

## Liberating Discipline Pedagogy in Indonesian Character Education

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### ABSTRACT

Discipline in Indonesian education is often addressed through external control rather than internal growth. This study seeks to address this issue by exploring how Stephen R. Covey's 7 *Habits* model can be adapted to reconceptualize discipline as a liberating process that fosters independence, moral responsibility, and collective well-being. The research aims to bridge the global discipline model with the character education paradigm in Indonesia. Using a qualitative library research design with purposive sampling of global and national literature (2016–2025), the data were analyzed through content analysis to identify thematic patterns connecting the 7 *Habits*, discipline, and local religious-cultural traditions. The findings show that the 7 *Habits* implement discipline through self-regulation, prioritization, collaboration, empathy, synergy, and holistic renewal, with positive yet context-dependent impacts on students' discipline, leadership, and socio-emotional growth. In the Indonesian context, integration with values such as *ikhlas* (sincerity), *mujahadah al-nafs* (self-discipline), and *ta'dhim al-mu'allim* (respect for teachers) strengthens discipline as a value-based practice within school culture. This study concludes that aligning global disciplinary principles with local wisdom produces a contextual approach to character education and provides conceptual contributions to the development of value-based discipline models as well as practical implications for curriculum design and educational policy.

**Keywords:** *Character Education, Indonesian Education, Religious, Stephen Covey, Student Discipline.*

### INTRODUCTION

Discipline is one of the main pillars in character building and academic achievement of students in the educational environment. In the context of school, discipline not only functions as a mechanism for controlling behavior, but also as the foundation for forming a productive and conducive learning culture. Good discipline enables effective learning interactions, encourages students to develop personal responsibility, and forms positive habits that will be useful throughout their lives. Several studies have shown that discipline is positively correlated with academic performance, learning engagement, and character

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development.<sup>1</sup> However, the reality on the ground reveals that student discipline issues remain a significant challenge across various levels of education in Indonesia. Violations of school rules, low motivation to learn, tardiness, and inappropriate behavior in the classroom are phenomena frequently encountered by teachers and school administrators.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines discipline as “the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior, using punishment to correct disobedience,”<sup>2</sup> which should not be understood merely as punishment or corrective action but as a systematic process of instilling values of order, perseverance, and compliance with norms. In the academic context, discipline encompasses two principal dimensions: external control through rules, instructions, and sanctions imposed by authority, and internal control reflected in an individual’s ability to direct oneself, regulate actions, and consistently develop positive habits. Thus, discipline is not simply passive obedience but a strategic instrument for character formation and the strengthening of personal autonomy, particularly within the educational sphere.

Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) recorded 2,355 child rights violations, with 36.56% occurring within educational settings, including physical violence, psychological abuse, and bullying.<sup>3</sup> The Indonesian Education Monitoring Network (JPPI) reported a 100% increase in cases of violence in the education sector compared to the previous year, spanning all levels of schooling.<sup>4</sup> In addition to violence, classical disciplinary issues remain prevalent. Findings from the Ministry of Education and Culture’s Research and Development Agency (Balitbang) revealed high rates of absenteeism: 20% of students had skipped school, 25% skipped classes, and 49% were late. Furthermore, 12% of students reported experiencing all three types of violations simultaneously.<sup>5</sup> These findings highlight that both violence and routine disciplinary violations persist as challenges requiring data-driven policy interventions.

“*Liberating discipline*,” framed within Stephen Covey’s *7 Habits*, conceptualizes discipline as the internalization of values and positive habits consciously cultivated rather than mere compliance with external rules. This paradigm emphasizes self-awareness, proactivity, and long-term goal orientation, wherein habits such as *Be Proactive*, *Begin with the End in Mind*, and *Put First Things First* shape self-regulation and balance between personal interests and social responsibilities.<sup>6</sup> *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* underscores that

<sup>1</sup> Moch Misbahul Alam and Nur Fitriatin, “Factors Affecting Student Discipline: A Case Study in Junior High Schools, Indonesia,” *Journal of Asian Islamic Educational Management (JAIEM)* 2, no. 1 (2024): 11–18, <https://doi.org/10.53889/jaiem.v2i1.543>; Morris Siu-Yung Jong, Chin-Chung Tsai, and Gwo-Dong Chen, “Self-Determination Theory, Learning Motivation, and Academic Achievement in the Asian Educational Context,” *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* 25, no. 3 (2016): 423–33, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-016-0282-5>.

<sup>2</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “discipline,” accessed June 20, 2025, [https://www.oed.com/dictionary/discipline\\_n](https://www.oed.com/dictionary/discipline_n).

<sup>3</sup> Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia (KPAI), *Laporan Tahunan KPAI 2023* (Jakarta: KPAI, 2023), <https://www.kpai.go.id/publikasi/laporan-tahunan>.

<sup>4</sup> Jaringan Pemantau Pendidikan Indonesia, “JPPI Terima 573 Laporan Kasus Kekerasan di Lembaga Pendidikan, Mayoritas di dalam Sekolah,” *Media Indonesia*, December 27, 2024, <https://mediaindonesia.com/humaniora/729648/jppi-terima-573-laporan-kasus-kekerasan-di-lembaga-pendidikan-mayoritas-di-dalam-sekolah>.

<sup>5</sup> Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan, Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, *Pendidikan di Indonesia: Belajar dari Hasil—Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)* (Jakarta: Balitbang Kemendikbud, 2019), 163–167.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 147–149.

effective behavior is rooted in universal principles such as responsibility, integrity, and sustained self-management, advancing an inside-out approach that prioritizes character development before behavioral change.<sup>7</sup> In the context of education, this framework offers strategies for building internal discipline that encourages freedom in developing students' potential and maintaining positive behavior.

Several schools worldwide have adopted Covey's framework through the *Leader in Me (LiM)* program, which integrates the 7 *Habits* into school culture and curriculum. Humphries et al. reported that the implementation of this program in elementary schools reduced disciplinary infractions, enhanced learning engagement, and strengthened students' sense of responsibility toward their school environment.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Lian et al. found that internalizing Covey's concepts fostered greater independence, focus, and cooperation among students.<sup>9</sup> However, research on this approach within Indonesian schools remains limited, particularly studies directly examining its relationship with reducing student disciplinary problems.

This gap suggests research opportunities to connect Covey's discipline framework with the reality of student discipline in Indonesia. Many local studies on student discipline still emphasize external approaches, such as sanctions, strict rules, or intensive supervision,<sup>10</sup> while approaches focusing on internal motivation and values remain underutilized. Yet, motivational theories such as *Self-Determination Theory*<sup>11</sup> and studies of learning motivation in Asian contexts<sup>12</sup> affirm that intrinsic motivation is more sustainable and effective in shaping positive behaviors.

The sociocultural context of Indonesia presents both challenges and opportunities for implementing the 7 *Habits* in schools. Norms of collectivism, hierarchical teacher–student relationships, and the central role of family influence the process of developing and internalizing positive habits.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, adapting Covey's concepts requires adjustments in language, local values, and communication strategies to ensure effectiveness and sustainability.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the literature on character education in developing countries emphasizes that the success of discipline formation is determined not only by individual interventions but also by the overall school ecosystem. Principal leadership, teacher

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.; Sarah D. Sparks, "How Schools Use Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," *Education Week*, March 22, 2022, <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/how-schools-use-coveys-7-habits-of-highly-effective-people/2022/03>.

<sup>8</sup> A. Cherie Humphries, F. Jane Cobia, and Leslie S. Ennis, "Perceptions of the Leader in Me: Process in Regard to Student Discipline," *Journal of Education and Human Development* 4, no. 3 (2015): 93–104, <http://dx.doi.org/10.15640/jehd.v4n3a11>.

<sup>9</sup> Chee Kooi Lian, Tan Kim Hua, and Nur-Ehsan Mohd-Said, "The Impact of Stephen Covey's 7 Habits on Students' Academic Performance during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 21, no. 1 (2022): 109–126, <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.21.1.7>.

<sup>10</sup> Alam and Fitriatin, "Factors Affecting Student Discipline", 11–18.

<sup>11</sup> Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 1 (2000): 68–78, <https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066x.55.1.68>.

<sup>12</sup> Jong, Tsai, and Chen, "Self-Determination Theory", 423–33.

<sup>13</sup> Bintang Anugrah Roshadi, Turnomo Rahardjo, and Joyo NS Gono, "Radaptasi Budaya Kolektivis Mahasiswa Indonesia," *Interaksi Online* 13, no. 1 (2024): 436–49, accessed June 20, 2025, <https://ejournal3.undip.ac.id/index.php/interaksionline/article/view/48752>.

<sup>14</sup> Ken Resnicow, Tumilola Baranowski, Jasjit S. Ahluwalia, and Ronald L. Braithwaite, "Cultural Sensitivity in Public Health: Defined and Demystified," *Ethnicity & Disease* 9, no. 1 (1999): 10–21, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45410142>.

competence in integrating character-based learning, and parental involvement are critical success factors.<sup>15</sup> Based on these considerations, this study's conceptual framework integrates individual factors, pedagogical strategies, and institutional dynamics to develop a comprehensive, culturally adaptive, and applicable discipline model for the Indonesian educational context.

This article aims to address this gap by using library research combined with content analysis to examine how the *7 Habits* can be interpreted and localized in the context of Indonesian religious-cultural and educational settings. Rather than being limited to measuring outcomes, this research seeks to identify thematic patterns, cultural resonance, and potential synergies between universal principles of discipline and local values rooted in Islam and the nation's educational traditions.

This study offers two main contributions that affirm its novelty. Theoretically, it extends the application of the *7 Habits*-based discipline to the complex religious and cultural context of education in developing countries, an area that has not been widely explored in the literature. Practically, this research formulates an integration model that combines internal discipline with school ecosystem support and community participation, resulting in a comprehensive and sustainable approach. This model is not only relevant for addressing student discipline challenges in Indonesia but also has the potential to serve as a reference for countries with similar religious and cultural characteristics, thereby filling research gaps across various contexts in global character education.

## METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative library research method to explore the integration of Stephen Covey's *7 Habits* with religious and cultural values in shaping student discipline in Indonesia. Data were drawn from purposively selected international and national literature, including books, journal articles, dissertations, and research reports published between 2016 and 2025, using keywords such as "*7 Habits*," "*Leader in Me*," "discipline," "character education," "religious values," and "Indonesian education." The data were analyzed through content analysis, involving identification, categorization, and interpretation to generate normative insights that serve as the conceptual basis for a framework of "liberating discipline," offering contributions that are contextually relevant to Indonesia and globally significant in educational discourse.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Conceptual Framework: Covey's *7 Habits* in Education

Stephen R. Covey, in his seminal work *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989), proposed a framework of personal and interpersonal effectiveness that emphasizes balance between self-mastery and social leadership.<sup>16</sup> These habits are not merely behavioral techniques but universal principles that can be applied across domains, including education.

The first habit, *be proactive*, underscores individual responsibility and self-regulation. Rather than being controlled by external circumstances, individuals are encouraged to

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<sup>15</sup> Marvin W. Berkowitz and Melinda C. Bier, *What Works in Character Education: A Research-Driven Guide for Educators* (St. Louis: Center for Character and Citizenship, University of Missouri–St. Louis, 2005), 1–24, [https://www.theibsc.org/uploaded/22AC\\_WorkshopPresentations/Block3\\_JosepSimon\\_EightCulturalForcesToBuildCharacter\\_What\\_Works\\_In\\_Character\\_Education.pdf](https://www.theibsc.org/uploaded/22AC_WorkshopPresentations/Block3_JosepSimon_EightCulturalForcesToBuildCharacter_What_Works_In_Character_Education.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Covey, *The 7 Habits*.

exercise awareness and choose responses aligned with values.<sup>17</sup> Within schools, this translates into students internalizing discipline as a conscious decision rather than passive compliance.

The second habit, *begin with the end in mind*, emphasizes having a clear vision and purpose.<sup>18</sup> In education, it fosters goal-directed learning, where discipline becomes a means to achieve long-term academic and moral aspirations.

The third habit, *put first things first*, relates to prioritization and time management.<sup>19</sup> In classrooms, this habit shapes students' ability to manage assignments, focus on essentials, and resist distractions, thus reframing discipline as strategic prioritization.

The fourth habit, *think win-win*, advances a collaborative paradigm.<sup>20</sup> For students, it cultivates social discipline by promoting respect, fairness, and collective success, which resonates with collectivist educational cultures.

The fifth habit, *seek first to understand*, then to be understood, cultivates empathy and deep listening.<sup>21</sup> Within classroom settings, this habit establishes communicative discipline: listening attentively before speaking, thereby creating a more conducive learning environment.

The sixth habit, *synergize*, emphasizes the value of creative collaboration.<sup>22</sup> In education, synergy manifests as collective discipline, where diversity of perspectives strengthens problem-solving and mutual accountability.

The seventh habit, *sharpen the saw*, highlights holistic self-renewal, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.<sup>23</sup> Applied in schools, this habit frames discipline as sustainable well-being: balancing study, rest, emotional regulation, and spiritual growth.

These habits have been institutionalized in the *Leader in Me* program, which embeds the 7 *Habits* into school curricula, culture, and student leadership practices.<sup>24</sup> Evidence demonstrates positive impacts on student discipline, leadership, and socio-emotional competencies across international contexts.<sup>25</sup> In Indonesia, the framework gains further relevance when contextualized with local cultural and religious values, such as *ikhlas* (sincerity), *mujahadah al-nafs* (self-discipline), and *ta'dhim al-mu'allim* (respect for teachers), thereby redefining discipline not as control but as a liberating process that nurtures autonomy, moral responsibility, and collective well-being.<sup>26</sup>

### **Empirical Evidence on the Implementation of 7 *Habits* and the *Leader in Me* Program**

The literature review identified ten relevant studies that examine the implementation of Stephen R. Covey's 7 *Habits* and the *Leader in Me* program within diverse educational

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 263.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 289.

<sup>24</sup> Stephen R. Covey, *The Leader in Me: How Schools and Parents Around the World Are Inspiring Greatness, One Child at a Time* (New York: Free Press, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Amber J. Sainz, *The Leader in Me and Its Effects on School Culture and Leadership* (Dissertation, Lindenwood University, 2021), 92-112. <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/dissertations/692/>

<sup>26</sup> Kholil, Ahmad. "Implementasi Pendidikan Karakter Melalui Proses Mujahadah dan Riyadah di Yayasan Taman Pendidikan Islam Pondok Pesantren SMK Darul Ulum Baureno Bojonegoro." *EDU-RELIGIA: Jurnal Keagamaan dan Pembelajarannya* 5, no. 1 (2022): 60–76. <https://doi.org/10.52166/edu-religia.v5i1.2980>; Sari, Nur Mutia. "Konsep Ikhlas dan Relevansinya terhadap Pendidikan Agama Islam." *Jurnal Media Akademik (JMA)* 2, no. 6 (Juni 2024). <https://doi.org/10.62281/v2i6.470>.

settings (Table 1). These studies employ a variety of methodological approaches, quantitative, qualitative, case studies, mixed-methods, and meta-analyses, providing a comprehensive perspective on their outcomes. Overall, the evidence demonstrates that both the *7 Habits* framework and the *Leader in Me* program positively contribute to student discipline, leadership development, and responsibility. Nevertheless, the findings are not uniform across contexts, highlighting the importance of local dynamics in shaping effectiveness.

**Table 1. Summary of Studies on *7 Habits* and *Leader in Me* in Student Discipline**

| Author(s)<br>& Year       | Research Focus                                            | Methodology              | Key Findings                                                                       |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Miller (2016)             | Impact of <i>Leader in Me</i> on achievement & discipline | Quantitative (pre–post)  | No significant short-term improvement; recommends long-term evaluation.            |
| Bolden (2019)             | Evaluation of <i>Leader in Me</i> in Georgia schools      | Mixed-methods            | Discipline improved; academic outcomes varied depending on local context.          |
| Villares et al. (2023)    | Meta-analysis of <i>Leader in Me</i>                      | Meta-analysis            | Small-to-moderate effects on discipline; dependent on fidelity and school support. |
| Lian et al. (2022)        | <i>7 Habits</i> during COVID-19 online learning           | Descriptive quantitative | Proactive habits and prioritization improved student discipline.                   |
| Sainz (2021)              | Perceptions of school culture                             | Mixed-methods            | Improved discipline, student leadership, and collaboration.                        |
| Nafisa & Iskandar (2022)  | Proactive values through inquiry-based learning           | Qualitative              | Enhanced discipline and socio-emotional skills.                                    |
| Pebriansyah et al. (2024) | <i>7 Habits</i> integrated with Sunnah values             | Qualitative (evaluative) | Effective in fostering discipline and collaboration.                               |
| Ahmad et al. (2022)       | Leadership based on <i>7 Habits</i>                       | Case study               | High consistency in habit implementation; challenges in task prioritization.       |
| Aulia et al. (2025)       | Application of <i>7 Habits</i> in elementary schools      | Literature review        | Improved discipline, empathy, and student leadership.                              |
| Munthoi (2021)            | Evaluation of <i>Leader in Me</i>                         | Qualitative (CIPP)       | Effective in enhancing leadership, discipline, and academic achievement.           |

Table 1 shows that while some studies, such as Miller, reported no significant short-term improvement in discipline,<sup>27</sup> others including Bolden, Sainz, and Munthoi, demonstrated meaningful enhancements in discipline, leadership, and academic achievement.<sup>28</sup> Meta-analytical evidence by Villares et al. further underscores small-to-

<sup>27</sup> Cheryl A. Miller, *The Effect of the Leader in Me, a School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention System (SW-PBIS), Based on Student Achievement and Office Discipline Referrals for Fifth Grade Students in a Rural Elementary School in North Central Washington State* (Online Submission, 2016), 177 pp., <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED565636>.

<sup>28</sup> Patricia Bolden, *An Evaluation of the "Leader in Me" Program Implementation in a Central Georgia Elementary School* (Disertasi doctoral, Valdosta State University, 2019), 59-74, <https://vtext.valdosta.edu/xmlui/handle/10428/4217>; Sainz, *The Leader in*, 92-112; Ahmad Munthoi, *Penerapan Program The Leader in Me di Sekolah SD An-Nisaa Jombang* (Master's thesis, FITK

moderate effects that are conditional upon fidelity of implementation and school-level support.<sup>29</sup> In Indonesia, studies such as Pebriansyah et al. and Nafisa and Iskandar reveal that when the *7 Habits* are contextualized with religious and cultural values, they foster not only discipline but also collaboration, socio-emotional growth, and deeper moral awareness.<sup>30</sup>

The synthesis of findings indicates the presence of significant mediating and moderating mechanisms. Mediating factors include the cultivation of intrinsic motivation, reinforcement of self-discipline through reflective awareness, and the internalization of proactive habits as part of students' identity. Moderating factors, on the other hand, involve socio-cultural variation, parental involvement, teacher capacity, and broader community engagement. These mechanisms illustrate that discipline is not merely an outcome of external control but rather a dynamic process shaped by both personal and contextual determinants.

Overall, evidence from Indonesia indicates that when Covey's *7 Habits* framework is integrated with religious traditions and local cultural values, the meaning of discipline undergoes a substantial transformation. Discipline is no longer perceived merely as an external mechanism of control, but rather evolves into a liberating process that cultivates individual autonomy, reinforces moral responsibility, and strengthens collective well-being.

### **Towards Liberating Discipline**

Findings from the ten reviewed studies collectively indicate that the implementation of Stephen Covey's *7 Habits* and the *Leader in Me* framework generates a complex yet consistent impact on student discipline, leadership, and socio-emotional development. International evidence demonstrates that while short-term improvements are not always significant,<sup>31</sup> longitudinal and context-sensitive applications often reveal stronger positive outcomes.<sup>32</sup> This suggests that discipline, as shaped by the *7 Habits*, is not a static construct but a developmental process contingent upon cultural alignment, program fidelity, and systemic support.

First, several studies highlight discipline as a behavioral and socio-emotional outcome. Lian et al. found that proactive habits, especially during the disruption of online learning, fostered greater student discipline through prioritization and self-regulation.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Nafisa and Iskandar demonstrated that inquiry-based approaches grounded in proactive values enhanced both discipline and socio-emotional competencies.<sup>34</sup> These findings underscore the multidimensional nature of discipline, not merely rule compliance but the cultivation of resilience, responsibility, and emotional balance.

Second, value-based integration emerges as a distinct theme, particularly in culturally embedded contexts. Pebriansyah et al. revealed that aligning the *7 Habits* with Sunnah-based

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UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2021), 102.  
<https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/59318>

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Villares, Amy E. Miller, and John Chevalier, "The Impact of Leader in Me on the School Climate and Student Behaviours: A Meta-Analysis," *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership* 19, no. 2 (2023): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.22230/ijep.2023v19n2a1339>.

<sup>30</sup> Aditya Pebriansyah, Arum Fatayan, and Yessy Yanita Sari, "Evaluasi Program Seven Habits With Sunnah dalam Menunjang Pendidikan Karakter di Sekolah Dasar Islam Terpadu," *Journal of Education Research* 5, no. 3 (2024): 2694–2703, <https://doi.org/10.37985/jer.v5i3.1232>; Mazya Nafisa and Rossi Iskandar, "Analisis Nilai Proaktif dalam 7 Habits Menggunakan Metode Pembelajaran Inkuiri Siswa Sekolah Dasar," *Jurnal Basicedu* 6, no. 2 (2022): 2526–2530, <https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v6i2.2087>.

<sup>31</sup> Miller, *The Effect of the Leader in Me*, 177 pp

<sup>32</sup> Bolden, *An Evaluation of the "Leader in Me"*, 59–74.; Villares, Miller, and Chevalier, "The Impact of Leader in Me", 1–16.; Munthoi, *Penerapan Program The Leader in Me*, 102.

<sup>33</sup> Lian, Hua, and Said, "The Impact of Stephen Covey's 7 Habits", 109–126

<sup>34</sup> Nafisa and Iskandar, "Analisis Nilai Proaktif", 2526–2530.

values encouraged collaborative discipline and moral responsibility.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, Aulia et al. noted that integrating the framework into elementary school settings fostered empathy and leadership alongside discipline.<sup>36</sup> Such evidence resonates with Indonesian values of *ikeblas* (sincerity), *mujahadah al-nafs* (self-discipline), and *ta'dhim al-mu'allim* (respect for teachers), suggesting that discipline becomes meaningful when rooted in spiritual and cultural traditions rather than external enforcement.

Third, discipline is also cultivated through leadership development and prioritization practices. Ahmad et al. observed that students exhibited consistent engagement with the 7 *Habits* but encountered challenges in task prioritization, pointing to the need for structured guidance in time management.<sup>37</sup> Sainz further highlighted how embedding the habits in school culture improved leadership, collaboration, and discipline simultaneously.<sup>38</sup> Bolden's mixed-methods evaluation in Georgia schools reinforced that the effectiveness of such leadership-oriented discipline depended on contextual adaptation, particularly school climate and community involvement.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, systemic and policy-level perspectives provide critical insight into program sustainability. Miller argued that the absence of significant short-term effects highlights the necessity of long-term program evaluation.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, Villares et al. through a meta-analysis, emphasized that positive effects on discipline were highly dependent on fidelity of implementation and institutional support.<sup>41</sup> Munthoi's CIPP evaluation further corroborated that when embedded as a whole-school approach, the *Leader in Me* framework substantially enhanced leadership, discipline, and even academic achievement.<sup>42</sup> These findings caution against interpreting discipline outcomes as immediate, advocating instead for systemic embedding and policy-level integration.

Taken together, these studies suggest that discipline, when viewed through the lens of Covey's 7 *Habits*, transcends the narrow definition of behavioral control. Instead, it represents an emancipatory process that nurtures autonomy, moral responsibility, and collective well-being. In the Indonesian context, this shift is particularly visible when the framework is harmonized with local religious and cultural traditions. Thus, discipline is liberated from being an external imposition and redefined as an internalized ethic of self-leadership, social responsibility, and cultural resonance, what this study conceptualizes as *Liberating Discipline*.

### **Operationalizing the 7 *Habits* in Indonesian Schools**

More than a mere theoretical integration, classroom practices in Indonesia demonstrate how Covey's 7 *Habits* can be fully operationalized in the daily life of schools. The framework does not remain abstract but is translated into routines and experiences that gradually cultivate student discipline, leadership, and social responsibility. Each habit

<sup>35</sup> Pebriansyah, Fatayan, and Sari, "Evaluasi Program Seven Habits With Sunnah", 2694–2703.

<sup>36</sup> Fadhila Nurul Aulia, Firman Robiansyah, and Oki Suprianto, "Analisis Implementasi Prinsip The Seven Habits dalam Membina Karakter Siswa di Sekolah Dasar," *PROSPEK* 4, no. 1 (2025): 18–25, <https://ojs.mahadewa.ac.id/index.php/prospek/article/view/4276>.

<sup>37</sup> Jamal Ahmad, Yusof Boon, Mohd. Khairudin Noordin, Hairul Jambari, and Mohd. Zaid Abdul Hamid, "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People among School Leaders in Riau Islands, Indonesia," *International Journal of Health Sciences* 6, no. S5 (2022): 8095–8100, <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS5.10808>

<sup>38</sup> Sainz, *The Leader in*, 92–112

<sup>39</sup> Bolden, *An Evaluation of the "Leader in Me"*, 59–74.

<sup>40</sup> Miller, *The Effect of the Leader in Me*, 177 pp.

<sup>41</sup> Villares, Miller, and Chevalier, "The Impact of Leader in Me", 1–16.

<sup>42</sup> Munthoi, *Penerapan Program The Leader in Me*, 102.

functions not as an isolated prescription but as part of a continuous process of habit formation, where discipline grows organically within cultural and institutional contexts.

*Habit 1: Be Proactive* is not treated as a slogan but enacted in morning assemblies led by students themselves. In these gatherings, students share short motivational talks or daily reflections of their own choice.<sup>43</sup> Such practice nurtures initiative, courage to take responsibility, and the awareness that discipline is rooted in self-leadership rather than mere teacher instruction. This naturally connects to *Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind*, which often takes shape through project-based learning. Activities such as social service programs, environmental campaigns, and small-scale entrepreneurship projects do more than enhance managerial skills; they instill a sense of vision and social responsibility.<sup>44</sup> In this way, discipline is reframed as a tool for achieving long-term purposes rather than short-term compliance.

*Habit 3: Put First Things First* gains a unique relevance in Indonesian schools, where structured academic schedules are frequently combined with religious practices such as muhasabah (self-reflection) and tadarus (collective Qur'an recitation).<sup>45</sup> This integration reveals that prioritization is not only about managing tasks efficiently but also about balancing spiritual commitments. Thus, time management skills are interwoven with spiritual discipline. Meanwhile, *Habit 4: Think Win-Win* is manifested in classroom conflict resolution, where teachers guide students to reach fair and mutually beneficial solutions rather than relying on punitive measures.<sup>46</sup> Discipline here is no longer associated with fear or control but with justice and shared responsibility.

A similar transformation is visible in *Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood*, which resonates strongly with Indonesia's long-standing tradition of musyawarah (deliberation).<sup>47</sup> This practice emphasizes empathy, active listening, and dialogue, cultivating discipline as the ability to restrain one's ego in order to understand others before seeking to be understood. From this foundation, *Habit 6: Synergize* emerges in collaborative projects rooted in local culture, such as batik-making, pesantren theater performances, or regional art festivals.<sup>48</sup> These activities not only encourage teamwork but also reinforce cultural appreciation, making discipline a shared creative process anchored in local wisdom.

<sup>43</sup> Sulastris Puji Lestari, Dadang Kurnia, dan Nurdinah Hanifah, "Penerapan Morning Activity untuk Meningkatkan Karakter Mandiri dan Tanggung Jawab," *Jurnal Pena Ilmiah* 3, no. 1 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.17509/jpi.v3i1.18930>

<sup>44</sup> Inayah Ilahiyyah, Sri Setyo Iriani, Harti Harti, dan Muchammad Khozi Izzuddin, "Implementasi Project-Based Learning Untuk Meningkatkan Entrepreneurial Mindset Dan Entrepreneurial Skills Pada Siswa SMK Nurul Islam," *Jurnal Maksipreneur: Manajemen, Koperasi, Dan Entrepreneurship* 11, no. 2 (2021): 197-211, <https://doi.org/10.30588/jmp.v11i2.885>.

<sup>45</sup> Efrita Norman, Firda Dwi Rahmawati, Arman Paramansyah, dan Tuti Alawiyah, "Integrated Islamic Time Management Model for Tahfidz Students Based on Surah Al-'Ashr As a Productivity Framework," *Managere: Indonesian Journal of Educational Management* 6, no. 3 (2024): 407-419, <https://doi.org/10.52627/managere.v6i3.750>.

<sup>46</sup> Firdausi Widiyari, Fatimatus Zahro, dan Abu Hasan Agus R, "Resolusi Manajemen Konflik Dalam Meningkatkan Hubungan Guru-Siswa Di Sekolah," *Jurnal Educatio FKIP UNMA* 10, no. 3 (2024): 714-719, <https://doi.org/10.31949/educatio.v10i3.8261>.

<sup>47</sup> Desy Arnita Dewi, "Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila Dimensi Gotong Royong dan Profil Pelajar Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin Nilai Musyawarah (Syura) Melalui Model Problem Based Learning (PBL)," *Lentera: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan* 18, no. 2 (2023): 14-24. <https://doi.org/10.33654/jpl.v18i2.2639>.

<sup>48</sup> Widyastuti Pusposari, Siti Ansoriyah, Iskandar Iskandar, dan Ani Rahmawati, "Afiriasi Seni Teater di dalam Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter," *Jurnal Jendela Pendidikan* 2, no. 02 (2022): 255-263, <https://doi.org/10.57008/jjp.v2i02.204>.

Finally, *Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw* expands the meaning of discipline as holistic self-renewal. Through extracurricular activities, ranging from scouting and sports to *pesantren kilat* (short-term Islamic boarding programs), students are encouraged to balance academic rigor, physical health, and spiritual depth.<sup>49</sup> Discipline thus transcends behavioral control to become a lifelong ethic of self-care and sustainable growth.

Taken together, these practices reveal that Covey's framework does not remain as an abstract set of principles but is translated into lived, concrete experiences in Indonesian schools. Discipline, therefore, is redefined: no longer a matter of external enforcement, it becomes an ethic of daily life, an ingrained habit of responsibility, collaboration, and self-leadership. Rooted in universal principles while nourished by local wisdom, discipline acquires a liberating quality not coercion, but empowerment not a rigid rule, but a formative habit shaping students' personal and collective future.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Stephen R. Covey's *7 Habits*, when adapted to educational contexts and integrated with cultural and religious values in Indonesia, transform the notion of discipline from an external mechanism of control into a liberating process. Discipline is reframed as self-autonomy, moral responsibility, and collective well-being, with international evidence suggesting that long-term, culturally responsive implementation tends to yield positive impacts on discipline, leadership, and socio-emotional development. Theoretically, these findings extend global scholarship by highlighting the cross-cultural adaptability of the *7 Habits*, while practically offering a model for embedding value-based leadership and proactive character formation into curricula, pedagogy, and school culture. However, the study is limited by the scope of contexts and the absence of large-scale longitudinal evidence, making generalization dependent on fidelity of implementation and institutional support. Future research should employ longitudinal and comparative designs to examine the sustainability of outcomes and explore the interaction between global leadership frameworks and local wisdom. Such efforts will deepen the understanding of liberating discipline while providing practical guidance for character education that is globally informed yet locally grounded.

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<sup>49</sup> Asri Darwanti, Utama Utama, dan Achmad Fathoni, "Implementasi Kegiatan Ekstrakurikuler Pramuka Dalam Membentuk Karakter Disiplin Siswa Di Sekolah Dasar," *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 9, no. 03 (2024): 879–892, <https://doi.org/10.23969/jp.v9i03.16598>

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