

IMPROVING STUDENT'S DISCIPLINE THROUGH THE BEHAVIORIST LEARNING THEORY APPROACH AT SMA X IN ENDE REGENCY

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 20-06-2026

Revised : 28-07-2026

Accepted : 05-08-2026

KEYWORDS

Behaviorist learning theory; students discipline; guidance and counseling; psychopedagogical approach; secondary school

ABSTRACT

Student discipline is one of the important factors that influences the success of the educational process. This study aims to describe students' disciplinary problems and analyze the implementation of a psychopedagogical approach based on behaviorist learning theory in improving students' discipline at SMA X in Ende Regency. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach conducted during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The research participants consisted of one guidance and counseling teacher, one principal, two homeroom teachers, eight students with a history of disciplinary violations, and five parents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Sandal. The findings revealed that students' disciplinary problems included tardiness, truancy, violations of school regulations, the use of mobile phones during learning activities, leaving the classroom without permission, and bullying behavior. The guidance and counseling teacher implemented behaviorist interventions including individual counseling, behavior shaping, behavior contracts, positive reinforcement, classroom guidance, home visits, and collaboration with parents.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a process aimed at developing students' potential to acquire academic competence, character, and attitudes that reflect the values of social life. One of the key factors contributing to the success of the educational process is student's learning discipline. Discipline is not merely related to compliance with school regulations but also reflects students' ability to regulate their behavior, manage time effectively, and fulfill their responsibilities as learners. A high level of learning discipline contributes to a conducive learning environment and improved academic achievement. More specifically, two major issues frequently encountered in Indonesian education are the low level of student participation and motivation in classroom learning, as well as the high incidence of disciplinary violations in schools. Several studies, both national and international, indicate that

students' learning motivation, particularly at the secondary school level, generally ranges from low to very low (Althaf Reifa & M. Mamduh, 2026).

Discipline is a fundamental aspect of character development and serves as an important indicator of educational success in schools. Disciplined behavior is reflected in students' obedience to school regulations, effective time management, responsibility in completing academic tasks, and respect for the norms established within the school environment. In the context of Indonesian education, strengthening disciplinary character is an essential component of implementing the Pancasila Student Profile, which emphasizes developing students who are faithful, independent, responsible, and possess integrity (Esti Homatul Hoeroh & Zabrina Azalia, 2026). Nevertheless, many schools continue to experience problems related to students' learning discipline. Common forms of disciplinary misconduct include student fights, tardiness, truancy, repeated violations of school regulations, mobile phone use during classroom instruction, and bullying. These conditions indicate that fostering disciplined behavior remains a significant challenge requiring systematic intervention, as such behaviors hinder the achievement of educational objectives and negatively affect students' character development. Therefore, continuous and systematic behavioral guidance strategies are needed to cultivate disciplined learning habits among students.

Recent studies have demonstrated that students' disciplinary behavior is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include learning motivation, self-control, and individual awareness of the importance of discipline. External factors encompass parenting styles, the school environment, peer influence, and the consistency with which teachers enforce school regulations. Furthermore, recent research suggests that psychopedagogical approaches integrating learning theories with guidance and counseling practices can effectively enhance students' disciplinary behavior. On the other hand, the rapid development of social media and changing patterns of adolescent interaction have contributed to increasingly complex forms of deviant behavior, thereby requiring more adaptive intervention strategies.

Senior High School X in Ende Regency is a private secondary school that educates its students through an egalitarian approach while promoting cultural values and local wisdom. Most students at this school have previously transferred from various secondary schools across Ende Regency. Based on preliminary observations conducted during the pre-research stage, a considerable number of students exhibited disciplinary problems. Consequently, this study examines these issues from a behaviorist perspective as implemented within the school's teaching and learning processes.

Theoretical Framework

Behaviorist learning theory explains that learning is a change in observable behavior resulting from the interaction between stimulus and response. Behavioral changes occur through habituation, reinforcement, and the application of consequences to specific actions. According to Burrhus Frederic Skinner, behaviors followed by positive reinforcement are more likely to be repeated, whereas behaviors that receive no reinforcement or are followed by certain consequences tend to decrease in frequency (Skinner, 1953). Therefore, the development of students' learning discipline can be achieved through the consistent provision of reinforcement for positive behaviors.

In addition to Skinner, Edward Lee Thorndike proposed the Law of Effect, which states that behaviors producing satisfying consequences are likely to be repeated, whereas behaviors producing unpleasant consequences are less likely to recur (Thorndike, 1911). This concept suggests that cultivating disciplined behavior through appropriate rewards and proportional consequences can help students develop positive learning habits. This perspective is further supported by John Broadus Watson, who argued that human behavior is shaped by the environment through the relationship between stimulus and response (Watson, 1913). Consequently, the school environment plays a strategic role in fostering students' disciplinary behavior.

In the educational context, the application of behaviorist principles is not limited to punishment but rather emphasizes reinforcing desired behaviors through rewards, feedback, habituation, teacher modeling, and consistent implementation of school regulations. According to Robert Mills Gagné, learning is a process that results in changes

in an individual's capabilities through experience and practice (Gagné, 1985). Therefore, the development of learning discipline requires repeated practice until disciplined behavior becomes a stable habit.

SMA X in Ende Regency, as a secondary educational institution, is committed to developing students who are disciplined, responsible, and high-achieving. In implementing the teaching and learning process, the school continuously develops various strategies to improve students' learning discipline through school regulations, habitual activities, teacher supervision, and rewards for positive behavior. However, the effectiveness of applying behaviorist principles in improving students' learning discipline still requires further investigation to better understand the implementation process, the forms of reinforcement employed, and their influence on students' behavioral changes. This statement serves as the rationale for the study and does not imply that the effectiveness of these principles has already been empirically established.

Based on the above discussion, this study is important because it examines the implementation of behaviorist principles in improving students' learning discipline at SMA X in Ende Regency. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of educational psychology, particularly regarding the application of behaviorist learning theory in shaping disciplinary behavior. In addition, the results are expected to provide practical recommendations for school principals, teachers, and other stakeholders in designing more effective, systematic, and sustainable strategies for fostering students' learning discipline.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to provide an in-depth description of students' disciplinary problems and the forms of intervention implemented through a psychopedagogical approach based on behaviorist learning theory at SMA X in Ende Regency. The research was conducted during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year.

The research participants consisted of one guidance and counseling (GC) teacher, one principal, two homeroom teachers, eight students with a history of disciplinary violations, and five parents. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in handling disciplinary cases.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to identify both disciplined behaviors and violations of school regulations. In-depth interviews were carried out with the guidance and counseling teacher, homeroom teachers, the principal, students, and parents to obtain information regarding the factors contributing to students' indiscipline and the strategies used to address these issues. Documentation, including school regulations, counseling case records, attendance records, parent notification letters, and home visit reports, was used to support the findings.

The research instruments consisted of observation guidelines, semi-structured interview guides, and documentation checklists developed based on indicators of student discipline and behaviorist learning theory. Data trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking with the primary informants.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis was conducted continuously throughout the data collection process until a comprehensive understanding of students' disciplinary behavior patterns and the behaviorist interventions implemented by the guidance and counseling teacher was obtained.

Table 1. Research Informant

Informant	Number	Role
Guidance Counselor Teacher	1	Main Informant
Principal	1	Supporting Informant
Homeroom Teacher	2	Supporting Informant

Informant	Number	Role
Student	8	Main Informant
Parent	5	Supporting Informant

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Forms of Students' Disciplinary Problems

The results of observations and interviews revealed that the most common forms of disciplinary violations committed by students included arriving late at school, being absent without permission, failing to wear the complete school uniform, using mobile phones during classroom instruction, leaving the classroom without permission, and engaging in bullying. According to the guidance and counseling (GC) teacher, most violations were repeatedly committed by the same students, indicating that these behaviors had developed into habitual patterns.

Table 2. Type of Disciplinary Violations Identified

Type of Violations	Conditions
Arriving Late	Often
Skip School	Quite Often
Not using all attributes	Often
Using a Cell Phone While Studying	Often
Bullying	Still Found
Violating the rules	Repeated

These findings suggest that indiscipline is not a spontaneous behavior but rather a learned response developed through continuous stimulus–response interactions. Nevertheless, the school consistently provides guidance and support. For example, students with disciplinary problems are often encouraged to participate in religious education activities conducted at nearby places of worship, with the expectation that such activities will help condition them toward more positive behaviors.

2. Analysis of Disciplinary Problems Based on Behaviorist Learning Theory

From the behaviorist perspective, individual behavior is formed through the relationship between stimulus and response, which is strengthened by specific consequences. Based on the interview findings, students' disciplinary problems were influenced by inadequate parental supervision, unfavorable peer environments, low learning motivation, and inconsistent enforcement of consequences for disciplinary violations.

The family serves as the primary educational environment for every individual. Therefore, parents are encouraged to collaborate with the school by supporting disciplinary measures and reinforcing agreed-upon consequences as part of the process of eliminating undesirable behaviors.

Several students admitted that they frequently arrived late because they were accustomed to waking up late and received little supervision from their families. This repeated stimulus gradually formed the habit of arriving late at school. Conversely, students who received praise or rewards for demonstrating disciplined behavior were more likely to maintain such positive behaviors. Since each student has different underlying causes of indiscipline, teachers provide rewards and verbal appreciation to students who demonstrate behavioral improvement in order to strengthen and maintain these positive changes.

These findings are consistent with B. F. Skinner's theory of operant conditioning, which explains that behavior is more likely to increase when followed by positive reinforcement and decrease when reinforcement is absent or when consistent consequences are applied.

3. Teachers' Interventions in Addressing Student Discipline

The guidance and counseling teacher implemented several behaviorist intervention techniques to address students' disciplinary problems, including:

1. Individual counseling to identify the causes of students' behavior.
2. Developing daily activity schedules (behavior shaping).
3. Establishing behavior contracts.
4. Providing positive reinforcement through praise, motivation, and rewards.
5. Contacting parents when students repeatedly violated school regulations.
6. Conducting home visits for students experiencing family problems or frequent absenteeism.
7. Delivering classroom guidance sessions on discipline, character education, and bullying prevention.

Collaboration among the guidance and counseling teacher, homeroom teachers, the principal, and parents played a significant role in facilitating students' behavioral change. Consistent supervision both at school and at home strengthened positive stimuli and contributed to the development of better disciplinary habits.

4. Psychopedagogical Implications

The psychopedagogical approach based on behaviorist learning theory suggests that developing students' disciplinary character cannot rely solely on punishment. Instead, it should be fostered through habituation, positive reinforcement, teacher role modeling, and active family involvement. Guidance and counseling teachers function as facilitators who assist students in developing adaptive behaviors through structured learning experiences. Consequently, improvements in disciplinary behavior can occur gradually and be sustained over time.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that disciplinary problems among students at Senior High School X in Ende Regency are characterized by late arrivals at school, truancy, violations of school regulations, the use of mobile phones during classroom learning, and bullying behavior. From the perspective of behaviorist learning theory, these behaviors are formed through stimulus-response relationships influenced by family environment, peer groups, and repeated learning experiences. School counselors have implemented various behavioristic interventions, including individual counseling, daily schedule planning (shaping), behavior contracts, positive reinforcement, classroom guidance services, home visits, and collaboration with parents. These strategies have proven effective in reducing undisciplined behavior while strengthening students' positive habits. This study emphasizes that successful discipline development requires synergy among school counselors, homeroom teachers, school principals, parents, and the school environment through the consistent implementation of positive reinforcement. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for the development of guidance and counseling services based on behaviorist theory to improve students' discipline in schools.

The authors express their deepest gratitude to Almighty God for His blessings and grace, which made the completion of this article possible. The authors would like to extend their sincere appreciation to their colleagues for their support, assistance, and excellent cooperation throughout the preparation of this article. The authors also express their heartfelt gratitude to their academic supervisor for the guidance, valuable input, constructive criticism, and suggestions provided from the planning stage through the completion of this research. Appreciation is also extended to the school, the principal, teachers, and all participating students for granting permission, providing assistance, and cooperating during the data collection process.

In addition, the authors would like to thank all friends for their moral support, encouragement, and assistance, which contributed significantly to the successful completion of this research.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest, either financial or non-financial, related to this research and the preparation of this article. The entire research process was conducted independently, objectively, and in accordance with the ethical standards of scientific research, without any intervention from external parties that could influence the findings or the interpretation of the results.

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