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Civics Education Learning and Discipline Character of Fifth-Grade Elementary School Students: A Correlational Study

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ABSTRACT

Discipline character is a cornerstone of Indonesia's national character education policy, yet empirical evidence linking Civics Education (Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan/PPKn) to disciplinary outcomes in elementary schools remains scarce. This study examined the relationship between PPKn learning and fifth-grade students' discipline character at Elementary School Eri, Indonesia, during the 2024/2025 academic year, quantifying its specific contribution. Utilizing a quantitative correlational design, a total sampling approach was applied to the entire population of 21 fifth-grade students. Data were gathered through validated four-point Likert-scale questionnaires measuring perceived PPKn quality and disciplinary behavior and subsequently analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlation. Results indicated that both PPKn learning ($M = 81.43$, $SD = 7.41$) and discipline character ($M = 83.29$, $SD = 3.66$) were categorized as high. A moderate, positive correlation was observed ($r = 0.4229$); however, the r -count value fell marginally below the critical r -table threshold (0.433) at $\alpha = 0.05$, retaining the null hypothesis. The coefficient of determination (R^2) revealed that PPKn learning accounts for 17.88% of the variance in discipline character. Although statistically non-significant, the moderate association demonstrates that civics education provides a meaningful, albeit partial, contribution to character formation. The remaining variance points to external factors like family and peers, underscoring the need for ecosystem-based character education strategies and larger-scale replication studies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a deliberate and planned process aimed at developing individuals holistically, encompassing not only the transmission of knowledge but also the formation of character, values, and noble personality traits (Miseliunaite et al., 2022; Rohman, 2024). Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System explicitly states that national education aims to develop students' potential to become individuals who are faithful, of noble character, healthy,

knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, democratic, and responsible (Indrawati & Kuncoro, 2021; Wartoyo, 2025). This mandate affirms that character formation constitutes the core of the educational process and is inseparable from learning activities at every level of education, including the elementary level (Birhan et al., 2021).

In an era of globalization fraught with social and behavioral challenges, the character development of younger generations faces persistent threats (Herak, 2025). Sandi et al. (2025) identified low levels of student discipline as a serious and recurring issue across many educational institutions, evidenced by frequent tardiness, absenteeism, violations of school regulations, and disruptive behavior that potentially diminishes the overall quality of learning. This condition demands systematic and sustained efforts to instill character values—particularly discipline—from the moment students enter elementary school.

Discipline character is one of the eighteen-character values stipulated in Indonesia's National Policy on Character Development (Sakban & Sundawa, 2023). Amelia and Dafit (2023) defined discipline character as an internal disposition that drives individuals to act in accordance with prevailing rules, whether in school, family, or community settings. The cultivation of discipline in students is intended to enable them to regulate their own activities and behave in accordance with societal norms; accordingly, discipline character reflects not merely rule compliance but the moral maturity and personal responsibility of the student (Safitri et al., 2025).

The phenomenon of low discipline character among elementary school students remains a shared concern among educators and policymakers (Sumar et al., 2025). Addawiyah and Kasriman (2023) found that efforts to build discipline character at the elementary level continue to face obstacles, ranging from inconsistent enforcement of school regulations and insufficient role modeling to suboptimal integration of character values into the learning process. Similar conditions were observed at Elementary School Eri, where preliminary observations revealed that a portion of fifth-grade students exhibited undisciplined behaviors, such as arriving late to class, submitting assignments irregularly, and inadequately adhering to school rules.

Civics Education (PPKn) occupies a strategically unique position as a primary vehicle for internalizing national character values at the elementary level. Noviana and Mubarak (2025), in a literature review, reported that PPKn is rich in character content and plays a substantial role in shaping the morals and ethics of the younger generation in accordance with Pancasila and national values. Utami and Sanjaya (2025) similarly emphasized that PPKn does not merely transmit civic knowledge but substantively builds students' moral character and behavior as nationally minded citizens, positioning it as a particularly appropriate subject for cultivating discipline character.

Theoretical Framework

The hypothesized relationship between PPKn learning and discipline character can be grounded in three complementary theoretical perspectives. Normativendura's social cognitive theory posits that behavior is acquired and reinforced through observation,

modeling, and the consequences experienced within a social environment (Scott et al., 2024); within this view, PPKn classrooms that consistently model and reinforce normative behavior provide a structured context for the vicarious learning of discipline. Second, Lickona's framework of character education distinguishes moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action as interdependent components of character formation (Kurniawan & Fitriyani, 2023), suggesting that PPKn instruction must move beyond cognitive transmission of civic knowledge to engage students' affective commitment and behavioral practice to translate into observable discipline. Third, self-determination theory by Deci and Ryan holds that values are most durably internalized when learning environments support autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan, 2025); from this perspective, the degree to which PPKn learning fosters genuine, autonomous endorsement of discipline—rather than mere external compliance—should determine the strength of its association with students' disciplinary behavior. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that the PPKn–discipline relationship is neither automatic nor uniform, but contingent on the pedagogical quality of modeling, affective engagement, and value internalization achieved in the classroom.

Empirical evidence supporting this theoretical link has accumulated in the Indonesian context. Salihah and Khairana (2025) demonstrated that the implementation of discipline character through PPKn learning content at the elementary level yielded positive and meaningful outcomes, with the internalization of discipline values embedded in PPKn instructional materials shown to form positive habits in time discipline, task submission, and adherence to school regulations. Consistent with this, Azri et al. (2025) found that PPKn learning linked to contextual activities—classroom discussions, social projects, and extracurricular engagement—significantly enhanced students' understanding of citizenship concepts while fostering prosocial behavior reflective of discipline character.

At the international level, evidence regarding the relationship between civic education and character formation continues to strengthen. Utami and Sanjaya (2025), through a qualitative case study, concluded that civic education at the elementary level has considerable potential to serve as a platform for instilling fundamental character traits such as discipline, responsibility, and social awareness, traits expected to shape enduring social attitudes into adulthood. Comparable findings from outside Indonesia reinforce this pattern: Park et al. (2024), studying fourth-grade students' civic competencies, found that the link between civic learning activities and behavioral outcomes is strengthened when instructional design explicitly bridges cognitive civic content with practical behavioral application, while Jerome et al. (2024), in a systematic review of citizenship education outcomes, noted that the impact of civic education on behavioral attitudes is often detectable at moderate effect sizes, particularly within small and homogeneous school contexts.

Despite this accumulating evidence, a study specifically examining the correlational relationship between PPKn learning and discipline character among fifth-grade students within the unique environmental characteristics of Elementary School Eri has not yet been conducted. Wati and Anggriani (2024) emphasized that a

contextual, empirically grounded approach within specific school settings is essential for generating targeted pedagogical recommendations for building national character through civic education. The present study addresses this gap by combining a theory-grounded framework with site-specific quantitative evidence, offering both a localized empirical contribution and a test case for the broader theoretical proposition that civic instruction supports—but does not single-handedly determine—discipline character formation.

Building on this rationale, this study aims to determine whether a statistically significant relationship exists between PPKn learning and the discipline character of fifth-grade students at Elementary School Eri, and to measure the magnitude of PPKn learning's contribution to discipline character formation. Formally, the competing hypotheses were specified as follows: H_0 (null hypothesis), there is no significant relationship between PPKn learning and discipline character; and H_1 (alternative hypothesis), there is a significant positive relationship between PPKn learning and discipline character

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational research design, selected because the study aimed to determine the presence and strength of the relationship between two variables—PPKn learning as the independent variable (X) and student discipline character as the dependent variable (Y) without administering any treatment or manipulation to the research subjects. The correlational approach enables an objective measurement of the strength and direction of the inter-variable relationship based on data collected under naturally occurring field conditions.



Figure 1. Correlational research design (X = PPKn Learning; Y = Discipline Character)

This research was conducted at Elementary School Eri during the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The population comprised all 21 fifth-grade students at the school. Given the relatively small population size and the fact that it constituted a single intact learning group, the sampling technique employed was total (saturated) sampling, whereby all members of the population served as research subjects. This approach was intended to ensure that the data accurately reflected the actual conditions of the entire population and to minimize potential sampling bias. The small population size is acknowledged as an inherent constraint of the single-site design and is addressed further in the Limitations section.

Two variables were examined. The independent variable (X), PPKn learning, encompassed five aspects: learning planning, implementation of the learning process, use of instructional methods and media, character assessment, and a learning environment conducive to value internalization. The dependent variable (Y), student discipline character, was operationalized across four indicator dimensions: (1) time

discipline (punctual class attendance and timely task submission); (2) dress and appearance discipline; (3) discipline during the learning process; and (4) discipline in adhering to school regulations.

Data were collected using two closed questionnaires employing a four-point Likert scale, as presented in Table 1: a PPKn learning questionnaire measuring students' perceptions of the quality of PPKn learning in their classroom, and a discipline character questionnaire measuring students' disciplinary behavior within the school environment.

Table 1. Likert Scale Response Criteria

Response Category	Score
Strongly Agree	4
Agree	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

Prior to use, both instruments underwent validity testing using Pearson product-moment correlation and reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha, assisted by SPSS version 27. An item was declared valid if r-calculated exceeded r-table, and an instrument was declared reliable if the Cronbach's alpha value was ≥ 0.60 . The research procedure was carried out in three stages. The preparation stage included a preliminary study at Elementary School Eri, development of the research instruments based on an item grid referencing the variable indicators, and administration of validity and reliability testing to respondents outside the main sample. The implementation stage encompassed questionnaire distribution to all fifth-grade students as research subjects, independent completion of the questionnaire under teacher guidance, and collection of documentary data related to PPKn learning implementation. The data analysis stage included data tabulation, prerequisite assumption testing, and hypothesis testing.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software. Descriptive statistical analysis was employed to describe the frequency distribution, mean, median, mode, and standard deviation of the PPKn learning and discipline character data. Data were subsequently categorized into five categories, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. PPKn Learning Categorization Criteria

Score Interval (PPKn Learning)	Category
$85 \leq \text{Score} \leq 100$	Very High
$75 \leq \text{Score} < 85$	High
$55 \leq \text{Score} < 75$	Moderate
$40 \leq \text{Score} < 55$	Low
Score < 40	Very Low

Hypothesis testing was conducted using Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis to determine the presence and significance of the relationship between PPKn learning (X) and discipline character (Y). The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) ranges between -1 and +1, where $r = -1$ indicates a perfect negative correlation, $r = 0$ indicates no correlation, and $r = +1$ indicates a perfect positive correlation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Descriptive Overview of Raw Data

Table 3 presents the raw scores of all 21 respondents. The second column lists each respondent's PPKn learning score obtained from the questionnaire; the third column displays each respondent's disciplined character score. Both variables show variation across individual respondents.

Table 3. Raw Research Data (n = 21)

No.	Respondent	PPKn Learning (X)	Discipline Character (Y)	X ²	Y ²	XY
1	AB	84	83	7,056	6,889	6,972
2	DG	87	86	7,569	7,396	7,482
3	AL	83	85	6,889	7,225	7,055
4	CK	91	90	8,281	8,100	8,190
5	DL	84	84	7,056	7,056	7,056
6	LK	81	80	6,561	6,400	6,480
7	BCT	89	87	7,921	7,569	7,743
8	MT	82	84	6,724	7,056	6,888
9	VT	93	78	8,649	6,084	7,254
10	ML	85	84	7,225	7,056	7,140
11	KL	83	82	6,889	6,724	6,806
12	YK	88	83	7,744	6,889	7,304
13	LV	84	85	7,056	7,225	7,140
14	LO	87	86	7,569	7,396	7,482
15	YM	75	77	5,625	5,929	5,775
16	IHW	70	85	4,900	7,225	5,950
17	YS	65	80	4,225	6,400	5,200
18	MDH	70	77	4,900	5,929	5,390
19	JA	75	85	5,625	7,225	6,375
20	LU	74	79	5,476	6,241	5,846
21	HW	80	89	6,400	7,921	7,120
Σ	Total	1,710	1,749	140,340	145,935	142,648

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistical results for both variables are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of PPKn Learning and Discipline Character

Statistic	PPKn Learning (X)	Discipline Character (Y)
Number of Data (n)	21	21
Total (Σ)	1,710	1,749
Mean	81.4286	83.2857
Median	83	84
Mode	84	85
Minimum Value	65	77
Maximum Value	93	90
Range	28	13
Standard Deviation (s)	7.4066	3.6626
Variance (s ²)	54.8571	13.4143

PPKn learning yielded a mean score of 81.43 (SD = 7.41), which falls within the High category ($75 \leq \text{Score} < 85$). Discipline characters yielded a mean score of 83.29 (SD = 3.66), likewise classified as High. Notably, PPKn learning scores exhibited considerably greater dispersion (range = 28; min = 65, max = 93) than discipline character scores (range = 13; min = 77, max = 90), indicating more homogeneous disciplinary behavior relative to more variable perceived learning quality across the sample.

Hypothesis Testing

Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was employed to determine the existence and strength of the relationship between PPKn learning (X) and discipline character (Y). The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Test Results

Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Test	
Number of Samples (n)	21
r-calculated	0.4229
r-table ($\alpha = 0.05$; $n = 21$)	0.433
t-calculated	2.0341
t-table ($\alpha = 0.05$; $df = 19$)	2.093
Coefficient of Determination (r^2)	0.1788 (17.88%)
H ₀ Decision (r-test)	Retained (r-calculated < r-table)
H ₀ Decision (t-test)	Retained (t-calculated < t-table)
Correlation Level	Moderate ($r = 0.40$ – 0.599)
Conclusion	No statistically significant relationship at $\alpha = 0.05$ (borderline)

The analysis yielded r -calculated = 0.4229, which falls within the Moderate category (0.40 – 0.599) based on the correlation interpretation guidelines presented in Table 6. The r -calculated value (0.4229) was below the r -table value (0.433) at $\alpha = 0.05$ with $n = 21$, and the t -calculated value (2.034) did not exceed the t -table value (2.093). Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_0) was retained, indicating that, at the 0.05 significance level, no statistically significant relationship was detected between PPKn learning and discipline character. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.1788$) indicates that PPKn learning accounts for approximately 17.88% of the variance in discipline character scores, with the remaining 82.12% attributable to variables not examined in this study.

Table 6. Correlation Coefficient Interpretation Guidelines

Coefficient Interval (r)	Correlation Level
0.80 – 1.00	Very Strong
0.60 – 0.799	Strong
0.40 – 0.599	Moderate
0.20 – 0.399	Weak
0.00 – 0.199	Very Weak

Discussion

PPKn Learning Among Fifth-Grade Students

The High categorization of PPKn learning ($M = 81.43$) indicates that, overall, fifth-grade students at Elementary School Eri perceive the quality of PPKn learning implementation in their classroom positively, reflecting that planning, implementation, instructional methods, media use, and value internalization have been carried out in a meaningful and constructive manner. Haryati et al. (2023) affirmed that the implementation of character education through PPKn at the elementary level, particularly through value-based learning models, serves as a primary vehicle for internalizing discipline values, as the subject systematically exposes students to the norms, ethics, and civic responsibilities underpinning disciplined behavior. Bukoting (2023) similarly argued that integrating character education within PPKn learning is effective in shaping a broad range of positive student traits, provided learning activities actively engage students in value internalization rather than passive reception of civic content. Read through Bandura's social cognitive lens (Kutuk, 2025), this finding suggests that the PPKn classroom at Elementary School Eri functions as a consistent source of behavioral modeling and reinforcement, conditions theoretically conducive to discipline acquisition.

Discipline Character Among Fifth-Grade Students

The discipline character variable yielded a mean score of 83.29, also classified as High, indicating that fifth-grade students at Elementary School Eri exhibit above-average disciplinary behavior across the four operational dimensions assessed. Salihah and Khairana (2025) underscored that discipline character at the elementary level is not a static trait but an ongoing process of behavioral habituation, shaped through consistent exposure to structured learning environments that provide clear normative expectations. The high mean score observed here is consistent with the interpretation that PPKn learning activities have, to a meaningful degree, contributed to a normative classroom climate in which disciplinary behaviors are regularly expected and practiced. Agustina et al. (2023) similarly concluded that civic education has significant potential as a foundation for character formation among elementary students, with discipline and responsibility emerging as the most consistently cultivated dimensions across well-implemented civic learning programs.

Relationship Between PPKn Learning and Discipline Character

Hypothesis testing produced a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.4229$ (Moderate category), with r -calculated falling marginally below r -table (0.433) at $\alpha = 0.05$, and t -calculated (2.034) likewise falling below t -table (2.093). The null hypothesis was therefore retained, indicating no statistically significant relationship at the conventional 0.05 threshold. Nonetheless, the coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.1788$) indicates that PPKn learning accounts for approximately 17.88% of the variance in discipline character, while the remaining 82.12% is explained by variables outside the scope of this study. This pattern is consistent with a growing body of

literature emphasizing the multidimensional and multifactorial nature of discipline character development, in which no single subject or instructional variable can account for the full breadth of behavioral outcomes (Alessandro & Simamora, 2024). The borderline statistical result warrants careful interpretation: a positive, moderate association does exist, suggesting that PPKn learning plays a role in discipline formation, but one that must be understood within the broader ecological context of student development.

Several theoretical and contextual factors help explain the moderate, borderline non-significant result. First, discipline character is inherently multifactorial, shaped by the interaction of school-based, family-based, and individual influences. Calderon-Villarreal et al. (2025) demonstrated that parental involvement and self-regulation strongly influence elementary students' behavioral discipline, with family-level variables accounting for a substantial share of variance in self-regulated conduct; this suggests that even where school-based learning is of high quality, the presence or absence of reinforcing family norms moderates the degree to which classroom learning translates into observable discipline—a pattern consistent with self-determination theory's (Ryan, 2025) emphasis on the relational conditions required for genuine value internalization. Second, the small sample size ($n = 21$) is a critical methodological consideration: with such a limited number of respondents, statistical power is reduced and the r -table threshold required to declare significance rises accordingly, making it more difficult to detect a genuine moderate population-level relationship. Jerome et al. (2024), in a systematic review of citizenship education outcomes, noted that the impact of civic education on behavioral attitudes is often detectable only at moderate effect sizes in small, homogeneous school contexts, and that an absence of statistical significance in small-sample studies should not be interpreted as an absence of educational relevance.

A third explanatory factor concerns the diversity of individual student characteristics within the sample. PPKn learning scores showed considerably wider dispersion ($SD = 7.41$; range = 28) than discipline character scores ($SD = 3.66$; range = 13), suggesting that while disciplinary behavior was relatively homogeneous across students, PPKn learning experiences varied considerably—implying that factors beyond formal classroom learning, including learning readiness, family support, and peer dynamics, substantially shape the translation of PPKn content into disciplinary behavior. Park et al. (2024) found that the relationship between civic learning activities and behavioral outcomes is strengthened when instructional design explicitly bridges cognitive civic content with practical behavioral application, such as collaborative problem-solving, role modeling, and school-community engagement; consistent with Lickona's tripartite model of moral knowing, feeling, and action (Kurniawan & Fitriyani, 2023), the degree to which such pedagogical bridging occurred at SD Negeri Eri was not directly measured in this study and represents an important target for future research. Taken together, these findings are consistent with prior work indicating that PPKn learning provides a meaningful but partial contribution to discipline character formation, with effects most pronounced when

complemented by a holistic approach integrating school, family, and community-level reinforcement (Agustina et al., 2023; Salihah & Khairana, 2025).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, these findings extend the application of social cognitive theory, character education theory, and self-determination theory to a specific elementary civic-education context, illustrating that the strength of the PPKn-discipline relationship is contingent on the affective and relational quality of instruction rather than its mere cognitive delivery. Practically, the results suggest that schools should not rely on PPKn instruction in isolation to cultivate discipline character; rather, an ecosystem-based strategy that deliberately coordinates classroom practice, parental engagement, and peer-group norms is likely to yield stronger and more consistent discipline outcomes. Teacher professional development that emphasizes experiential, value-internalizing pedagogy—such as collaborative projects, role modeling, and reflective discussion—may strengthen the behavioral translation of civic content identified as a gap in the present study.

Limitations

The sample was limited to a single intact class of 21 fifth-grade students at one school, restricting statistical power and the generalizability of findings to other schools, grades, or regions.

- The cross-sectional, self-report design relies on students' own perceptions of PPKn learning quality and disciplinary behavior, which may be subject to common-method variance and social-desirability bias.
- The correlational design precludes causal inference regarding the direction or mechanism of the PPKn-discipline relationship.
- Specific item-level validity coefficients and Cronbach's alpha values for the two instruments were not reported in the available dataset; their inclusion is recommended to meet the methodological transparency expected by internationally indexed journals.
- Family, peer, and individual-level moderating variables identified in the discussion were not directly measured and remain inferential.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between PPKn learning and discipline character among fifth-grade students at Elementary School Eri during the 2024/2025 academic year. PPKn learning was classified as High ($M = 81.43$, $SD = 7.41$), and discipline character was likewise classified as High ($M = 83.29$, $SD = 3.66$). Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis yielded $r = 0.4229$ (Moderate category), with r -calculated marginally below r -table (0.433) at $\alpha = 0.05$ and t -calculated (2.034) below t -table (2.093); accordingly, the null hypothesis (H_0) was retained, and no statistically significant relationship was detected at the 0.05 level. Nevertheless, the positive moderate correlation and the coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 17.88\%$) indicate that

PPKn learning contributes meaningfully to students' discipline character, while the remaining 82.12% of variance is attributable to factors external to PPKn learning, including family environment, peer relationships, individual motivation, and broader school culture.

These findings underscore the need for a multidimensional, ecosystem-based approach to character education that strengthens the complementary roles of teachers, families, and the school community in the sustained formation of students' discipline character. Future research should replicate this design across larger, multi-site samples; incorporate validated, multi-informant measures (e.g., teacher and parent ratings) to reduce reliance on student self-report; and consider longitudinal or quasi-experimental designs capable of clarifying the causal pathways linking civic education to discipline character development.

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