readers.



Figure 1. Model of Discipline Character Fostering during Emergency Remote Learning

Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual model of how discipline character is fostered through adaptive teacher strategies during emergency remote learning. The model positions teachers as the central agents who design instructional routines and initiate discipline-related communication. Instructional structuring forms the first component, providing students with predictable schedules and expectations that substitute for classroom-based regulation. Behavioral monitoring operates as the second component, where student discipline is observed through digital participation, task completion, and responsiveness. Communicative reinforcement connects instructional and behavioral components by enabling feedback, reminders, and encouragement through online platforms. Parental collaboration functions as a contextual support system that extends discipline supervision into the home environment. Digital

learning platforms serve as mediating tools that facilitate interaction among teachers, students, and parents. The model demonstrates that discipline character during emergency remote learning emerges from continuous interaction rather than direct physical control.

Discussion

The findings confirm that structured instructional routines play a critical role in sustaining discipline character during emergency remote learning. This result aligns with previous studies emphasizing the importance of routine and consistency in character education (Aningsih et al., 2022; Arifuddin et al., 2023). When physical classroom control is absent, routines function as symbolic discipline mechanisms that guide student behavior. Similar patterns were identified in Islamic education contexts where discipline is embedded in daily practices and moral instruction (Ikhrum et al., 2023). The findings also support Kotten et al. (2025), who argued that institutional culture and teacher identity influence character education implementation. However, emergency conditions require teachers to reinterpret these routines within digital environments. This adaptation highlights the flexibility of character education practices. It also demonstrates that discipline character can be sustained beyond physical classrooms when pedagogical strategies are intentionally redesigned.

The reliance on communicative and persuasive behavioral strategies reflects a significant shift in disciplinary practices. Unlike traditional classroom discipline, remote learning limits teachers' authority to enforce rules directly. This finding is consistent with Tadege et al. (2022), who reported that teacher values shape discipline approaches under constrained conditions. Teachers' preference for feedback and reminders over punishment also resonates with contemporary views on positive discipline (Herman et al., 2024). Such approaches emphasize internalized discipline rather than compliance driven by fear. The findings further echo Cavaletto and Miglietta (2024), who highlighted the role of supportive learning environments in character development. Emergency remote learning thus accelerates the transition from authoritarian discipline to relational guidance. This shift may have long-term implications for character education practices beyond crisis contexts.

Parental collaboration emerged as a decisive factor in the effectiveness of discipline character education. This finding extends previous research that identifies family involvement as essential in character formation (Arifuddin et al., 2023; Nizariah et al., 2025). During emergency remote learning, parents effectively become co-educators responsible for monitoring student behavior. However, unequal parental capacity creates disparities in discipline outcomes. This supports Kotten et al. (2025), who emphasized the role of socio-cultural context in shaping educational practices. The findings also align with Tohirin et al. (2025), who noted that teachers must negotiate moral education within complex social realities. The dependence on parental support highlights structural inequalities within remote learning environments. Therefore, discipline character education cannot be viewed solely as a teacher-driven process during emergencies.

The study contributes to contemporary academic discourse by situating discipline character education within emergency remote learning contexts. While prior studies focus on stable educational environments, this research highlights character education resilience during crises (Aningsih et al., 2022; Kotten et al., 2025). The findings demonstrate that discipline character is not abandoned during emergencies but transformed through adaptive strategies. This transformation supports broader discussions on educational resilience and teacher agency

(Tadege et al., 2022; Cavaletto and Miglietta, 2024). Islamic primary education provides a unique lens to understand value-based adaptation. The integration of religious values, discipline, and digital pedagogy enriches existing character education literature. This study thus fills an empirical gap by foregrounding teachers' lived experiences. It also opens new pathways for research on character education under crisis conditions.

Implications

The findings suggest that character education policies should explicitly incorporate strategies for emergency learning contexts. Teachers require institutional support to design structured routines adaptable to digital platforms. Training programs should emphasize communicative and collaborative discipline approaches rather than punitive methods. Schools should also develop frameworks for systematic parental engagement during remote learning. These implications are relevant for policymakers aiming to strengthen educational resilience. Value-based schools, in particular, can leverage moral frameworks to sustain discipline character. The study underscores the need for flexible character education models. Such models can enhance continuity of moral education across diverse learning conditions.

Limitations

This study is limited by its qualitative scope and contextual focus within Islamic primary education. The findings cannot be generalized statistically to all educational settings. Data were based on teacher perspectives without direct observation of student behavior. Emergency conditions also constrained prolonged field engagement. Variations in technological access were not examined in depth. Parental perspectives were indirectly captured through teacher reports. The study focused primarily on discipline character rather than broader character dimensions. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Suggestions

Future research should incorporate multiple stakeholder perspectives, including students and parents. Comparative studies across different educational contexts would strengthen external validity. Longitudinal research could examine whether adaptive discipline strategies persist after emergency learning ends. Quantitative approaches may complement qualitative insights by measuring discipline outcomes. Studies focusing on digital equity are also needed. Exploring other character dimensions such as responsibility or empathy would enrich the field. Policymakers should support experimental models of remote character education. These directions can further advance research on character education resilience.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that fostering student discipline character during emergency remote learning requires adaptive and context-sensitive teacher strategies. The findings demonstrate that discipline character can be sustained through structured instructional routines, communicative behavioral monitoring, and strong parental collaboration. Teachers play a central role in redesigning discipline practices when conventional classroom supervision is no longer possible. Rather than relying on direct control, discipline formation during remote learning is mediated through consistent communication and value integration. The Islamic primary education context further highlights the importance of moral and religious frameworks in supporting discipline character. However, the effectiveness of these strategies is influenced by students' home environments and parental involvement. These results confirm that discipline character

education is not suspended during crises but transformed through pedagogical adaptation. Overall, this study contributes empirical evidence to contemporary discussions on character education resilience in emergency learning contexts.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Elva Gustiana conceptualized the study, designed the research framework, and led the data collection process. She also conducted the primary data analysis and drafted the initial version of the manuscript. Rosma Hartiny contributed to the development of the theoretical framework, supported data interpretation, and critically revised the manuscript for important intellectual content. Sinta Agusmiati assisted in literature review synthesis, validated the analytical process, and contributed to manuscript editing and refinement. All authors participated in discussing the results, reviewing successive drafts, and approving the final version of the manuscript for submission.

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