



Comparative Analysis of the Role of Social Environment (Bandura) and Cultural Mediation (VYGOTSKY) in Character Education Literature

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to conduct a theoretical deconstruction of the mechanisms of student discipline formation by comparing two major perspectives: Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Lev Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory. The research method used is library research with a qualitative descriptive approach. Data analysis was conducted through content analysis techniques on primary and secondary works relevant to both figures. The results of the study indicate that, according to Bandura, discipline is constructed through modeling and vicarious reinforcement mechanisms that culminate in the formation of self-efficacy. Meanwhile, Vygotsky emphasized that discipline is a product of the internalization of cultural values mediated by language and scaffolding within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The conclusion of this study confirms that ideal student discipline is the result of a synergistic combination of imitation of appropriate role models and conscious internalization of cultural values. The implications of this study offer a framework for educational institutions to integrate aspects of the visual environment (role models) and dialogic interaction (interpretation of rules) in character education curricula.

Keywords: Social Theory, Socio-Cultural, Character Education

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of student discipline problems today has become a complex and diverse issue, transcending the boundaries typically found within the classroom. Information from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), through the latest PISA report, consistently shows that disciplinary conditions are closely linked to students' academic performance and mental health. (PISA 2022 Results (Volume I and II) - Country Notes: Indonesia, 2023) In Indonesia, data released by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) and various recent studies indicate an increase in deviant behavior, (KPAI Public Relations, 2025) ranging from bullying to decreased compliance with institutional norms, which is exacerbated by the disruption of digital technology.

This crisis demonstrates that regulating student behavior can no longer be done solely through formal laws or administrative sanctions. Educational institutions, especially boarding-based institutions, now face significant challenges in instilling values amidst the abundance of information that is changing the image of role models. Therefore, strengthening character within the education system is crucial. A theoretical reconstruction capable of explaining this is needed. The role of the social environment as a provider of behavioral

examples, and how institutional culture can influence how students understand discipline. (Kurniati, 2025) In this context, the combination of Albert Bandura's social learning theory and Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural perspective becomes important to analyze the way discipline is formed which is not only mechanical, but also organic and rooted in shared consciousness.

Based on the background explanation, the main issue found in this study is the disharmony between external rules imposed by institutions and the formation of disciplinary awareness in students. Theoretically, discipline is often understood separately; either solely as a consequence of environmental imitation (social learning) or as a result of cultural interaction alone. This difficulty is further compounded by students' declining confidence in facing moral distortions in the digital world, which often conflict with the character values instilled in schools or dormitories. There is an urgent need to analyze how consistent modeling processes and appropriate cultural support can work together to build sustainable disciplined behavior. Therefore, this study focuses on finding conceptual common ground between Bandura's reciprocal determinism and Vygotsky's symbolic mediation as theoretical approaches to addressing the character crisis in educational institutions.

This study aims to reanalyze and theoretically reformulate the concept of student discipline by comparing Albert Bandura's social learning theory with Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. More specifically, this study aims to map the similarities and differences between the two theories in explaining how discipline is formed. Furthermore, this study seeks to formulate a conceptual framework that integrates the role of the social environment as a provider of behavioral models (Bandura) with the role of culture as a tool for internalizing values (Vygotsky). In this way, this study is expected to provide a clearer theoretical understanding of how to cultivate discipline without coercion, but through a synergistic educational ecosystem.

Practically, the results of this study are intended for educational institution managers and educators, especially in dormitory or Islamic boarding school environments, as a strategic basis for formulating disciplinary policies. By understanding how *modeling* and cultural scaffolding, educators can design more effective interventions that prioritize good role models and meaningful dialogue, leading to significant character change in students. Furthermore, this research provides new insights for policymakers in assessing character education curricula that are appropriate to the social challenges of today's digital age.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach (Sugiyono, 2020) This study uses library research to explore the phenomenon of the discipline crisis. The data sources in this study consist of primary data obtained from the original works of Albert Bandura and Lev Vygotsky, and secondary data in the form of journals, books, and articles related to character education and student discipline over the past 10 years. Data collection techniques are carried out through documentation and thematic studies. Furthermore, the collected data is then analyzed comparatively to find the points of agreement and differences between the two theories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory

The construction of discipline in Albert Bandura's view begins with the mechanism of imitation and learning from other people's experiences. (Nadila Ambriyani et al., 2024) Bandura (1986) stated that much human behavior is learned by closely observing the actions of others, where learners tend to adopt disciplinary attitudes if they see individuals perceived as having authority or social closeness exhibiting consistency in such behavior. (Syafii & Purnomo, 2024) This process is not linear, but rather through the concept of reciprocal determinism, which includes dynamic and continuous interactions between

personal factors (thoughts), the environment, and the behavior itself.(Albert Bandura, 1997)In this case, the dormitory environment serves as a source of social stimulation that shapes students' way of thinking about what is considered acceptable or unacceptable behavior.

Furthermore, success in internalizing discipline is greatly influenced by self-efficacy, namely a person's belief in his or her ability to organize and carry out the actions needed to achieve certain goals. (Albert Bandura, 1997)Students who have high self-efficacy are usually better able to regulate themselves regarding the rules that apply in the institution, because they see discipline not as an external burden, but as a sign of their self-control in achieving both academic and personal goals.(Abadi et al., 2026)Thus, discipline in Bandura's perspective is the result of a cognitive process that arises as a result of social observation and is reinforced by belief in one's own abilities.(Ode et al., 2025)

Lev Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory

In Lev Vygotsky's view, students' disciplinary behavior is seen not merely as a reaction to external stimuli, but as a result of the integration of cultural values and social norms. Vygotsky argued that every aspect of a child's cultural development emerges twice: first in the social (interpsychological) dimension and then in the personal (intrapyschological) dimension. (Lev Vygotsky, 1978)In this context, school discipline is initially perceived as a social interaction between students and More Knowledgeable Others (MKOs)—such as teachers, caregivers, or more experienced peers—who provide guidance through scaffolding. This support supports students in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the area where students are not yet fully capable of self-discipline but are able to do so with support.(Lev Vygotsky, 1978)

Furthermore, Vygotsky emphasized the importance of language as a tool that supports mental processes. Through conversation and verbal instruction, abstract principles are transformed into inner speech or internal dialogue that independently guides individual behavior. (Afriani et al., 2024)Thus, discipline in a socio-cultural context is not merely following orders mindlessly to authority, but rather a process in which students consciously understand the cultural norms of the institution as elements of their identity through social interaction and language.

Bandura's Construction of Discipline: Discipline as a Result of Observation

In Albert Bandura's theoretical perspective, student discipline is developed through observational learning, where individuals acquire new behavioral patterns by observing the actions of others and the consequences that accompany those actions. Bandura emphasized that humans learn not only from their own experiences but also cognitively process information from the social models around them. (Chairunnisa et al., 2025)In an educational context, disciplinary behavior from authority figures, such as teachers or seniors, serves as a symbolic model, providing students with a reference point for what constitutes appropriate behavior. This process is reinforced by observational reinforcement; when students witness peers receiving rewards for their discipline, they mentally construct that the same behavior will also yield positive results for themselves.(Albert Bandura, 1997)

Furthermore, Bandura explained that this observation is not passive imitation, but rather involves cognitive processes that include attention, memory storage, and motivation. Consistent discipline is formed when students are able to regulate themselves based on internal standards they derive from observing existing social models.(Rizzan et al., 2025)Thus, in the social cognitive view, discipline is a manifestation of an individual's ability to predict future consequences and direct their own behavior according to the behavioral patterns they learn from their social environment.(Albert Bandura, 1997)

Construction of Discipline according to Vygotsky: Discipline as a Cultural Product

In Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective, discipline is not seen as a mechanical adherence to rules, but rather as a process of internalizing cultural values that occurs through meaningful social interactions. Vygotsky argued that disciplinary behavior begins at the interpsychological level (between people) through guidance from adults or more competent peers (More Knowledgeable Others), before finally transforming into an intrapsychological function within the student. (Lev Vygotsky, 1978) In this context, institutional rules act as symbolic mediation tools that help students regulate their psychological functioning. Discipline emerges when students are able to overcome their impulsive inhibitions through scaffolding—temporary support provided by educators to help students operate within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) until they achieve moral independence. (Lev Vygotsky, 1978)

Furthermore, the construction of discipline in this view relies heavily on the role of language as a regulator of behavior. Vygotsky explains that social instructions from the environment will gradually be absorbed into the child's *inner speech* (inner speech), (Lev Vygotsky, 1978) where students begin to instruct themselves to maintain discipline without the need for constant external supervision. Thus, discipline is not simply a product of a supervisory system, but rather a manifestation of self-control acquired through active participation in the school culture. Discipline, in this sense, is a living cultural product; it is the result of a process of negotiating meaning between individual identity and the collective values prevailing in the environment. (Lev Vygotsky, 1981)

Comparative Analysis: The Dialectics of Modeling and Internalization in Disciplinary Construction

An analysis of the primary literature shows that although Bandura and Vygotsky come from different psychological traditions, they converge on one fundamental premise: discipline is not an emergent entity *inborn* (innate), but rather constructed through social reality.

Meeting Point: Socialization as a Basis for Self-Regulation

These two theories converge in viewing behavioral control as shifting from external to internal. Bandura, through the concept of reciprocal determinism, explains that the environment provides behavioral standards that are then internalized into self-efficacy. (Albert Bandura, 1986) In line with this, Vygotsky emphasized that cultural functions first appear in the social realm before becoming personal mastery. (Lev Vygotsky, 1978) In the context of character education, these two figures agree that without the presence of "others" (MKO according to Vygotsky or Model according to Bandura), individuals will not have a frame of reference for acting in a disciplined manner. (Husneti & Fitriani, 2023)

Point of Difference: Behavioral Acquisition Mechanisms

The stark difference lies in the medium of transformation. Bandura places greater emphasis on the visual and cognitive aspects of the library—what students see and evaluate. (Mida Hardianti, 2020) Discipline results from observing the consequences of a model (vicarious reinforcement). In contrast, Vygotsky emphasized linguistic and symbolic media. Discipline results from negotiating meaning through dialogue. While, in Bandura's view, students are disciplined by "seeing and imitating" the success of the model, (Albert Bandura, 1986) So in Vygotsky's view, students are disciplined because they have "understood and agreed" to the meaning of the rules through the help of scaffolding. (Lev Vygotsky, 1978)

Integrative Synthesis: A Holistic Disciplinary Framework

Bandura's theory's mechanistic weakness in imitation is offset by Vygotsky's deepening of meaning through cultural interaction. Conversely, Vygotsky's sometimes abstract weakness in individual motivation is reinforced by the concept of *self-*

efficacy Bandura. The synthesis of these two theories resulted in a model of "Participatory Discipline": (Witasari, 2024)

1. Observation Stage (Bandura): The institution provides consistent role models.
2. Mediation Stage (Vygotsky): There is a space for dialogue between teachers and students to discuss the philosophy behind the rules.
3. Internal Efficacy Stage (Synthesis): Students have the confidence to obey the rules because they feel capable (Bandura) and feel they own the rules as part of their group's culture (Vygotsky).

Implementation in Character Education Literature

The implementation of discipline in character education literature cannot be seen simply as the application of administrative rules, but should be structured as an interconnected social system. Based on the theoretical synthesis described above, the first step in implementation is creating a consistent modeling environment. Referring to Bandura, (Albert Bandura, 1986) Character education will be successful only if there is consistency between the values taught verbally and the behavior demonstrated by authority figures in schools. In modern character education studies, this is known as the hidden curriculum, where students acquire the ethos of discipline through observation in everyday life. However, simply modeling is not enough; this implementation must be reinforced with cultural scaffolding strategies. As Vygotsky emphasized, the role of educators is as mediators who help students navigate the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) through reflective dialogue about the meaning of rules. (Lev Vygotsky, 1978)

In its application, comprehensive character education literature recommends shifting the teacher's role from mere supervisor to "discussion partner" capable of facilitating the internalization of values. This implementation requires a discussion forum where rules are not only applied but also understood collectively to foster a strong inner voice within students. By combining strengthening self-efficacy through successful observation (Bandura) and symbolic meaning-making through social interaction (Vygotsky), educational institutions can foster a disciplined, autonomous character. (Retnaningsih, 2024) This implementation model ensures that the discipline that is formed is not the result of fear of punishment, but rather moral awareness that is rooted in the social and cognitive identity of students. (Lickona, 1991)

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that ideal student discipline is not a product of coercive obedience, but rather the synergistic combination of imitation of appropriate role models and conscious internalization of cultural values. Through Albert Bandura's lens, discipline begins with the provision of consistent and highly efficacious social models, where students absorb behavioral standards through observation and vicarious reinforcement. However, for such behavior to become an autonomous character, Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural mechanisms are required, where rules are mediated through dialogue and *scaffolding* to become part of the students' inner consciousness (inner speech). Thus, the integration between external aspects (modeling) and internal aspects (internalization of meaning) creates a holistic educational ecosystem; an environment where students are not only disciplined because they "see" good examples, but also because they consciously "interpret" discipline as an inseparable part of their cultural and moral identity.

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