Journal of Educational Sciences
Journal homepage: https://jes.ejournal.unri.ac.id/index.php/JES
P-ISSN 2581-1657
E-ISSN 2581-2203

Exploration of Changes in the Character of Curiosity and Discipline of Students in the Puberty Phase (Case Study at MIS Bakti, Padang City)

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 21 Jan 2026
Accepted: 20 July 2026
Available Online: 25 July 2026

Keywords:

Curiosity,
Discipline,
Puberty,
Students,
Qualitative Case Study

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Article Doi:

https://doi.org/10.31258/jes.10.7.p.1103-1114

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A B S T R A C T

Puberty is a critical developmental phase characterized by biological, psychological, and social changes that influence students' character development. During this period, curiosity and discipline often undergo significant changes that affect learning behavior. This study aimed to explore changes in students' curiosity and discipline during puberty at MIS Bakti, Padang City, and to examine the roles of teachers, parents, and peers in shaping these character changes. A qualitative case study approach was employed involving two students in the puberty phase as the primary participants, supported by teachers and parents as key informants. Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing with verification. The findings revealed that both students experienced a shift in curiosity from academic learning toward social and emotional interests, particularly curiosity related to interpersonal relationships. This shift was accompanied by declining discipline, reflected in reduced learning focus, violations of school dress regulations, and decreased compliance with school rules. The findings also showed that teachers, parental guidance, and peer interactions played decisive roles in either supporting or hindering the development of students' curiosity and discipline during puberty. The study concludes that effective character development during puberty requires consistent collaboration among schools, families, and peers to channel students' curiosity into positive learning experiences while strengthening discipline.

1. Introduction

Character education is an integral part of the national education system, aiming to develop Indonesian citizens who are faithful, possess noble character, are

knowledgeable, and demonstrate strong personality and social responsibility (Wahono, 2018). At the primary education level, character education plays a strategic role because it provides the foundation for shaping students' attitudes, values, and behaviors from an early age (Zahro, 2025). Elementary schools and Islamic elementary schools (*madrasah ibtidaiyah*) therefore function not only as institutions for academic learning but also as environments that continuously cultivate students' character through classroom instruction, habituation, and teacher role modeling. Among the essential character values that should be developed are curiosity and discipline.

Character education requires learning experiences that integrate cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Innovative learning activities that actively engage students have been shown to strengthen responsibility, discipline, and meaningful participation during classroom learning. Likewise, strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile contributes to developing positive character values that support students' social and moral development (Annisa, 2025; Azizah et al., 2025). Curiosity encourages students to ask questions, seek information, and actively construct knowledge during the learning process (Artinta & Fauziah, 2021), while discipline enables students to comply with school regulations, manage their learning responsibilities, and demonstrate consistent self-control both in school and at home (Izzah & Magfiroh, 2025). These two character dimensions complement one another in supporting students' academic engagement and overall personal development. Previous studies also indicate that learning designs encouraging exploration and active participation significantly enhance students' curiosity and creative thinking. Curiosity developed through meaningful learning activities contributes to better engagement and supports students' cognitive as well as character development (Annisa, 2025; Farhani et al., 2025)

Character development, however, is not static but evolves throughout children's developmental stages. One of the most critical periods is puberty, which is characterized by substantial biological, psychological, emotional, and social changes (Sulhan et al., 2024). During this transition, students experience rapid emotional and cognitive development that influences their attitudes and behaviors. Curiosity generally increases during puberty; however, this curiosity is not always directed toward academic learning. Instead, students begin to show greater interest in social relationships, self-identity, peer acceptance, and attraction to the opposite sex. Consequently, curiosity that previously supported classroom learning may gradually shift toward social and emotional exploration. Without appropriate guidance from adults and the surrounding environment, this developmental transition may reduce students' academic engagement and influence their disciplinary behavior.

Changes in curiosity are frequently accompanied by changes in discipline (Diniyah & Lisnawati, 2023). During puberty, students tend to question existing rules, seek greater autonomy, and express themselves more independently (Apriana & Mesra, 2024). Such developmental tendencies may contribute to disciplinary problems, including reduced learning concentration, delayed task completion, lateness, violations of school regulations, and decreased responsibility toward academic

activities. These behavioral fluctuations present significant challenges for teachers and parents in maintaining positive character development while simultaneously supporting students' psychosocial growth.

The phenomenon of changing curiosity and discipline is also evident among students at MIS Bakti, Padang City. Preliminary observations revealed that several students entering puberty experienced noticeable behavioral changes, including decreased concentration during classroom learning, increasing interest in social and emotional relationships, and inconsistent compliance with school regulations. Some students appeared to prioritize friendships and interpersonal relationships over academic responsibilities, resulting in declining learning discipline. These changes cannot be understood solely from students' internal developmental processes because environmental factors also play substantial roles in shaping character development (Mahfuzah et al., 2024). Teachers function as educators, mentors, and role models who guide students through meaningful learning experiences and consistent character development (Ramadhan et al., 2025). Likewise, parents contribute through supervision, emotional support, and reinforcement of positive values within the family (Islami & A'yun, 2024). Furthermore, peers become increasingly influential during puberty because adolescents are more likely to adopt attitudes and behaviors consistent with their friendship groups (Asyia et al., 2022).

Several previous studies have examined character development during puberty from different perspectives. Rosyada (2022) reported that puberty is often accompanied by changes in students' learning interest, emotional stability, and classroom participation. Students entering puberty tend to experience shifts in attention from academic learning toward interpersonal relationships, which may reduce learning discipline. Furthermore, Utomo and Nurfadhilah (2023) proposed that puberty represents a critical stage for character education in primary schools because biological, cognitive, and psychosocial changes require integrated support from teachers, parents, and the school environment. Likewise, Arfah and Yarni (2023) emphasized that psychosocial readiness enables students to regulate increasing curiosity and learning responsibilities during puberty. In addition, Quevedo et al. (2009) explained that puberty is characterized by significant changes in motivation and emotional regulation that influence adolescents' learning behaviour, whereas Crone and Dahl (2012) argued that adolescence is a developmental period in which social and emotional exploration naturally increases alongside cognitive development. Collectively, these studies indicate that puberty is a critical developmental period in which both internal developmental processes and environmental factors influence students' curiosity, discipline, and learning behaviour.

Despite these valuable contributions, previous studies have mainly discussed curiosity, discipline, learning motivation, psychosocial readiness, or environmental influences as separate issues. Few studies have simultaneously explored how changes in curiosity and discipline interact during puberty, particularly among elementary school students in Islamic primary schools (madrasah ibtidaiyah). Furthermore, limited research has comprehensively examined the combined roles of teachers, parents, and peers in shaping both curiosity and discipline during

puberty. Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by exploring the interaction between curiosity and discipline while examining how the three major social environments jointly influence students' character development during puberty.

Therefore, this study aims to explore changes in the character of curiosity and discipline among students experiencing puberty at MIS Bakti, Padang City, while simultaneously examining the roles of teachers, parents, and peers in supporting or constraining these character changes. By addressing the identified research gap, this study is expected to enrich the literature on character education by providing a comprehensive understanding of how curiosity and discipline interact during puberty within the context of Islamic elementary education. The findings are also expected to offer practical recommendations for schools, teachers, and parents in designing more contextual and collaborative strategies for character development that effectively support students throughout the puberty phase.

2. Methodology

Types and Approaches of Research

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand in depth the phenomenon of changes in the character of curiosity and discipline of students during the puberty phase in a natural context. The case study method is used to comprehensively explore the dynamics of character changes experienced by students, as well as the factors that influence them in the school and family environment. This research was conducted at MIS Bakti Jalan Anggrek Kleurahan Dadok Tunggul Hitam, Koto Tangah District, Padang City, West Sumatra Province. The selection of the research location was based on the consideration that the madrasah has students who are in the puberty phase and show dynamics of character changes relevant to the focus of the research. The research was conducted in the even semester of the current academic year, by adjusting the learning activity schedule and the conditions of the madrasah.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection was conducted using three complementary techniques, namely observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Each technique was employed to obtain different types of information so that the findings could be triangulated. Observation was conducted directly during classroom learning, break time, morning assembly, and other school activities. The observed aspects included students' learning participation, questioning behavior, attention during lessons, punctuality, compliance with school regulations, dress code, interaction with peers, and responsibility in completing assignments. Field notes were prepared immediately after each observation session. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two students experiencing puberty as the main participants, supported by classroom teachers and parents as key informants. The interviews explored students' curiosity, learning discipline, emotional changes, peer

relationships, parental supervision, and teachers' strategies in guiding students during puberty. Documentation included school regulations, attendance records, students' report books, photographs of learning activities, field notes, and other school documents related to students' disciplinary behavior. These documents were used to verify and complement the data obtained from observations and interviews.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using an interactive analysis model that includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction was performed by selecting and focusing data relevant to the research objectives (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). Data presentation was conducted in the form of narrative descriptions to facilitate understanding of patterns and relationships between data. Conclusions were drawn gradually and continuously verified with data obtained throughout the research process.

Data Validity

To ensure data validity, this study employed triangulation techniques, including both source and technical triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from students, teachers, and parents (Nisa' & Fatmawati, 2020). Technical triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. Furthermore, the researcher double-checked the data with informants to ensure the accuracy and validity of the information obtained. This research was conducted in accordance with ethical research principles. The researcher formally requested permission from the madrasah before conducting the research and guaranteed the confidentiality of the identities of the research subjects and informants. All data obtained was used solely for research and scientific development purposes.

3. Results and Discussion

Characteristics of Participants

The research shows that students in puberty at MIS Bakti Kota Padang experienced significant character changes, including curiosity and discipline. These changes were evident in their daily behavior, both during classroom learning and in social activities within the school environment. This study involved two students of MIS Bakti Padang City who were entering the puberty phase as the main participants. Both participants were selected purposively because they demonstrated noticeable changes in curiosity and discipline based on preliminary observations conducted by the researcher. To strengthen data credibility, the researcher also interviewed the classroom teacher and parents of each participant. Therefore, the findings were obtained from four different perspectives, namely students, teachers, parents, and school documentation.

The research was conducted over several stages. First, preliminary observations were carried out to identify students who showed characteristics of puberty-related behavioral changes. After obtaining permission from the school and parents, classroom observations were conducted repeatedly during learning activities. Semi-structured interviews were subsequently undertaken with students, teachers, and parents. Documentation such as attendance records, school regulations, report books, and photographs of learning activities was also collected to support the interview and observation findings. The three data sources were then triangulated to improve the credibility of the findings. To ensure consistency in data collection while allowing flexibility to explore participants' responses in greater depth, the interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide developed based on the research objectives. The main interview questions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Interview Guide

Informant	Main Questions
Students	What changes have you experienced during puberty?
Students	What makes you interested during learning?
Students	Why do you sometimes lose concentration in class?
Students	How do friends influence your behavior?
Teacher	What behavioral changes are observed during puberty?
Teacher	How do students' curiosity and discipline change?
Teacher	What strategies are used to guide students?
Parents	What behavioral changes occur at home?
Parents	How do you supervise study discipline?
Parents	How do peers influence your child?

Changes in Students' Curiosity Character

Classroom observations indicated that students in the puberty phase tended to pay less attention during teacher explanations and were more frequently engaged in conversations with peers. Some students appeared more interested in discussing friendships and interpersonal relationships than participating in classroom discussions. Observation also showed that students who previously asked questions actively became less involved during academic learning activities. Based on observations and interviews, students' curiosity increases during puberty, but its direction and form shift. Before puberty, students' curiosity focused more on academic aspects, such as the desire to understand subject matter, ask questions of teachers, and complete assignments successfully.

However, during puberty, students' curiosity tends to shift to the social and emotional realms. Students showed a greater interest in friendships, peer group dynamics, and attraction to the opposite sex. This was evident in their increased focus on social interactions compared to learning activities. During the learning process, some students became less active in asking questions about the material and were more often distracted by activities outside of class, such as talking with friends or thinking about personal problems. However, students' curiosity doesn't

completely decline, but rather shifts direction. Students still show a desire to learn new things, but it's more related to social and emotional experiences.

This finding suggests that the observed shift should not be interpreted as a decline in students' willingness to learn, but rather as a developmental transition in which their curiosity is redirected toward issues that are perceived as more personally relevant. During puberty, students become increasingly concerned with identity formation, peer acceptance, and interpersonal relationships. As a result, academic learning may temporarily receive less attention unless teachers intentionally connect classroom activities with students' developmental interests. Therefore, the challenge for educators is not to suppress students' curiosity but to redirect it toward meaningful academic exploration through contextual and student-centred learning.

The findings support the developmental perspective proposed by Crone and Dahl (2012), who explained that puberty is characterized by increased social-emotional exploration due to rapid cognitive and biological development. Similarly, Utomo and Nurfadhilah (2023) argued that curiosity during puberty naturally expands beyond academic learning and therefore requires structured character education to ensure that students' curiosity develops in constructive ways learning experiences rather than behaviors that reduce academic engagement. These findings are further supported by Farhani et al. (2025), who demonstrated that students' curiosity develops more effectively when learning activities encourage active exploration and meaningful engagement.

The shift from academic to social and emotional curiosity is consistent with early adolescent development theory, which explains that puberty is characterized by increasing exploration of identity and interpersonal relationships (Al Atsari & Ichsan, 2025). When students' curiosity is not effectively connected to classroom learning, their academic engagement may decline, as reflected in reduced questioning behaviour and lower concentration during lessons (Risqianto & Fadlullah, 2025). Nevertheless, this developmental transition also provides opportunities for teachers to design contextual and interactive learning experiences that reconnect students' emerging curiosity with meaningful academic activities. This interpretation is consistent with findings reported by Annisa et al. (2025) and Rini et al. (2025), who demonstrated that contextual learning environments encourage active participation while simultaneously strengthening positive character development.

The present findings also indicate that curiosity during puberty is highly responsive to the quality of learning experiences provided by teachers. When classroom instruction encourages exploration, discussion, and real-life problem solving, students are more likely to redirect their curiosity back toward academic learning. Conversely, learning environments dominated by one-way instruction may unintentionally strengthen students' tendency to seek stimulation outside the classroom. This finding reinforces the importance of designing learning activities that accommodate students' developmental characteristics during puberty.

Changes in Student Discipline Character

This shift in curiosity impacts students' disciplinary behavior. Research results indicate fluctuations in discipline among students during puberty. Some of the declines in discipline identified include late submission of assignments, lack of concentration during lessons, and violations of school rules, such as disobedience in dress and lack of tidiness. Furthermore, students also show a decline in discipline in managing study time. Study time at home is often disrupted by other activities, such as playing with friends or using gadgets. Lack of self-control and emotional management during puberty are factors that influence students' lack of discipline. However, not all students show the same decline in discipline. Some students are still able to maintain good study discipline, especially those who receive consistent guidance and supervision from parents and teachers. This demonstrates that the environment plays a crucial role in shaping and maintaining students' disciplined character.

This variation indicates that discipline during puberty is not determined solely by biological development but is also influenced by the consistency of environmental support received by students. Those who experience regular supervision, clear behavioural expectations, and positive reinforcement from teachers and parents tend to demonstrate better self-regulation despite experiencing the same developmental transition. Therefore, discipline should be understood as a character competency that develops through continuous interaction between individual maturity and environmental guidance.

Documentation analysis supported these findings. Attendance records, classroom notes, and school disciplinary reports indicated several cases of incomplete uniforms, delayed assignment submission, and inconsistent compliance with school regulations. These documents confirmed the interview statements provided by teachers and parents regarding the decline in students' discipline during puberty. These findings are consistent with Rosyada (2022), who reported that students experiencing puberty frequently show declining learning interest and classroom discipline because emotional changes influence their academic engagement. Likewise, Utomo and Nurfadhilah (2023) emphasized that discipline during puberty should be strengthened through continuous character education involving schools and families rather than relying solely on school regulations. These findings imply that disciplinary problems observed during puberty should not merely be addressed through stricter school rules or punishment. Instead, teachers need to implement preventive character education by fostering students' self-awareness, responsibility, and intrinsic motivation. Such an approach is more consistent with the developmental needs of early adolescents and is likely to produce more sustainable improvements in disciplined behaviour.

The changes in disciplinary characteristics that occur during puberty also reflect an internal conflict between the need for freedom and the demand for adherence to rules. Students in this phase begin to question rules and seek space for self-expression, leading to a tendency for discipline to become unstable. These findings reinforce the view that discipline during puberty cannot be built through an

authoritarian approach but rather requires a persuasive, dialogical, and role-modeling approach. The present findings also support previous evidence demonstrating that disciplined behaviour among elementary school students is more likely to emerge when learning activities are motivating, interactive, and supported by consistent teacher guidance. Therefore, discipline should be viewed as an outcome of both character education and meaningful learning experiences rather than solely as obedience to school rules (Nurcahyanti & Utomo, 2026).

Factors Influencing Character Change

Research also revealed several factors influencing changes in students' curiosity and discipline during puberty (Lumbantoruan & Naibaho, 2025). Internal factors include emotional changes, the search for self-identity, and increased sensitivity to the social environment. External factors include the role of teachers at school, parenting styles at home, and peer influence. Teachers play a crucial role in nurturing students' curiosity through engaging and meaningful learning. However, limited time and student numbers present challenges in providing optimal support. Parents play a key role in supervising and reinforcing discipline at home, but not all parents are able to provide consistent support. Peer influence is a very dominant factor in influencing student behavior, both positively and negatively. The findings demonstrate that character development during puberty results from the interaction between internal developmental changes and external environmental influences. Emotional maturation may increase students' sensitivity to social experiences, while guidance from teachers, parents, and peers determines whether these developmental changes lead to positive or negative behavioural outcomes. Consequently, successful character education cannot rely on schools alone but requires active collaboration among all educational stakeholders.

Data triangulation demonstrated consistency among observations, interviews, and documentation. Students reported increasing interest in peer relationships, teachers observed declining classroom participation, while parents described reduced study discipline at home. School documents further supported these findings through records of attendance, classroom behavior, and disciplinary compliance. This triangulation strengthened the credibility of the research findings. The present findings also reinforce the integrated character education model proposed by Utomo and Nurfadhilah (2023). Their study emphasized that successful character development during puberty depends on collaboration among teachers, parents, and peers. This collaborative support helps students regulate curiosity, strengthen self-discipline, and adapt positively to developmental changes. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that collaborative communication among schools and families should be strengthened through regular monitoring of students' behavioural development, consistent reinforcement of positive values, and shared strategies for addressing challenges experienced during puberty. Such collaboration enables character education to be implemented more consistently across both school and home environments.

The roles of teachers, parents, and peers are key factors in managing changes in students' character. Teachers act as facilitators and guides, nurturing students'

curiosity through active and participatory learning strategies. Parents serve as value reinforcers and primary supervisors at home, helping students develop self-control and responsibility. Peers, as the closest social environment, need to be guided through the development of a positive and conducive school culture. Overall, the results of this study confirm that fostering curiosity and discipline during puberty requires a holistic and collaborative approach. Schools and families need to work synergistically to understand the developmental characteristics of students so that changes can be directed in a positive direction and support learning success and the development of their holistic character.

4. Conclusion

This study successfully achieved its objective of exploring changes in the character of curiosity and discipline among students experiencing puberty at MIS Bakti, Padang City, while examining the roles of teachers, parents, and peers in shaping these character changes. The findings demonstrate that puberty represents a critical developmental stage in which students experience shifts in curiosity and discipline as part of their psychological and social development. These changes are influenced not only by internal developmental processes but also by the quality of guidance and support provided by the surrounding environment.

The study confirms that effective character development during puberty requires a holistic, collaborative, and sustainable approach involving schools, families, and peers. Consistent guidance from teachers, supportive parenting practices, and positive peer interactions play essential roles in directing students' curiosity toward meaningful learning experiences while fostering responsible and disciplined behaviour. Therefore, schools are encouraged to implement contextual and character-based learning strategies that accommodate students' developmental characteristics, while parents should strengthen communication, supervision, and emotional support at home. These collaborative efforts are expected to support students in navigating the transition to adolescence and contribute to the development of positive character and lifelong learning attitudes.

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How to cite this article:

An Shoriah, K., Hendrizal., & Helmi, W. M. (2026). Exploration of Changes in the Character of Curiosity and Discipline of Students in the Puberty Phase (Case Study at MIS Bakti, Padang City). *Journal of Educational Sciences*, *10(7)*, 1103-1114.