




# A Conceptual and Theoretical Analysis of Discipline in School Studies: From Educational Order to Power Constructs

Niloufar. Parsafard<sup>1</sup> , Ali. Khalkhali<sup>1\*</sup> , Zohreh. Shakibaei<sup>1</sup> 

1. Department of Educational Sciences, To.C., Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran

\* Corresponding author email address: khalkhali\_ali@iau.ac.ir

## Article Info

### Article type:

Original Research

### How to cite this article:

Parsafard, N., Khalkhali, A., & Shakibaei, Z. (2026). A Conceptual and Theoretical Analysis of Discipline in School Studies: From Educational Order to Power Constructs. *AI and Tech in Behavioral and Social Sciences*, 4(3), 1-10.

<https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.aitech.5646>



© 2026 the authors. Published by KMAN Publication Inc. (KMANPUB), Ontario, Canada. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License.

## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the conceptual and historical transformation of school discipline and to examine its theoretical dimensions from the perspective of power theories, particularly within the framework of school studies, sociology of education, and critical educational thought. This research employed a qualitative, descriptive–analytical design grounded in a conceptual and theoretical approach. Data were collected through documentary and library-based methods, including the review and critical analysis of classical and contemporary texts in sociology of education, philosophy of education, school studies, and theories of power. Particular emphasis was placed on the perspectives of Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Henry Giroux, Michael Apple, and other critical theorists. Data analysis was conducted using a critical–interpretive framework to examine the historical evolution, conceptual foundations, and socio-political implications of discipline in educational institutions. The analysis demonstrated that school discipline has evolved from a primarily pedagogical mechanism for maintaining educational order into a complex power-oriented construct embedded within broader social and institutional relations. Findings indicated that disciplinary practices function through surveillance, assessment, normalization, and behavioral regulation, contributing to the production of compliant educational subjects. The study further revealed that discipline serves as a mechanism for the reproduction of social norms, cultural values, and, in some contexts, educational inequalities. Critical perspectives highlighted that disciplinary policies may reinforce dominant ideological structures, whereas participatory and democratic approaches to discipline can promote agency, critical awareness, self-regulation, and educational justice. The study concludes that school discipline should not be understood solely as a technical or managerial tool for maintaining order. Rather, it represents a multidimensional social mechanism that shapes identities, regulates behavior, and mediates power relations within educational settings.

**Keywords:** School discipline; School studies; Educational order; Power; Sociology of education; Critical pedagogy; Educational justice; Social control; Educational policy; Power theories.

## 1. Introduction

School is one of the most influential social institutions in shaping human behavior, transmitting cultural values, and reproducing social norms across generations.

Beyond its apparent educational functions, the school serves as a complex social arena where power relations, authority structures, identity formation processes, and mechanisms of social regulation continuously interact. Within this institutional framework, discipline has long

been regarded as a central element of educational practice because it is closely associated with order, classroom management, learning effectiveness, and the achievement of educational goals. Historically, educational systems have treated discipline as a necessary prerequisite for successful teaching and learning, emphasizing obedience to rules, respect for authority, and adherence to established norms. Consequently, discipline has often been perceived as a neutral and indispensable instrument for maintaining educational order and ensuring the efficient functioning of schools (Baghcheban, 2016; Durkheim, 1956; Durkheim, 1994).

Traditional perspectives on discipline emerged largely from functionalist conceptions of education, which viewed schools as institutions responsible for socializing younger generations into the moral and cultural values of society. From this standpoint, discipline facilitates the internalization of social norms and contributes to social cohesion by preparing students to function effectively within the broader social order. Educational order, classroom regulations, and behavioral expectations are therefore interpreted as essential components of a stable and productive learning environment. Such perspectives have significantly influenced educational policy and practice in many countries, where discipline is commonly associated with maintaining order, minimizing disruption, and maximizing academic achievement (Baghcheban, 2016; Durkheim, 1956; Durkheim, 1994; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006).

As educational systems became increasingly institutionalized and bureaucratized, disciplinary practices evolved alongside broader social and political transformations. Modern schooling introduced formal regulations, standardized curricula, examination systems, grading procedures, attendance requirements, and administrative structures that expanded the scope and complexity of discipline. Within these systems, discipline became more than a classroom management strategy; it emerged as an institutional mechanism that organizes students' time, behavior, movement, and performance according to predefined standards. Curriculum planning, educational management, and school governance structures have consequently incorporated disciplinary practices as fundamental components of educational administration (Fathi Vajargah, 2013; Khodadadi, 2018; Naghibzadeh, 2009).

However, beginning in the second half of the twentieth century, critical scholars challenged the assumption that

discipline is merely a neutral educational necessity. Among the most influential contributions to this debate are the works of Michel Foucault, who fundamentally transformed understandings of discipline by conceptualizing it as a technology of power rather than simply a mechanism of order. Foucault argued that modern institutions, including schools, prisons, hospitals, and military organizations, employ disciplinary techniques to regulate bodies, shape behavior, and normalize individuals. Through practices such as surveillance, examination, documentation, assessment, and categorization, disciplinary systems produce compliant and self-regulating subjects who internalize institutional expectations. From this perspective, discipline operates not only through external control but also through subtle processes that encourage individuals to monitor and regulate themselves (Deacon, 2006; Foucault, 1977; Foucault, 2008).

Foucauldian analyses have profoundly influenced contemporary educational scholarship by highlighting the hidden dimensions of power embedded within everyday school practices. Classroom seating arrangements, attendance procedures, examinations, grading systems, behavioral evaluations, and disciplinary regulations can all be interpreted as mechanisms that contribute to normalization and social control. Rather than functioning solely as educational tools, these practices become part of a broader network through which power is exercised and reproduced. Such analyses have encouraged scholars to reconsider the social and political implications of disciplinary policies and to question the extent to which schools contribute to the production of particular forms of citizenship, identity, and conformity (Deacon, 2006; Foucault, 1977; Foucault, 2008; Soleimani, 2019).

The critical examination of discipline was further developed through the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, who analyzed educational institutions as mechanisms for the reproduction of social inequalities. According to their theory of cultural reproduction, schools often legitimize and reinforce existing social hierarchies by privileging dominant cultural values and forms of knowledge. Within this framework, discipline serves as a mechanism through which particular behaviors, attitudes, and cultural dispositions are rewarded, while others are marginalized or penalized. As a result, disciplinary practices may contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities rather than functioning as neutral instruments of educational order (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Mohseni Tabrizi, 2011; Nemati, 2018).

Critical pedagogical perspectives have similarly challenged traditional understandings of discipline by emphasizing the relationship between education, ideology, and power. Scholars such as Giroux and Apple argue that schools are not merely sites of knowledge transmission but also spaces where dominant social, political, and economic interests are reproduced. From this perspective, disciplinary policies may reinforce conformity, obedience, competition, and standardization while limiting opportunities for critical thinking, democratic participation, and student agency. Critical pedagogy therefore advocates for alternative disciplinary approaches grounded in dialogue, participation, social justice, and empowerment (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2011; Khosropanah, 2017, 2020; Rahimi, 2021).

Recent educational scholarship has increasingly emphasized the importance of democratic and participatory approaches to school discipline. These approaches seek to move beyond authoritarian models by promoting student involvement in decision-making processes, collaborative rule formation, and the development of self-regulation skills. Democratic discipline is viewed not as the absence of structure but as a framework that balances institutional order with respect for human dignity, individual autonomy, and social responsibility. Such perspectives are particularly relevant in contemporary educational environments that prioritize inclusion, equity, and student-centered learning (Abbasi, 2021; Khosropanah, 2020; Mazaheri, 2020; Rahimi, 2021).

At the same time, rapid technological developments are transforming educational environments and introducing new dimensions to discussions of discipline, control, and educational governance. The integration of digital technologies, artificial intelligence, virtual learning environments, and data-driven educational systems has created new opportunities for learning while simultaneously generating novel forms of monitoring, assessment, and regulation. Contemporary research on technology integration demonstrates that educational technologies increasingly shape pedagogical practices, teacher decision-making, and student engagement. Consequently, questions concerning power, surveillance, and disciplinary mechanisms remain highly relevant in digitally mediated educational contexts (Ertmer & Ottenbreit Leftwich, 2013; Sharma, 2025; Tondeur et al., 2017; Yulin & Danso, 2025; Yurdakul & Demir, 2025).

Studies investigating teachers' technological and pedagogical competencies further illustrate the growing

complexity of educational environments. Research on technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK), digital competence, pedagogical content knowledge, and technology-enhanced instruction highlights how educational practices are increasingly mediated through digital tools and data systems. These developments raise important theoretical questions regarding how disciplinary processes operate in contemporary schools and how power relations may be transformed through emerging educational technologies (Abebe & Trainin, 2024; Ga et al., 2025; Ortiz-Padilla et al., 2025; Yip, 2025; Yurdakul & Demir, 2025).

Moreover, recent reviews of critical pedagogy indicate a growing scholarly interest in examining the intersections among power, technology, educational governance, and social justice. Bibliometric analyses reveal that contemporary educational research increasingly recognizes the need to critically evaluate institutional practices that influence student agency, participation, and democratic engagement. This trend underscores the continued relevance of theoretical analyses that explore the relationship between discipline and power within evolving educational contexts (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2011; Ural & Özdemir, 2025).

Within the Iranian educational context, scholarship on discipline has traditionally focused on legal, managerial, psychological, and administrative dimensions. While these studies have contributed valuable insights into classroom management, educational order, and school governance, relatively limited attention has been devoted to the conceptual and theoretical foundations of discipline as a power-oriented construct. Existing research has increasingly emphasized educational justice, democratic discipline, social control, and critical educational philosophy; however, a comprehensive synthesis of these perspectives remains underdeveloped. Consequently, there is a need for deeper conceptual analysis capable of integrating classical sociological theories, contemporary critical perspectives, and emerging educational realities into a coherent understanding of discipline in schools (Abbasi, 2021; Bagheri, 2015; Khodadadi, 2018; Khosropanah, 2017, 2020; Mazaheri, 2020; Mohseni Tabrizi, 2011; Nemati, 2018; Soleimani, 2019).

Given these theoretical developments and research gaps, conceptual and theoretical inquiry remains an essential methodological approach for understanding the evolving nature of discipline. Qualitative and interpretive research designs provide opportunities to critically examine

educational concepts, uncover underlying assumptions, and explore the historical and ideological dimensions of educational practices. Such approaches are particularly valuable when investigating phenomena that extend beyond observable behaviors and involve complex relationships among institutions, power structures, cultural norms, and social processes (Creswell, 2013).

Therefore, the present study aims to conceptually and theoretically analyze the transformation of school discipline from a mechanism of educational order into a power-oriented construct and to examine its implications for understanding educational institutions, disciplinary practices, and contemporary educational policy through the perspectives of sociology of education, critical pedagogy, and theories of power.

## 2. Methods and Materials

The present study was conducted using a qualitative research design grounded in conceptual and theoretical analysis. Rather than relying on empirical data collection from human participants, the research sought to critically examine and reinterpret the concept of discipline within the context of school studies through the systematic analysis of theoretical and scholarly literature. The study adopted a descriptive-analytical and critical approach, focusing on the historical evolution, conceptual foundations, and socio-political dimensions of school discipline. The research was situated within the interdisciplinary fields of sociology of education, philosophy of education, school studies, and theories of power. Sampling was carried out purposively through the selection of relevant scholarly sources that directly addressed school discipline, educational order, social control, power relations, normalization processes, and educational policy. Both classical and contemporary theoretical works were included to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Particular attention was devoted to influential theoretical contributions from Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-Claude Passeron, Émile Durkheim, Henry Giroux, Michael Apple, and contemporary educational theorists. In addition, Persian-language scholarly works related to school discipline, educational justice, critical pedagogy, and sociology of education were examined to contextualize the discussion within the Iranian educational setting. The inclusion criteria consisted of theoretical relevance, conceptual richness, scholarly credibility, and direct contribution to understanding the relationship between discipline and

power in educational institutions. Sources that lacked a clear theoretical foundation or did not directly address disciplinary processes in schools were excluded from the analysis.

Data were collected through an extensive documentary and library-based review of scholarly resources. The primary materials consisted of books, peer-reviewed journal articles, theoretical treatises, educational policy analyses, and academic texts related to school discipline, sociology of education, educational philosophy, critical pedagogy, and theories of power. The documentary review functioned as the principal research tool, enabling the systematic identification, examination, and interpretation of relevant conceptual frameworks. Data collection involved a comprehensive review of both foundational and contemporary literature addressing the historical development of disciplinary practices in schools, the institutional functions of discipline, and the role of disciplinary mechanisms in shaping educational subjects and social relations. Particular emphasis was placed on texts that examined discipline as a mechanism of surveillance, assessment, normalization, symbolic control, and ideological reproduction. The selected sources were carefully reviewed to identify key concepts, theoretical propositions, explanatory models, and critical perspectives. Notes, thematic summaries, and conceptual mappings were developed throughout the review process to facilitate comparison across theoretical traditions and to trace similarities, differences, and developments in scholarly understandings of school discipline. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of how discipline has been conceptualized across different historical periods and intellectual paradigms.

Data analysis was conducted using a critical-analytical and interpretive framework. Following the collection of relevant documentary materials, the selected texts were subjected to repeated reading and systematic examination in order to identify major themes, conceptual categories, and theoretical assumptions concerning school discipline. The analytical process involved comparing different theoretical perspectives and examining the ways in which discipline has been defined, justified, criticized, and reconstructed within educational discourse. Particular attention was given to the relationship between discipline and power, including themes such as surveillance, normalization, social control, symbolic violence, educational inequality, ideological reproduction, student agency, and democratic participation. The analysis

proceeded through a process of thematic categorization, conceptual synthesis, and critical interpretation. Historical developments in disciplinary practices were examined alongside contemporary theoretical debates to identify patterns of continuity and transformation. The findings were then organized into coherent analytical categories that highlighted the evolution of discipline from a predominantly educational and managerial mechanism to a broader socio-political construct embedded within institutional power relations. Through this interpretive approach, the study generated a comprehensive theoretical understanding of school discipline and its implications for educational policy, school governance, democratic participation, and educational justice.

### 3. Findings and Results

Because the present study was conducted using a conceptual and theoretical methodology based on documentary analysis, no human participants were involved and consequently no demographic characteristics were collected. The findings are therefore presented in the form of conceptual, historical, and theoretical categories extracted from the critical analysis of educational, sociological, and philosophical literature related to school discipline.

**Table 1**

*Conceptual and Historical Transformation of Discipline in the Institution of Schooling*

Historical Period/Approach	Dominant Conception of Discipline	Primary Function of Discipline	Main Mechanisms	Relationship to Power
Pre-modern Traditional Period	Moral obedience and submission	Maintenance of behavioral order	Corporal punishment, moral instruction, teacher authority	Direct and visible power
Classical Functionalism	Educational order and social morality	Socialization and transmission of norms	School regulations and teacher authority	Legitimate institutional power
Psychological-Educational Approach	Behavior management tool	Classroom control and educational efficiency	Reward and punishment systems	Technical and executive power
Modern Bureaucratic School	Formal institutional discipline	Standardization and predictability	Regulations, examinations, grading, scheduling	Structural power
Foucauldian Approach	Disciplinary technology	Production of obedient subjects	Surveillance, assessment, documentation	Invisible disciplinary power
Social Reproduction Theory	Instrument of symbolic violence	Reproduction of inequality and dominant culture	Classification, ranking, cultural valuation	Symbolic power
Critical School Studies	Ideological mechanism	Production of desired social identities	Standardization and disciplinary policies	Ideological power
Critical Pedagogy	Dialogical and participatory process	Development of agency and critical awareness	Participation, dialogue, responsibility	Distributed power
Humanistic Approaches	Participatory discipline	Moral growth and dignity enhancement	Self-regulation and collaborative rule-making	Relational power

The findings presented in Table 1 reveal a substantial conceptual transformation in the understanding of school discipline throughout history. The analysis demonstrates that discipline has evolved from a relatively simple mechanism for maintaining obedience and classroom order into a sophisticated social construct deeply embedded in institutional power relations. In traditional educational settings, discipline was primarily associated with direct authority, obedience, and behavioral conformity. However, with the emergence of modern schooling systems, disciplinary practices became increasingly formalized through bureaucratic structures such as examinations, grading systems, timetables, and institutional regulations. The findings further indicate that contemporary theoretical

perspectives challenge the traditional perception of discipline as a neutral educational necessity. Instead, discipline is increasingly understood as a mechanism that contributes to the formation of identities, the regulation of behavior, and the production of socially acceptable norms. While critical perspectives emphasize the controlling and normalizing dimensions of discipline, humanistic and participatory approaches advocate for forms of discipline grounded in dialogue, responsibility, self-regulation, and respect for human dignity. Overall, the findings suggest that the meaning of discipline has progressively shifted from external behavioral control toward a complex interplay between educational practices, institutional authority, and broader social power structures.

**Table 2**

*Theoretical Analysis of School Discipline from the Perspective of Power Theories*

Theory/Approach	View of Discipline	Main Function	Primary Mechanisms	Type of Power
Foucault's Disciplinary Power	Technology of normalization	Production of compliant subjects	Surveillance, examinations, documentation	Invisible and internalized power
Classical Functionalism	Instrument of social order	Transmission of norms and values	School rules and institutional authority	Legitimate power
Bourdieu's Symbolic Power	Mechanism of cultural reproduction	Reproduction of social inequality	Classification and cultural valuation	Symbolic power
Critical School Studies	Ideological apparatus	Reproduction of dominant ideologies	Standardization and disciplinary policies	Ideological power
Sociology of Education Perspective	Social control mechanism	Normalization and regulation	Formal regulations and sanctions	Structural power
Critical Pedagogy	Participatory educational process	Development of critical consciousness	Dialogue and shared responsibility	Relational power
Humanistic Perspective	Democratic discipline	Promotion of dignity and self-regulation	Participation and collaborative decision-making	Transparent power

The results summarized in Table 2 indicate that theories of power offer fundamentally different interpretations of the nature and purpose of school discipline. Among these perspectives, the Foucauldian framework provides the most comprehensive explanation of discipline as a mechanism through which power becomes internalized and normalized within educational settings. According to this view, disciplinary practices extend beyond overt punishment and operate through subtle processes of observation, examination, documentation, and self-monitoring. The findings also demonstrate that Bourdieu's theory highlights the role of discipline in reproducing cultural and social inequalities by privileging forms of behavior and

knowledge associated with dominant social groups. Similarly, critical school theorists argue that disciplinary systems often serve ideological purposes by encouraging conformity to prevailing political, economic, and cultural norms. In contrast, critical pedagogy and humanistic educational theories propose alternative models in which discipline functions as a means of fostering participation, responsibility, democratic engagement, and critical thinking. Collectively, these findings suggest that school discipline cannot be adequately understood solely as a managerial tool; rather, it represents a multifaceted phenomenon that reflects broader social, cultural, and political processes.

**Table 3**

*Educational Policy and Practice Implications of Power-Oriented Understandings of Discipline*

Analytical Dimension	Traditional Disciplinary Model	Democratic and Participatory Model
Policy Orientation	Control and compliance	Participation and empowerment
Teacher Role	Authority and supervision	Facilitator and mentor
Student Role	Passive recipient of rules	Active participant in rule formation
Educational Outcome	Obedience and conformity	Responsibility and self-regulation
Social Impact	Potential reproduction of inequality	Promotion of educational justice
View of Power	Hierarchical and centralized	Shared and transparent
Decision-Making	Top-down administration	Collaborative governance

The findings presented in Table 3 demonstrate that differing conceptions of discipline produce substantially different educational outcomes and policy implications. Traditional disciplinary models are characterized by centralized authority, top-down decision-making processes, and an emphasis on compliance with institutional regulations. Although these approaches may facilitate

short-term order and predictability, the analysis suggests that they may also contribute to the reproduction of hierarchical power relations and social inequalities. In contrast, democratic and participatory models conceptualize discipline as a developmental process designed to cultivate self-regulation, critical awareness, social responsibility, and active citizenship. The findings

indicate that when students participate in rule formation and disciplinary decision-making processes, disciplinary practices become more closely aligned with educational justice, human dignity, and long-term personal development. These results support the argument that future educational policies should move beyond purely punitive or managerial understandings of discipline and instead embrace approaches that balance institutional order with participation, autonomy, and democratic engagement. Overall, the conceptual analysis demonstrates that the transformation of disciplinary practices represents a critical prerequisite for the development of more equitable, inclusive, and socially responsive educational systems.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to provide a conceptual and theoretical analysis of school discipline and to examine its transformation from a mechanism primarily concerned with educational order into a broader construct associated with power relations, social control, normalization, and the formation of educational subjects. The findings demonstrated that discipline has undergone a substantial historical and conceptual evolution. Rather than functioning solely as a managerial or pedagogical instrument designed to regulate student behavior, discipline emerged as a multidimensional phenomenon that intersects with institutional structures, cultural expectations, ideological frameworks, and power relations. The analysis further revealed that contemporary understandings of discipline extend beyond classroom management and encompass broader concerns regarding social reproduction, educational justice, democratic participation, and student agency.

One of the central findings of this study was the identification of a historical shift in the conceptualization of discipline. The analysis showed that traditional educational systems primarily understood discipline as a mechanism for maintaining order, ensuring obedience, and facilitating the transmission of social norms. This finding is consistent with the classical sociological perspective of Durkheim, who emphasized the role of discipline in moral education and social integration (Durkheim, 1956; Durkheim, 1994). Durkheim viewed discipline as a necessary component of socialization through which individuals internalize collective values and become capable of participating effectively in social life. Similarly, educational management perspectives have historically associated

discipline with classroom effectiveness, behavioral regulation, and the establishment of productive learning environments (Baghcheban, 2016; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). The findings of the present study support these interpretations by demonstrating that educational order has traditionally constituted a foundational objective of disciplinary practices.

However, the findings also indicate that the expansion of modern schooling systems transformed discipline into a more complex institutional mechanism. The emergence of bureaucratic educational structures, standardized curricula, examination systems, and formal regulations contributed to the development of discipline as a systematic form of institutional governance. This finding aligns with previous analyses emphasizing the role of modern educational institutions in organizing students' behavior, time, and performance according to predetermined standards (Fathi Vajargah, 2013; Naghibzadeh, 2009). As schools became increasingly integrated into broader social and political structures, disciplinary practices expanded beyond individual behavioral management and became embedded within institutional processes of regulation and accountability.

A particularly significant finding of the present study concerns the relationship between discipline and power. The analysis demonstrated that discipline functions as a mechanism through which power is exercised, reproduced, and internalized within educational settings. This finding strongly supports Foucauldian interpretations of educational institutions as disciplinary environments characterized by surveillance, examination, assessment, and normalization (Foucault, 1977; Foucault, 2008). According to Foucault, disciplinary power operates not primarily through coercion but through subtle techniques that encourage individuals to regulate themselves according to institutional expectations. The findings suggest that school practices such as grading, behavioral monitoring, attendance control, classroom organization, and performance evaluation can all be understood as disciplinary technologies that shape students' identities and conduct. These results are consistent with Deacon's interpretation of Foucauldian educational theory, which emphasizes the productive and pervasive nature of power in educational environments (Deacon, 2006).

The findings further revealed that disciplinary mechanisms contribute to processes of normalization through which particular forms of behavior, knowledge, and identity are constructed as desirable or acceptable. This

result corresponds closely with contemporary analyses of school disciplinary policies that emphasize the relationship between educational governance and social regulation (Mohseni Tabrizi, 2011; Soleimani, 2019). The normalization process identified in the present study suggests that discipline plays an active role in shaping students' perceptions of themselves and their social roles. Rather than merely responding to misconduct, disciplinary systems participate in defining what constitutes appropriate behavior, successful performance, and legitimate participation within educational institutions.

Another important finding concerns the role of discipline in reproducing social and cultural inequalities. The analysis indicated that disciplinary practices are not always neutral and may disproportionately privilege students whose cultural characteristics align more closely with dominant institutional expectations. This finding is highly consistent with the theory of cultural reproduction proposed by Bourdieu and Passeron (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). According to this perspective, schools function as sites where dominant cultural values are legitimized and reproduced, often under the appearance of neutrality. The present findings suggest that disciplinary policies may inadvertently reinforce existing social hierarchies by rewarding conformity to dominant norms while marginalizing alternative forms of cultural expression. Similar concerns have been raised in studies examining educational justice and social inequality within educational systems (Abbasi, 2021; Nemati, 2018). These studies emphasize that disciplinary practices can contribute to unequal educational experiences when they fail to account for social, cultural, and economic differences among students.

The study also found that discipline serves ideological functions within educational institutions. This finding aligns closely with the critical educational perspectives of Apple and Giroux, who argue that schools are important sites for the reproduction of dominant social, political, and economic ideologies (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2011). The analysis demonstrated that disciplinary systems often reinforce values such as obedience, conformity, standardization, and compliance with institutional expectations. While these values may contribute to organizational stability, they may also limit opportunities for critical thinking, creativity, and democratic participation. The findings therefore support the argument that disciplinary policies should be critically examined not

only in terms of their effectiveness but also in relation to their broader social and ideological consequences.

An additional finding of the study was the growing significance of democratic and participatory approaches to discipline. The analysis revealed that contemporary educational theories increasingly advocate for disciplinary models grounded in dialogue, collaboration, self-regulation, and student participation. This finding is consistent with recent scholarship emphasizing democratic school management, educational justice, and critical pedagogy (Khosropanah, 2017, 2020; Mazaheri, 2020; Rahimi, 2021). These perspectives challenge authoritarian conceptions of discipline and propose alternative frameworks in which students actively participate in the construction of school norms and behavioral expectations. The findings suggest that such approaches have the potential to strengthen responsibility, critical awareness, and social competence while simultaneously maintaining educational order.

The relevance of these findings becomes even more apparent in light of contemporary technological transformations in education. Recent research demonstrates that educational environments are increasingly shaped by digital technologies, artificial intelligence, learning analytics, and virtual learning platforms (Sharma, 2025; Yulin & Danso, 2025; Yurdakul & Demir, 2025). Although these innovations provide significant opportunities for learning and instructional improvement, they also introduce new mechanisms of monitoring, assessment, and behavioral regulation. The present findings suggest that the theoretical concerns raised by power-oriented analyses of discipline remain highly relevant within digital educational environments. In many respects, emerging technologies may extend the reach of disciplinary mechanisms through data collection, performance tracking, and algorithmic evaluation.

Furthermore, contemporary studies examining pedagogical competence and technology integration highlight the growing importance of understanding how power operates within technologically mediated educational settings. Research on technological pedagogical content knowledge, pedagogical readiness, and digital competence demonstrates that educational technologies increasingly influence instructional practices and learning experiences (Abebe & Trainin, 2024; Ertmer & Ottenbreit Leftwich, 2013; Ga et al., 2025; Ortiz-Padilla et al., 2025; Tondeur et al., 2017; Yip, 2025). The findings of the present study suggest that future discussions of

school discipline must consider not only traditional disciplinary mechanisms but also emerging forms of digital governance and technological regulation within educational institutions.

Finally, the study highlights the continuing relevance of critical pedagogy in contemporary educational discourse. Recent bibliometric analyses indicate sustained scholarly interest in examining the relationships among power, participation, social justice, and educational reform (Ural & Özdemir, 2025). The findings support this trend by demonstrating that discipline remains a central concept through which broader questions regarding democracy, equity, authority, and citizenship can be explored. Consequently, understanding the conceptual transformation of discipline provides valuable insights into both the historical development and future direction of educational systems.

The present study is subject to several limitations. First, because the research employed a conceptual and theoretical methodology, its findings are based on the analysis and interpretation of existing literature rather than empirical observations. Consequently, the conclusions cannot be generalized directly to all educational contexts without further empirical validation. Second, the study relied primarily on published theoretical and scholarly sources, which may not fully capture the complexities and variations of disciplinary practices as they occur in real educational settings. Third, although the analysis incorporated both international and Iranian scholarship, the availability of recent empirical studies addressing discipline from a power-oriented perspective remains limited. Finally, the rapidly changing nature of educational technology means that some emerging forms of disciplinary practice may not yet be adequately represented in the existing literature.

Future studies should investigate disciplinary practices through empirical methodologies, including qualitative case studies, ethnographic observations, and mixed-method research designs. Comparative studies across different educational systems, cultural contexts, and school types would contribute to a deeper understanding of how disciplinary mechanisms operate under varying social conditions. Researchers should also explore the relationship between digital technologies and disciplinary power, particularly in relation to learning analytics, artificial intelligence, surveillance systems, and online learning environments. Additional research examining students' perceptions of disciplinary policies, democratic school governance, and participatory approaches to behavior

management would further enrich the literature. Longitudinal studies investigating the long-term effects of different disciplinary models on academic achievement, social development, and civic engagement would also be valuable.

Educational policymakers should reconsider disciplinary policies in ways that balance educational order with student participation, dignity, and autonomy. School administrators are encouraged to create environments that promote dialogue, collaboration, and shared responsibility rather than relying exclusively on punitive or authoritarian approaches. Teachers should receive professional development opportunities that enhance their understanding of democratic discipline, conflict resolution, restorative practices, and culturally responsive behavior management. Schools should actively involve students in developing behavioral expectations and classroom norms, thereby strengthening ownership and self-regulation. Finally, educational institutions should critically evaluate the implications of emerging technologies for student privacy, surveillance, and autonomy to ensure that technological innovations support learning while respecting human dignity and educational justice.

### Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

### Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

### Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

### Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all individuals helped us to do the project.

### Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

### Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

## Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

## References

- Abbasi, A. (2021). *Discipline and Educational Justice in Iranian Schools*. Ney Publishing.
- Abebe, F., & Trainin, G. (2024). Predicting Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (TPACK) Formation in Elementary Math Education. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 24(2). <https://doi.org/10.70725/521250nwdsyh>
- Apple, M. W. (2004). *Ideology and Curriculum* (3rd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203487563>
- Baghcheban, A. (2016). *Foundations of Educational Management*. SAMT Publications.
- Bagheri, K. (2015). *Philosophy of Education*. SAMT Publications.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1990). *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Deacon, R. (2006). Michel Foucault on Education: A Preliminary Theoretical Overview. *South African Journal of Education*, 26(2), 177-187.
- Durkheim, E. (1956). *Education and Sociology* (S. D. Fox, Trans.). Free Press.
- Durkheim, É. (1994). *Education and Society* (B. Parham, Trans.). Agah Publishing.
- Ertmer, P. A., & Ottenbreit Leftwich, A. T. (2013). Removing Obstacles to the Pedagogical Changes Required by Jonassen's Vision of Authentic Technology Enabled Learning. *Computers & Education*, 64, 175-182. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2012.10.008>
- Evertson, C. M., & Weinstein, C. S. (2006). *Handbook of Classroom Management: Research, Practice, and Contemporary Issues*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Fathi Vajargah, K. (2013). *Curriculum Planning Theories and Models*. Agah Publishing.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (2008). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (A. Jahandideh, Trans.). Ney Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv120qr2d.34>
- Ga, S., Cha, H., & Yoon, H. (2025). Pre-Service Elementary Teachers' Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge in Lesson Planning and Post-Lesson Reflection Discourses on Science Classes Using Virtual and Augmented Reality Content. *Journal of Science Education and Technology*, 34, 171-182. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10956-024-10171-3>
- Giroux, H. A. (2011). *On Critical Pedagogy*. Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Khodadadi, M. (2018). *Redefining Discipline in Modern Schools*. Tarbiat Modares University Press.
- Khosropanah, A. (2017). *Critical Philosophy of Education*. Research Institute for Culture and Islamic Thought.
- Khosropanah, A. (2020). *Critical Philosophy of Education and Educational Justice*. Research Institute for Culture and Islamic Thought.
- Mazaheri, M. (2020). *School Management and Democratic Discipline*. Agah Publishing.
- Mohseni Tabrizi, A. (2011). *Sociology of Education*. Ney Publishing.
- Naghizadeh, A. (2009). *A History of Educational Developments in Iran*. SAMT Publications.
- Nemati, M. (2018). *Discipline and Social Justice in Iranian Education*. Institute for Educational Research.
- Ortiz-Padilla, M., Velasco, N., & Ortiz, S. A. (2025). Analysis of Pedagogical Content Knowledge for Teaching Mathematics in Early Childhood Education. *Journal of Infrastructure Policy and Development*, 9(1), 10135. <https://doi.org/10.24294/jipd10135>
- Rahimi, F. (2021). *Critical Pedagogy and Student Participation*. SAMT Publications.
- Sharma, P. (2025). AI-Driven Pedagogy: Innovations in Educational Technology. <https://doi.org/10.59646/ap/313>
- Soleimani, Z. (2019). *Theories of Power and School Disciplinary Policies*. Institute of Education Research.
- Tondeur, J., Pareja Roblin, N., van Braak, J., Voogt, J., & Prestridge, S. (2017). Preparing Beginning Teachers for Technology Integration in Education: Ready for Take Off? *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 26(2), 157-177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1475939X.2016.1193556>
- Ural, A., & Özdemir, A. (2025). A Bibliometric Study on the Literature of Critical Pedagogy: Trends, Themes, and Future Directions. *Yaşadıkça Eğitim*, 39(1), 98-116. <https://doi.org/10.33308/26674874.2025391793>
- Yip, S. Y. (2025). Transition into Teaching: Examining the Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) Development of Pre-Service STEM Career-Change Teachers. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2025.2471901>
- Yulin, N., & Danso, S. D. (2025). Assessing pedagogical readiness for digital innovation: A Transformation of their Companies. *MIS Quarterly Executive*, 16(1).
- Yurdakul, C., & Demir, K. (2025). Technology Integration in Pedagogical Processes: Digital Competence and Teaching Practices of Primary School Teachers in Turkey. *Discover Education*, 4, Article 351. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-025-00646-9>