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CHARACTER FORMATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE DIGITAL ERA: QUALITATIVE STUDIES IN INNOVATIVE LEARNING

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the disciplinary character of elementary school students through the implementation of innovative learning in the digital era. The development of digital technology presents both opportunities and challenges in developing student character, particularly in discipline in following rules, managing time, and being responsible for assignments. This study used a qualitative approach with a literature review and interview design. The subjects were elementary school teachers, who served as key informants. Data were collected through a review of relevant journals and scientific books, as well as semi-structured interviews with teachers. Data were then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that the implementation of innovative digital-based learning, such as the use of instructional videos, digital quizzes, educational games, interactive presentations, and project-based learning, can improve the disciplinary character of elementary school students. Improved discipline is evident in aspects of punctuality in attending lessons and submitting assignments, adherence to class rules, and student responsibility in completing tasks assigned by teachers. The findings of this study confirm that innovative learning designed in a structured, engaging manner and accompanied by teacher guidance can be an effective strategy in developing the disciplinary character of elementary school students in the digital era.

Keywords; Disciplinary Character; Elementary School; Innovative Learning; Digital Era; Elementary Education.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has significantly changed the way of learning in elementary schools. On the other hand, technology provides opportunities for teachers and students to get learning materials, interactive learning media, and various interesting learning methods. However, on the other hand, the digital era also presents a big challenge to the character formation of students, including the nature of discipline which is one of the main abilities in character education at the elementary school level.

Discipline is a person's ability to organize themselves in order to fulfill tasks, follow rules, and take responsibility for the work given. This plays an important role in helping the overall development of students, both in the field of learning and in social relationships and feelings. Today's challenges, such as the ease of obtaining content that is not in accordance with educational values, the habit of using digital devices for too long, and irregular learning times, can damage students' discipline attitudes if not managed properly by teachers and the learning system.

Innovative learning is a way to address these challenges by appropriately combining digital technology with learning methods that emphasize students' active participation. Innovations such as learning with digital literacy, using digital systems to manage learning activities, and creative ways to use digital media can be effective ways to instill discipline values in a sustainable manner. Innovative learning models not only help students understand the subject matter better, but also form disciplined habits through rules for the use of technology, setting study schedules, and the habit of conducting self-evaluation in the digital learning process.

Research shows that in the digital era, character education needs to be encouraged by the role of teachers as facilitators in the learning process and directing moral values and discipline. Thus, technology is not a barrier in shaping students' character, but can be an effective tool to strengthen their character. In addition, the use of several models, such as positive habits and understanding of technology, also helps shape the discipline attitude of elementary school students in the innovative learning process.

Based on this background, this study uses a qualitative approach in order to understand more deeply how the disciplined character of elementary school students is formed in today's all-digital world through innovative learning methods. The results of this study are expected to provide real benefits and conceptual understanding for educators, education practitioners,

and decision-makers in designing effective learning approaches to strengthen students' discipline attitudes as a whole.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The formation of discipline character in elementary school students is a fundamental process that is closely related to the formation of students' values, habits, and self-awareness. From the perspective of character education, discipline is not only interpreted as obedience to school rules, but as the ability to self-discipline, namely students' awareness in regulating behavior and learning responsibilities. Lickona (1991) emphasized that character is formed through the integration of moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions that develop through daily learning experiences.

In the digital era, the formation of student discipline faces increasingly complex challenges. Castells (2010) explained that a network society is characterized by a rapid and massive flow of information, which also influences the behavior of individuals, including elementary school-age children. Based on various qualitative research findings, the use of undirected technology often gives rise to undisciplined behaviors, such as difficulty focusing, dependence on gadgets, and weak study time management. However, some studies have also shown that technology can play a positive role when used in a structured and educational learning context.

Vygotsky's approach to social constructivism is an important foundation in understanding the process of forming disciplines qualitatively. Vygotsky emphasized that learning takes place through social interaction and support (scaffolding) in the zone of proximal development. In the context of digital learning, technology serves as a mediation tool that helps students build understanding and discipline habits through teacher guidance and interaction with peers. From a qualitative point of view, discipline is understood as process that develops gradually through learning experiences, not as instant results.

Innovative technology-based learning, such as gamification, is a relevant strategy in this context. Deterding et al. (2011) state that gamification is able to create a learning environment that has clear rules, goals, and challenges. In qualitative research, the implementation of gamification can be analyzed through student behavior, such as consistency in following learning rules, responsibility in completing assignments, and students' reflections on their learning experiences. Thus, discipline emerges as a social practice that is formed through the active involvement of students in the digital learning environment.

The concept of connectivism proposed by Siemens (2005) also enriches the qualitative analysis in this study. Learning in the digital era is seen as the process of building and managing information connections. However, the ability of elementary school students to manage these connections is highly dependent on teacher mentoring. Therefore, in a qualitative context, the role of teachers is not only as a technology facilitator, but also as a value guide and reinforcer of disciplinary character.

Based on this study, the formation of the disciplinary character of elementary school students in the digital era can be understood as a social and pedagogical process influenced by interactions, learning experiences, and innovative learning designs. The qualitative approach allows researchers to delve deeply into the meaning of discipline from the perspective of students and teachers, thereby providing a contextual and holistic understanding of the formation of disciplinary character in elementary schools.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach through literature studies and interviews. Literature studies are carried out by examining journals, books, and research that discuss student discipline and digital-based innovative learning. Brief interviews were conducted with elementary school teachers to get a first-hand overview of the implementation of innovative learning in the classroom. Data from the literature and interviews were analyzed by summarizing, comparing, and drawing conclusions to see the relationship between learning innovation and the character of student discipline. Synthesis of qualitative research definitions

Based on the opinion of some experts, qualitative research can be understood as a scientific approach that focuses on the depth of meaning and social reality. Here are the main points from the experts:

1. Focus on Participants and Descriptions (Creswell, Bogdan & Taylor): Qualitative research is a method that relies heavily on the subject's (participant) perspective. The data produced are descriptive, in the form of strings of spoken and written words and observed behaviors, which are then analyzed to find specific themes.
2. Natural and Human Approach (Kirk, Miller, & Sugiyono): This method is rooted in the social science tradition that prioritizes direct observation of human beings in their natural environment (natural conditions). In contrast to experiments, researchers here play a key role as a key instrument that collects data thoroughly (triangulation).
3. Exploration of Meaning and Characteristics (Schensul): This approach allows

researchers to deeply dissect organizational characteristics, individual behaviors, and social phenomena in order to find the meaning behind these actions.

4. Non-Statistical and Inductive Analysis (Strauss, Corbin, & Sugiyono): A major characteristic of qualitative research is that its findings are not obtained through mathematical calculations or statistical procedures. The data analysis is inductive, where the researcher prioritizes understanding deep meaning rather than simply generalizing the results.

Based on the description above, this study does not only use literature studies but also uses interview techniques. John Creswel (1987) states that : " ... Can directly discuss the problems that arise, and obtain information immediately. Can be a note about a particular episode or atmosphere in general. Can help identify personal problems of respondents. Invite respondents to solve the problem ." Based on this statement, the essence can be taken that field interview techniques offer advantages in the form of the ability of researchers to discuss problems directly and obtain instant information from informants. This question and answer process functions as an instrument to record social phenomena based on predetermined research parameters or indicators. Through this interaction, researchers can conduct in-depth exploration, identify problems, as well as develop questions flexibly according to the dynamics in the field. However, the success of this technique is highly dependent on the communication skills of the informant and the ability of the researcher to keep the direction of the conversation in line with the research objectives. In addition, ethical aspects such as politeness and accuracy in listening to answers are the main keys to avoiding misunderstanding of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Interview Results at SDIT Ash Sholihah with 5th grade homeroom teacher

No.	Interview Question	Teacher's Response
1	In your opinion, is disciplinary character important for elementary school students?	Students' disciplinary character refers to obedience to rules, responsibility for assignments, and the ability to manage time well. Therefore, it is very important to strengthen student discipline.
2	What is the current condition of elementary school students' discipline in the digital era?	Student discipline faces considerable challenges due to gadget use. However, discipline can still be developed through engaging and well-directed learning.
3	What are examples of disciplined behavior among students at school?	Examples include arriving on time, completing assignments, following classroom rules, and respecting teachers.
4	How does digital technology affect students' discipline?	Technology can support learning, but it can also distract students' focus if it is not properly supervised.
5	What examples of innovative learning are implemented in elementary school?	The teacher uses instructional videos, digital quizzes, educational games, and interactive presentations.
6	How does innovative learning influence students' disciplinary character?	Students become more orderly, enthusiastic, and responsible for the assignments given by the teacher.

7	What obstacles are faced in implementing innovative learning?	The main obstacles are limited facilities and the need to supervise students' use of gadgets.
8	What solutions can be applied to overcome these obstacles?	Teachers need to establish clear rules for technology use and select learning methods that are appropriate for students' needs.
9	What are your expectations for students' disciplinary character in the future?	Students are expected to become disciplined, independent, and responsible individuals.
10	What is the condition of students' discipline in the class you teach?	Most students are sufficiently disciplined, although some still need guidance, especially in completing assignments on time.

This formation focuses on the disciplined character of elementary school students through innovative learning in the digital era. The analysis stage used is a data collection technique where there are two data collection techniques, namely field studies and literature studies. In order for this study to be more objective and the data accurate, the study sought additional informants by conducting interviews intended to obtain accurate information from reliable data sources.

The following are the results of research based on in-depth observations and interviews that have been conducted by researchers with informants when conducting research on the discipline character of elementary school students through innovative learning in the digital era. In conducting in-depth observations and interviews with informants, the researcher did so based on the location and time that had been arranged as best as possible.

The results of this study were obtained through data collection techniques with observation and interviews. The technique is carried out to obtain natural data, the interview structure that the researcher designed is not a standard guideline, so if the answer given by the informant is not clear, then the researcher asks other questions so that the informant can explain further and in depth when they explain, which Later the answers given can complement the previously unclear answers so that the data obtained will be more accurate and can solve the formulation of the problems faced by the researcher, then the researcher can analyze the disciplinary character of elementary school students through innovative learning in the digital era, which includes:

1. The Importance of Discipline Character in Elementary School Students

Disciplined character is very important to be instilled in elementary school students because it is the main foundation in the formation of children's personality and positive habits in the future. At elementary school age, children are in the golden phase of habituation, so the value of discipline instilled from an early age will be strongly attached to daily behavior.

"The character of student discipline is an attitude of obedience to rules, responsibility for tasks, and the ability to manage time well, so it is very important to improve or discipline

student discipline." (Jamah Mardiana, interview, January 12, 2026).

Based on the presentation from Mrs. Jamah Mardiana as the main informant, the researcher concluded that it is very important to have a discipline character that must be instilled in order to improve the attitude of obedience to rules, responsibility, and the ability to manage time well for their provision in the future through the habit of discipline from elementary school age. Next, the researcher asked what are the examples of student discipline behavior at school. The following is the presentation of Jamah Mardiana's mother,

"Of course, show up on time, do assignments, follow class rules, and respect teachers." (Jamah Mardiana, interview, January 12, 2026).

Then the researcher asked how the condition of student discipline in the class that you were teaching was. "Most of the students are very disciplined, but there are still some who need to be guided, especially in doing assignments on time." (Jamah Mardiana, interview, January 12, 2026).

Based on the presentation of Mrs. Jamah Mardiana, the researcher concluded that there are still some students who need to be guided so that they are disciplined in time in doing assignments, students who are late in collecting assignments can be caused by many factors, one of which is due to a lack of interest and enthusiasm in learning which makes students feel lazy and reluctant to do assignments on time.

It is therefore necessary to create a pleasant learning atmosphere through innovative learning in schools.

2. Innovative Learning in the Digital Age

In this era, teachers are not only the presenters of the material, but also as facilitators who guide students in exploring knowledge. Teachers must take a learning approach that utilizes digital technology to create an active, creative, collaborative, and student-centered learning process. Before that, the researcher asked how the condition of elementary school students is in the current digital era, following a presentation from Mrs. Jamah Mardiana,

"Student discipline is very challenging due to the use of gadgets, but it can also be formed through interesting and directed learning." (Jamah Mardiana, interview, January 12, 2026).

Based on Mrs. Jamah Mardiana's presentation, the researcher concluded that the interesting and directed learning in question is innovative learning where the technique is a learning technique that uses creative new methods, methods, and media to make students active, think critically, and be directly involved in learning. This learning is student-centered,

encourages creativity, and adapts to the times so that learning is more meaningful and effective.

Furthermore, the researcher asked what are the examples of innovative learning applied in elementary schools, the answer was:

"By using learning videos, digital quizzes, educational games, and interactive presentations" (Jamah Mardiana, interview, January 12, 2026).

Then the researcher again asked how innovative learning can affect the character of student discipline. He explained again,

"Students become more orderly, enthusiastic, and responsible for the tasks given by teachers" (Jamah Mardiana, interview, January 12, 2026).

Based on this presentation, the researcher concluded that innovative learning in the digital era can improve the character of student discipline through the use of structured and meaningful technology. Using digital platforms is able to train students to manage time, collect assignments according to deadlines, and comply with online learning rules. In addition, the use of interactive digital media makes students more motivated and responsible, so that disciplinary habits are formed consistently in the learning process. However, supervision is still needed from teachers so that digital media and technology in learning do not have a negative impact which can make students addicted to technology so that it interferes with their focus on learning.

"Technology can help with learning, but it can also interfere with focus if left unsupervised." (Jamah Mardiana, interview, January 12, 2026)

On the other hand, the informant mentioned that there are still obstacles in implementing innovative learning in schools, namely:

"Limited facilities, and supervision of the use of gadgets," he said. (Jamah Mardiana, interview, January 12, 2026)

Then the researcher asked how the right solution was to overcome the obstacle, and he explained:

"Teachers must also set rules for the use of technology and choose the appropriate method." (Jamah Mardiana, interview, January 12, 2026)

From Mrs. Jamah's presentation, the researcher concluded that here teachers play a very important role in the implementation of innovative learning, and teachers are required to be technologically literate and open to innovation, creative in designing learning, becoming mentors and motivators, not the only source of learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion that has been described, it can be concluded that the discipline character of elementary school students is an important aspect that needs to be formed early as a foundation for personality and positive habits in the future. In the digital era, student discipline faces considerable challenges due to technological developments and The use of gadgets that have the potential to divert students' focus from learning if they are not directed properly. The results of the analysis of literature studies and interviews with elementary school teachers show that the application of digital-based innovative learning has a significant role in shaping and improving the character of student discipline. The use of digital media such as learning videos, digital quizzes, educational games, interactive presentations, and online learning platforms can encourage students to be more orderly, responsible for tasks, comply with learning rules, and manage time better. Innovative learning that is designed in a structured and engaging manner can create a fun learning atmosphere while practicing student discipline consistently. However, the success of the implementation of innovative learning is highly dependent on the role of teachers in regulating the use of technology, providing mentoring, and setting clear rules so that the use of technology does not have a negative impact on students. Based on these conclusions, the researcher provides the following suggestions: 1. For teachers, it is hoped that they can continue to develop innovative learning that is creative and directed by using digital technology wisely. Teachers also need to set clear rules for the use of technology and supervise so that learning continues to run effectively and support the formation of student discipline character. 2. For schools, it is recommended to support the implementation of innovative learning by providing adequate facilities and infrastructure, as well as providing training to teachers regarding the use of technology in learning. 3. For parents, it is hoped that they can work with the school in supervising and guiding the use of gadgets at home so that the disciplinary habits formed at school can be applied consistently in daily life. 4. For the next researcher, it is recommended to conduct more in-depth research with broader methods and subjects, so that a more comprehensive picture of the influence of innovative learning on the formation of discipline character of elementary school students is obtained.

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