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Collaborative Innovative Classroom Management Strategies for Enhancing Positive Discipline Among Elementary Students: A Multi-Site Case Study

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Abstract. Low student discipline in elementary schools is often attributed to conventional, teacher-centered, and authoritative classroom management. This study analyzes collaboration-based classroom management as a strategy for fostering positive discipline at two schools with contrasting settings: SDN Ciranjanggirang 2 in rural Cianjur Regency and SDN Cimahi Mandiri 5 in urban Cimahi City. A qualitative multi-site case study collected data over four months from twelve informants (principals, teachers, students, and parents) through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, which were analyzed with the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. Trustworthiness was established through triangulation, prolonged engagement, member checking, and an audit trail. Planning took the form of co-constructed classroom agreements and management moments embedded in lesson plans; organizing distributed classroom roles through a rotating system and reorganized the physical layout; actuating relied on logical consequences, collaborative learning, and teacher role modeling; and controlling shifted from inspection to reflective classroom walkthroughs within a professional learning community. Informant accounts and observation indicated greater engagement, stronger adherence to classroom agreements, and more self-regulated conduct. Two barriers recurred at both sites, namely inconsistent discipline between home and school and the time demanded by collaborative planning, which the schools addressed through parenting workshops and collaborative teacher forums with partial success. The study concludes that a shift from authoritative control to participatory collaboration supports a psychologically safe classroom, and that the model transfers across settings because the delivery channel varies while the managerial logic remains constant.

Keywords: Classroom Management, Collaboration, Elementary School, Positive Discipline, Student Discipline.

1 Introduction

Primary education serves as a foundation for character development, and discipline is among the values that most strongly shape a child's later academic and social trajectory. Schools are increasingly expected to function not only as sites of cognitive instruction

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but as institutions responsible for social and moral cultivation. Classroom management, in this view, extends beyond maintaining physical order to become a pedagogical instrument for creating an environment in which ethical values are practiced daily. The role of the teacher consequently shifts from a unilateral transmitter of knowledge to a manager who facilitates a respectful and productive learning climate [1].

Empirical evidence nevertheless indicates that many elementary schools continue to face persistent disciplinary problems. These commonly appear as a lack of sustained attention, disregard for agreed rules, peer conflict [2], and dependence on reward-and-punishment motivation. Historically, classroom management has leaned toward command-and-control models rooted in behaviorist assumptions. Such approaches are teacher-centered and rely on directives and punitive measures to suppress unwanted behavior. While authoritarian methods can produce short-term compliance, they frequently fail to cultivate internalized self-discipline: students obey because they anticipate punishment rather than because they understand the reasons behind a rule. This gap between behavioral compliance and character formation indicates the need for more participatory and humanistic management approaches [3].

Innovative classroom management based on collaboration represents such an alternative. The approach emphasizes the construction of a classroom belief system: instead of rules imposed by an authority figure, norms are co-constructed through dialogue between teachers and students. This orientation is consistent with the Kurikulum Merdeka and its emphasis on the Profil Pelajar Pancasila, which foregrounds independence, mutual collaboration, critical reasoning, and respect for diversity. By involving students in the management of their own learning space, teachers can foster ownership, intrinsic motivation, and shared responsibility [4], [5].

The theoretical basis for expecting this outcome is well established. Self-determination theory holds that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are the basic psychological needs whose satisfaction produces internalized rather than externally controlled regulation of behavior [6]. Correspondingly, the positive discipline tradition argues that discipline should be firm and kind at the same time, replacing punishment with logical consequences and with procedures that allow children to repair harm and participate in solving the problems their behavior creates [7]. Read together, these two frameworks predict that participation in rule-making should strengthen, rather than weaken, the order of a classroom, which is the proposition this study examines empirically.

Despite the recognized importance of such frameworks, comparative empirical research on how collaborative models are actualized across different demographic and socio-cultural settings remains limited. Much of the existing literature discusses classroom management in general terms and rarely examines the day-to-day operational mechanics of collaboration as a driver of intrinsic discipline. Studies of effective classroom procedure tend to focus on the establishment of routines by the teacher [8], while studies of leadership effects address the school level rather than the classroom [9]. The intermediate question of how a principal's support translates into collaborative practice inside individual classrooms has received less attention.

This research addresses that gap by analyzing the POAC management cycle, namely planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling, as applied to collaborative classroom

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management in two elementary schools with contrasting characteristics [10]. The novelty of the study lies in integrating classical management functions with developmentally appropriate positive discipline theory, and in holding policy constant while varying the socio-geographic setting so that the elements of the model that are invariant can be distinguished from those that must be adapted. Accordingly, the study is guided by four questions: how is collaborative classroom management planned; how is it organized; how is it actuated; and how is it supervised, including which barriers arise and how schools respond to them.

The significance of the study is twofold. Theoretically, it contributes to the discourse on educational management by providing evidence on how participatory models can replace authoritative ones without sacrificing the structural integrity of classroom discipline, and by specifying the managerial mechanisms through which this substitution occurs [11]. Practically, it offers an actionable account for teachers, principals, and policymakers seeking to implement collaborative structures that respect student agency while maintaining a focused and safe learning environment. By examining both the barriers and the responses observed in two specific Indonesian contexts, the study offers contextualized insights relevant to the broader concern with sustainable character education [12].

2 Methods

2.1 Research Design and Sites

This study employs a qualitative approach with a multi-site case study design, chosen in order to obtain context-rich insight into the daily realities of implementing innovative classroom management. The multi-site design follows the logic of multiple-case inquiry, in which each site is first analyzed as a complete case on its own terms and a cross-case synthesis is developed only afterwards, so that the comparison rests on two independently grounded analyzes rather than on a merged account [13], [14].

The research was conducted at two locations deliberately selected to represent contrasting socio-geographic conditions. SDN Ciranjanggirang 2, in Cianjur Regency, represents a rural and sub-urban context characterized by strong traditional community ties and predominantly agrarian household livelihoods. SDN Cimahi Mandiri 5, in Cimahi City, represents an urban context with a heterogeneous population, varied socio-economic backgrounds, and routine use of digital communication. This contrast constitutes the comparative logic of the study: because both schools operate under the same national curriculum policy, differences in practice can be attributed to the school context rather than to differing mandates. The design is summarized in Fig. 1.

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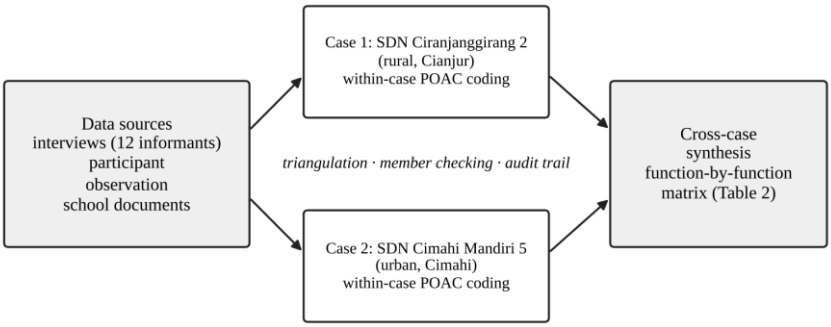


Fig. 1. Multi-site case study design: within-case POAC analysis of each school followed by a function-by-function cross-case synthesis.

2.2 Informants

Participants were selected through purposive sampling in order to obtain the perspectives of those most directly involved in formulating and enacting classroom discipline. The sample comprised school principals, classroom teachers, students, and parents, totaling twelve key informants across the two sites, as presented in Table 1. The criteria for inclusion required that teachers had implemented collaborative management for at least one full semester and that parents had a child in a class where the approach was in use, so that informants could describe change over time rather than first impressions.

Table 1. Distribution of research informants

Informant	SDN Ciranjanggirang 2	SDN Cimahi Mandiri 5	Data focus
Principal	1	1	Supervision, walkthroughs, institutional responses
Classroom teachers	(n)	(n)	Agreements, roles, consequences, planning workload
Students	(n)	(n)	Experience of agreements and roles (interviewed in pairs)
Parents	(n)	(n)	Home–school consistency, communication
Total	(n)	(n)	12 informants

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2.3 Data Collection

Data collection spanned four months, which allowed classroom dynamics to be observed beyond the opening weeks of the academic year, when the novelty of new agreements can temporarily inflate compliance. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were designed to probe the pedagogical beliefs, routine difficulties, and decision-making of teachers and principals, and to capture the accounts of students and parents in their own terms. Interviews with students were conducted in pairs and in familiar settings in order to reduce the asymmetry between adult researcher and young respondent.

Participant observation was carried out inside classrooms, documenting interactions between teachers and students, the physical layout of the learning space, the handling of peer conflict in real time, and the general emotional climate of the room. Observations were distributed across different days and lesson types so that both structured academic activity and less structured transitions could be seen. Documentation study involved analysis of lesson plans (RPP), student-created classroom agreement posters, records of disciplinary incidents, and school-parent communication logs. In this qualitative design the researcher functioned as the principal instrument, which required reflexivity and sustained attention to context [15].

2.4 Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña [16]. This cyclical process involves data condensation, in which field notes and interview transcripts are filtered and categorized; data display, in which condensed data are organized into comparative matrices that make cross-site similarities and differences visible; and conclusion drawing with verification. Coding proceeded deductively from the four management functions, with sub-codes emerging inductively for themes such as role modeling, home-school consistency, and teacher workload.

Several procedures were used to establish trustworthiness. Credibility was pursued through source triangulation, cross-verifying claims among teachers, students, and parents, and through technique triangulation, comparing interview statements against classroom observation and school records; prolonged engagement over the four-month period and formal member-checking sessions with teachers and principals were also conducted. Transferability was supported by thick description of each school's context, dependability by maintaining an audit trail of instruments, transcripts, and coding decisions, and confirmability by peer debriefing with colleagues in educational management who had no role in data collection [17].

2.5 Research Ethics

Research ethics were observed throughout. Permission was obtained from the relevant education offices and from both schools prior to fieldwork. Informants were informed of the purpose of the research and of their right to withdraw, and consent was obtained from teachers and parents, with parental consent secured before any student was

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interviewed. The identities of individual teachers, students, and parents are not disclosed, and records containing personal student data were examined on school premises without being copied.

3 Results

3.1 Collaborative Planning and the Classroom Agreement

The findings from both sites indicate that the foundation of collaborative management lies in the planning phase. In conventional practice, a list of non-negotiable rules is posted by the teacher on the first day of school. Teachers at SDN Ciranjanggirang 2 and SDN Cimahi Mandiri 5 replaced this routine with class forums, referred to at both schools as Circle Time, in which teachers sat at eye level with students and discussed the kind of classroom environment they wanted to establish. The process culminated in a co-created Classroom Agreement, or classroom belief system, rather than a list of classroom rules. The distinction matters in practice: students described imposed rules as external restrictions, whereas they described the agreement as a commitment they had themselves made, and they invoked it when reminding one another of expected conduct [7].

Planning also required that collaborative practices be written into formal lesson plans (Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran). Rather than treating discipline as a separate matter, teachers planned specific management moments, that is, brief intervals placed within the academic lesson in order to reinforce collaborative values. Before beginning a group science project, for example, a teacher would pause instruction to refer back to the agreement concerning respectful listening and the equitable division of tasks. This embedded planning ensured that discipline was addressed proactively as part of instructional design rather than reactively when problems arose [18].

Document analysis nevertheless identified a limitation common to both sites. Although the agreements themselves were well documented and displayed, the lesson plans recorded management moments inconsistently: teachers who were most committed to the approach wrote them in explicitly, while others relied on recall. Teachers acknowledged that this inconsistency made the practice vulnerable when a class was taken over by a substitute, since the agreement was visible on the wall but the procedures for reinforcing it were not written anywhere.

3.2 Organizing Classroom Roles and Learning Space

In the organizing function, the teacher's monopoly over classroom control was deliberately dismantled and classroom roles were distributed among students in order to cultivate collective responsibility. Teachers implemented a rotating system in which every student, regardless of academic standing, was assigned a specific duty. Roles included Time Keeper, responsible for managing transitions between activities; Materials Manager, responsible for distributing and maintaining learning tools; and Peace Maker, a peer mediator prepared to de-escalate minor disputes. This structure

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shifted part of the daily management load from the teacher to the class as a community. Observation indicated that students were more likely to protect the classroom environment when they held personal responsibility for a specific aspect of its upkeep [19].

The physical layout of the classrooms was also reorganized to support collaboration. Rows of desks facing the teacher were replaced by clusters, U-shapes, and joined group tables. This arrangement facilitated eye contact and peer-to-peer communication and made mutual accountability easier, since students could see the consequences of their conduct for the group working alongside them. Teachers reported that the layout required adjustment over time: at SDN Cimahi Mandiri 5, where class sizes were larger, the cluster arrangement initially increased off-task conversation until group composition was revised and the rotation of roles was tightened.

The rotation of roles produced an effect the teachers had not anticipated. Because duties were assigned irrespective of academic achievement, students who performed poorly in formal assessment were observed taking visible responsibility in the classroom, and teachers at both sites reported that this changed how such students were regarded by peers. The organizing function therefore operated not only as a distribution of labor but as a redistribution of status within the class.

3.3 Actuating: Logical Consequences, Collaborative Learning, and Role Modeling

The actuating phase focused on guiding students from external regulation, in which conduct depends on teacher surveillance, toward self-regulation, in which conduct follows an internalized standard. Teachers applied positive discipline techniques, relying on natural and logical consequences rather than punishment. During an observation at SDN Ciranjanggirang 2, a student spilled ink across a shared desk during an art activity. Under conventional management this might have prompted a reprimand or a time-out; under the collaborative model the consequence was the responsibility to clean the affected area and to apologize to the group members whose work had been disturbed. This approach makes the effect of one's action on the immediate community explicit without damaging the student's standing or the relationship with the teacher [7].

Collaborative learning served as the principal vehicle for implementation. Working in heterogeneous groups placed students in situations that required negotiating disagreement, waiting, and exercising self-control. Teachers at SDN Cimahi Mandiri 5 observed that when students were engaged in demanding and interactive tasks, the frequency of attention-seeking disruption declined, which they attributed to the reduction of idle time. This mechanism is consistent with constructivist accounts of learning, in which understanding is built through active engagement with material and with peers rather than received passively [20], and with findings that project-based collaborative activity contributes to the development of social behavior in young learners [21].

The most demanding aspect of implementation was adherence to the principle of the teacher as role model. Teachers were expected to demonstrate the collaborative conduct, emotional regulation, and respect they asked of students. In interviews,

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students repeatedly reported that they were more inclined to act in a disciplined manner because their teachers treated them fairly, listened to their opinions, and visibly observed the classroom agreements themselves, including setting aside mobile phones during periods designated for focused work. This reciprocity formed the basis of the classroom culture: where the agreement bound the teacher as well, students treated it as legitimate. Both schools also used secure messaging applications to share brief updates on student progress and positive behavior with parents, extending the collaborative approach beyond the classroom, in line with the partnership model of school–family communication described by Epstein [22].

3.4 Supervision, Barriers, and Institutional Responses

Supervision in this model shifted from evaluative audit to reflective professional support. Principals at both sites set aside clipboard-based inspection in favor of frequent, low-stakes classroom walkthroughs that assessed the warmth, equity, and psychological safety of teacher-student interaction rather than the quietness of the room. Following these walkthroughs, structured reflection meetings were held in which teachers shared difficulties, failures, and successes in implementing collaborative management. This horizontal supervision mechanism cultivated a professional learning community among staff and oriented evaluation toward institutional growth rather than individual judgment [9], [23], [24].

Two barriers were identified consistently across both sites. The most frequently raised was the inconsistency of disciplinary approaches between home and school. While the schools practiced dialogue-based positive discipline, a portion of students returned to households that were either strongly authoritarian or largely unstructured. Teachers reported that this inconsistency produced confusion and was followed by behavioral regression at the start of each week. The second barrier was the time required for collaborative planning: teachers described the preparation needed to facilitate participatory methods as substantially greater than that required for textbook-based instruction, and connected this to their existing administrative workload.

The schools responded to both barriers institutionally rather than leaving them to individual teachers. To address the home-school gap, both launched parenting workshops intended to align disciplinary expectations by explaining the reasoning and the longer-term aims of positive discipline to parents, which teachers reported reduced the inconsistency students experienced. To address workload, principals made use of established collaborative forums, namely the MGMP (Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran) and KKG (Kelompok Kerja Guru), allowing teachers to co-develop lesson plans and share management strategies and thereby reducing duplicated individual preparation [25]. The adoption of digital platforms for administrative documentation and parent communication further reduced clerical time, allowing teachers to redirect effort toward classroom interaction. Supervision data also indicated that these responses were only partially sufficient: attendance at parenting workshops was uneven, and the teachers whose households were least reachable were those reporting the most persistent regression.

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3.5 Cross-Site Comparison of Collaborative Management

Compared across the two sites, the schools converge on the substance of all four management functions and on the two barriers identified above, but differ in the resources and channels through which the functions are enacted. The convergences indicate which practices are essential to collaborative classroom management, while the divergences indicate which are shaped by the school's setting, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Cross-site comparison of collaborative classroom management

Management Function	SDN Ciranjanggirang 2 (Cianjur)	SDN Cimahi Mandiri 5 (Cimahi)
Planning	Agreement framed through community values of mutual aid; forums conducted in Sundanese and Indonesian	Agreement framed through explicit participation protocols for a heterogeneous class
Organizing	Rotating roles in smaller classes; layout adjusted once and retained	Rotating roles tightened after initial off-task talk; group composition revised in larger classes
Actuating	Logical consequences drawing on shared community norms; limited use of digital media	Logical consequences with explicit verbal framing; routine use of messaging with parents
Controlling	Walkthroughs and reflection in a small staff; parental alignment through face-to-face contact	Scheduled walkthroughs with written reflection notes; parental alignment through digital channels
Shared barriers	Home-school inconsistency; time demanded by collaborative planning	Home-school inconsistency; time demanded by collaborative planning

The pattern in Table 2 suggests that socio-geographic context influences the delivery channel rather than the managerial logic. At SDN Ciranjanggirang 2, implementation drew on existing community values of social cohesion and mutual aid (gotong royong), and parental alignment was pursued mainly through face-to-face contact at the school. At SDN Cimahi Mandiri 5, the heterogeneity of the student population required more explicit participation protocols, and digital communication was used to keep working parents informed. In both cases the outcome was comparable: a noticeable improvement in student conduct and in the psychological climate of the classroom. That both schools nevertheless encountered the same two barriers suggests these arise from the nature of the model rather than from local conditions.

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4 Discussion

The results of this multi-site study indicate that collaborative classroom management functions as an effective means of strengthening student discipline. By shifting the locus of control from the teacher alone to the class as a collective, students develop a sense of agency that supports intrinsic motivation. This finding corresponds closely to self-determination theory, which holds that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are the psychological needs whose satisfaction produces internalized regulation [6]. In the classrooms studied, the agreement-making process addressed the need for autonomy; the rotating assignment of roles built competence and self-efficacy, and did so in a way that was independent of academic ranking; and sustained group work supported relatedness (Fig. 2). The observed redistribution of status within the class is significant in this respect, since it indicates that competence was experienced by students whom formal assessment had positioned as low achievers.

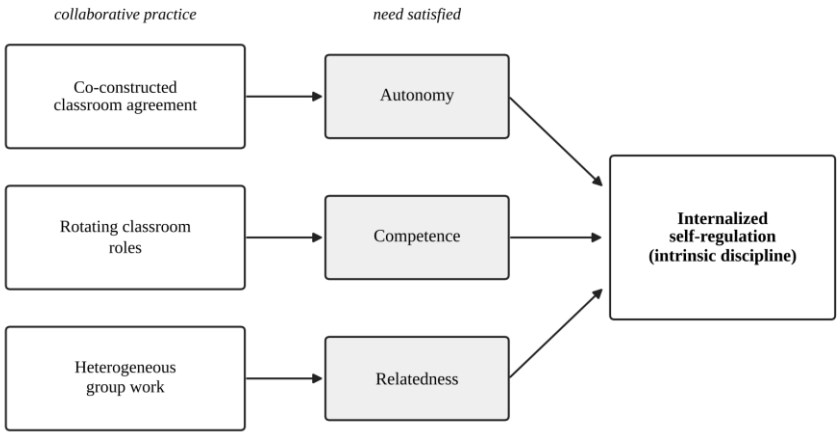


Fig. 2. How the collaborative practices observed at both schools map onto the three basic psychological needs of self-determination theory.

The integration of classical management functions with collaborative principles provides a workable framework for sustaining the approach. Within this framework, planning ceases to be a top-down mandate and becomes a participatory process; organizing is concerned not with arranging students into orderly rows but with building a network of responsibility within the classroom; actuating focuses on facilitating engagement rather than on enforcing rules; and controlling becomes a process of professional reflection rather than performance audit. Read in terms of quality management, this constitutes the shift advocated by Deming [26] from inspection of outcomes to improvement of the processes that generate them [24], which is precisely the shift the reflection meetings at both schools institutionalized.

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The findings also clarify the relationship between positive discipline and classroom order, which is frequently assumed to be a trade-off. Teachers initially expected that granting students a role in rule-making would reduce their authority. What was observed instead was that the agreement became a shared reference that students invoked with one another, which distributed the work of enforcement. The condition for this outcome, evident at both sites, was that the agreement bound the teacher as well: where teachers observed the agreements visibly, students treated them as legitimate, which is consistent with the emphasis in the positive discipline tradition on discipline that is simultaneously firm and kind [7]. The practice of logical consequences was central here, since it allowed the teacher to respond to misconduct without resorting to the punitive measures the model had set aside.

Comparatively, the findings from the two sites indicate that while socio-geographic context influences the specific challenges encountered, such as differences in parental educational background, internet access, and community cohesion, the core principles of collaborative management remain effective in both. In the agrarian setting of Cianjur, implementation leaned on existing traditions of mutual aid; in the urban setting of Cimahi, it required explicit participation protocols and digital communication with parents. The parallel outcomes suggest that the model is adaptable across differing demographic realities, and that schools adopting it should replicate its managerial structure rather than another school's particular program design [27].

The study further indicates the importance of institutional support. Management innovation of this kind cannot be sustained as the isolated effort of an individual teacher; it requires the backing of the principal, the cooperation of colleagues, and the engagement of parents. Kindness-based leadership proves relevant in sustaining such a shift: where school leadership is grounded in empathy, transparent communication, and a shared vision, teachers report feeling able to experiment with new management techniques without fear of punitive evaluation [28]. The reflection meetings observed in this study operationalize that condition, and the barrier analysis reinforces it, since the institutional responses to both barriers, namely parenting workshops and collaborative teacher forums, required decisions at the school level rather than the classroom level (Fig. 3). A pedagogy oriented toward respectful conduct, understood as the cultivation of adab, likewise locates discipline in the quality of the relationship between teacher and student rather than in the enforcement of rules [29].

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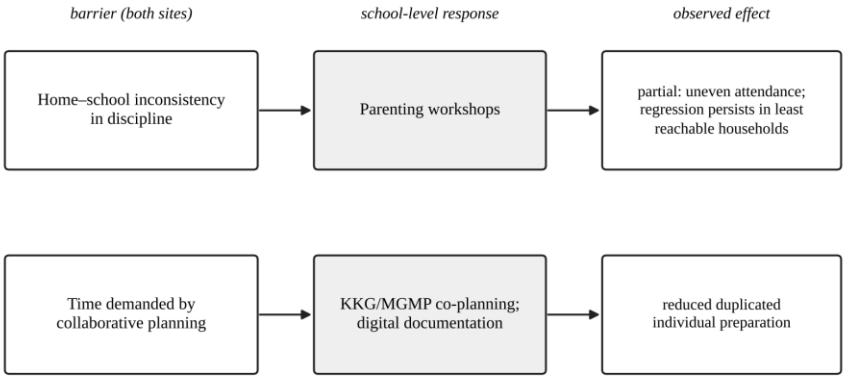


Fig. 3. The two barriers shared by both schools, the school-level responses, and the effects observed.

4.1 Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study involved two elementary schools, so its findings are analytically rather than statistically generalizable. Data were drawn substantially from the accounts of teachers and principals; although students and parents were interviewed, their representation was proportionally smaller, and student accounts may have been shaped by the presence of a researcher known to be working with their teachers. The four-month period, while sufficient to move beyond initial novelty effects, does not permit conclusions about whether the observed changes persist across school years or transfer to subsequent grades, and improvements in conduct were assessed qualitatively rather than through behavioral measurement. These limitations indicate the value of longitudinal and mixed-methods work on the same question.

5 Conclusion

This multi-site research demonstrates that innovative classroom management based on student collaboration is an effective strategy for strengthening discipline in elementary education. By involving students in the planning, organization, and daily execution of their own classroom norms, teachers can shift the basis of discipline from obedience-driven compliance to responsibility-based self-regulation.

Across the four management functions, planning was realized through co-constructed classroom agreements and the embedding of management moments in lesson plans; organizing through a rotating distribution of classroom roles and the reorganization of the learning space, which also redistributed status within the class; actuating through logical consequences, collaborative learning, and consistent teacher role modeling; and controlling through reflective classroom walkthroughs and

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structured reflection meetings that functioned as a professional learning community. Two barriers recurred at both sites, namely the inconsistency of disciplinary approaches between home and school and the time demanded by collaborative planning, and both were addressed at the institutional level through parenting workshops and collaborative teacher forums.

The comparison between rural and urban settings indicates that while tactical implementation must adapt to local socio-cultural conditions, the underlying requirements of agency, mutual respect, and collaborative structure hold in both. Schools adopting this model should therefore replicate its managerial logic and select delivery channels appropriate to their own community rather than reproducing another school's specific activities.

On this basis the study recommends that teacher education programs and continuing professional development give greater priority to training in collaborative management and positive discipline, since the barrier most frequently reported by teachers concerned the preparation these methods demand rather than disagreement with their aims. School policy should support a whole-school approach to discipline that includes parents and the wider community, and should recognize collaborative planning time as part of a teacher's workload rather than an addition to it. Future research should pursue longitudinal designs capable of examining the longer-term effects of collaborative management on both academic achievement and character development as students progress to higher levels of education.

DECLARATIONS

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, S.M. and Y.I.; methodology, S.M. and Y.I.; investigation and data curation, S.M.; formal analysis, S.M.; writing—original draft preparation, S.M.; writing—review and editing, Y.I.; supervision, Y.I. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the article.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Research Ethics and Informed Consent

Permission was obtained from the relevant education offices and from both schools before fieldwork, consent was obtained from teachers and parents, and parental consent was secured before any student was interviewed. Individual identities are not disclosed, and records containing personal student data were examined on school premises without being copied.

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Data Availability Statement

Anonymized interview transcripts, field notes, and coding records are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Student records and disciplinary incident logs are not available because they contain personal data of minors.

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