



# Fostering Self-Regulated Learning Through a School-Based Habituation Program in Vocational Education

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## ABSTRACT

### Keywords:

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This study aims to analyze the role of the SIBERTA (Siswa Berhati Imkata) Program as a school-based habituation program in fostering self-regulated learning and strengthening an ecosystem of student independence in vocational education. A qualitative case study design was employed using purposive sampling to select school leaders, advisory teachers, homeroom teachers, and students as participants. Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, and their credibility was ensured through source and method triangulation. The findings indicate that the SIBERTA Program effectively promotes students' self-regulated learning by strengthening six key dimensions aligned with the Pancasila Student Profile: responsibility, risk management, initiative, autonomous decision-making, self-reflection to reduce procrastination, and consistency in daily learning practices. These findings demonstrate that structured habituation integrated into school culture supports students in developing self-control, learning independence, and positive behavioral habits despite challenges posed by the digital era. The study implies that school-wide culture-based intervention programs can serve as an effective strategy for enhancing self-regulated learning and independent character development among vocational high school students.

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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformation of twenty-first-century education has shifted the emphasis from merely acquiring academic knowledge and technical competencies toward developing lifelong learning skills, particularly self-regulation (Theobald, 2021; Yuniarti et al., 2024). Self-regulated learning enables students to plan, monitor, control, and evaluate their own learning processes to achieve predetermined goals while adapting to changing educational and

professional demands. Such competence is increasingly essential because graduates are expected to become independent learners who can continuously improve their knowledge and skills throughout their careers (Kersna et al., 2025; Olid-Luque et al., 2024). In vocational education, self-regulation is even more critical because students must demonstrate responsibility, discipline, initiative, and decision-making abilities alongside occupational competencies. Theoretical perspectives from Social Cognitive Theory explain that self-regulation develops through reciprocal interactions among personal factors, behaviors, and environmental influences, whereas ecological perspectives emphasize the significant role of daily school environments in shaping students' behavioral habits and cognitive control (Yuniarti et al., 2024). Therefore, strengthening self-regulation has become a strategic priority for improving educational quality and preparing vocational students to successfully respond to future academic, social, and workplace challenges.

Despite its recognized importance, developing students' self-regulation remains a significant educational challenge, particularly in vocational schools implementing learner-centered curricula (Chiu, 2024). The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum requires students to become active participants who independently organize learning activities, reflect on their progress, and assume greater responsibility for achieving learning outcomes. However, many students continue to experience difficulties in planning study activities, managing time effectively (Mustaghfiroh et al., 2025), maintaining learning motivation, and evaluating their own performance. These challenges have become more apparent in the digital era, where unrestricted access to smartphones, social media, and online entertainment frequently distracts students from academic responsibilities and increases procrastination. Consequently, inadequate self-regulation negatively affects academic performance, task completion, discipline, and readiness for future employment. Previous studies consistently report that vocational students generally demonstrate only moderate levels of self-regulated learning, indicating that current educational practices have not yet fully developed students' capacity for autonomous learning and behavioral regulation (Susanto et al., 2025). This condition highlights the urgent need for sustainable interventions that extend beyond conventional classroom instruction.

Empirical evidence further suggests that strengthening self-regulation requires educational environments that consistently cultivate positive habits rather than relying solely on instructional strategies implemented during classroom learning. Previous studies have demonstrated that self-regulated e-learning, self-directed learning approaches, and motivational interventions positively influence students' learning independence, academic achievement, and engagement (Y.-F. Lee et al., 2025). Other studies also emphasize the

contribution of psychological factors, including learning motivation, self-efficacy, and metacognitive awareness, in improving self-regulated learning among vocational students (Ng et al., 2024). Although these findings provide valuable insights, most existing research primarily focuses on instructional methods, technology integration, or individual psychological characteristics. Comparatively limited attention has been given to the influence of school culture and structured habituation programs that shape students' daily behaviors through continuous social interaction and environmental conditioning. From an ecological perspective, this limitation represents an important research gap because students' behavioral development is strongly influenced by their immediate educational environment and routine experiences (Mejeh & Held, 2022). Accordingly, examining school-wide habituation programs offers a promising direction for expanding current understanding of self-regulation development in vocational education (Nurhaida & Asdiqoh, 2026).

Although previous studies have contributed substantially to understanding self-regulated learning in vocational education, several conceptual and empirical limitations remain unresolved. Existing research predominantly examines self-regulation from an instructional perspective by evaluating classroom learning strategies, digital learning environments, project-based learning, or students' psychological attributes, such as motivation and self-efficacy (Mejeh & Grieder, 2025). These studies generally conclude that improving instructional quality positively influences students' learning independence; however, they provide limited explanations regarding how self-regulation can be sustained beyond formal learning sessions. Furthermore, intervention-based studies often measure short-term academic outcomes while overlooking the role of everyday school experiences that continuously reinforce desirable behaviors through repeated practice. Consequently, the mechanisms through which school culture contributes to the internalization of responsibility, discipline, initiative, and autonomous decision-making remain insufficiently explored (Sujarwo, 2025). Addressing this limitation is essential because self-regulation is a behavioral competence developed through continuous interaction between individuals and their surrounding environment rather than through isolated instructional activities alone.

Another limitation of previous studies lies in the relatively narrow conceptualization of educational interventions for fostering self-regulation. Most interventions emphasize cognitive and metacognitive learning processes while paying less attention to school-wide habituation programs that integrate character development into students' daily routines (M. Lee et al., 2023). Consequently, limited empirical evidence explains how structured communal responsibilities, shared environmental management, and consistent behavioral

expectations collectively shape students' capacity for self-control and independent learning. This gap becomes increasingly relevant within vocational education, where students are expected not only to master occupational competencies but also to demonstrate responsibility, collaboration, adaptability, and initiative in authentic working environments. Investigating school culture as a comprehensive educational intervention therefore extends existing discussions beyond classroom pedagogy and individual psychological variables. Such an approach provides a broader understanding of how organizational culture, habitual practices, and collective participation interact to establish an educational ecosystem that continuously nurtures self-regulated learning and strengthens students' independent character throughout their educational experiences.

This study addresses the identified gap by examining self-regulated learning through a school-wide habituation program that emphasizes collective responsibility and the management of shared environments as part of students' daily activities. Rather than treating self-regulation solely as an instructional outcome or an individual psychological characteristic, this research conceptualizes it as a behavioral competence cultivated through continuous participation in a structured school culture. The investigated program integrates routine communal responsibilities, behavioral reinforcement, leadership opportunities, and reflective practices into students' everyday experiences, enabling self-regulation to develop naturally through repeated action and social interaction. This perspective offers a more comprehensive framework for understanding how educational ecosystems can strengthen independent character while simultaneously supporting learning autonomy. By positioning school culture as the primary mechanism for developing self-regulation, the study expands current perspectives on character education and provides an alternative model for vocational schools seeking sustainable approaches to preparing students for lifelong learning and professional readiness.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze how a structured school habituation program contributes to the development of self-regulated learning and the establishment of an ecosystem that promotes students' independence in vocational education. It argues that self-regulation is strengthened not merely through effective classroom instruction but through consistent behavioral experiences embedded within the broader school environment. Daily participation in structured communal responsibilities is expected to encourage students to develop responsibility, initiative, autonomous decision-making, reflective thinking, persistence, and behavioral consistency as integral components of independent learning. The findings are expected to enrich theoretical discussions concerning the relationship between school culture and self-regulated learning while providing practical evidence for designing

sustainable character education programs in vocational schools. Ultimately, this study contributes a holistic perspective demonstrating that the integration of habituation, environmental management, and school culture constitutes an effective strategy for fostering self-regulated learning and preparing students to meet future educational, social, and professional challenges.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of how the SIBERTA Program fosters students' self-regulated learning and supports the development of an ecosystem of independence. A qualitative approach was selected because the research sought to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and interactions within their natural educational context rather than to measure causal relationships quantitatively. The case study design was considered appropriate because it enabled an intensive investigation of a single bounded case, namely the implementation of the SIBERTA Program as a school-based habituation initiative designed to strengthen students' responsibility, discipline, autonomy, and self-regulation through everyday practices. This approach allowed the researchers to capture the complexity of the program, examine the interactions among school stakeholders, and understand how the school culture contributed to students' behavioral development in its real-life context (Sibbald et al., 2021).

The study was conducted at a vocational high school implementing the SIBERTA Program as one of its flagship character education initiatives. The research site was purposively selected because the program has been systematically integrated into the school's daily routines and provides a relevant context for examining the relationship between school culture and students' self-regulated learning. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in planning, implementing, and experiencing the program. The participants included the principal, the vice principal for student affairs, teachers responsible for the SIBERTA Program, homeroom teachers, and students actively participating in the program. Data were collected through non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to obtain comprehensive information from multiple perspectives and capture both the implementation process and participants' experiences (Cleland et al., 2021; Sabono et al., 2024).

The researchers served as the primary research instruments throughout the study by planning the research procedures, collecting and interpreting the data, and drawing conclusions. Data analysis followed the interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing with verification. During the data condensation stage, information obtained from

interviews, observations, and documents was organized, coded, and reduced to identify meaningful categories and emerging themes. The organized data were subsequently presented through descriptive matrices and thematic displays to facilitate interpretation and identify relationships among categories. Finally, conclusions were continuously verified by comparing evidence obtained from different participants and data collection methods. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation and method triangulation were applied by cross-checking information obtained from school leaders, teachers, and students as well as comparing evidence generated through observations, interviews, and documentation. These procedures enhanced the credibility and consistency of the research findings (Lavarda & Bellucci, 2022).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

The findings indicate that the SIBERTA Program played an important role in strengthening students' self-regulated learning through structured daily habituation integrated into the school environment. Observations, interviews, and document analysis consistently showed improvements in students' ability to organize daily responsibilities, complete assigned tasks independently, comply with school regulations, and evaluate their own behavior. The program encouraged students to participate actively in routine communal activities, allowing them to practice self-management in authentic situations rather than only in academic settings. These experiences contributed to the development of behavioral consistency and greater independence in completing both academic and non-academic responsibilities.

Analysis of the collected data revealed that students' self-regulated learning was reflected in six major indicators of independence: responsibility, risk management, initiative, autonomous decision-making, self-reflection, and consistency in achieving daily goals. These indicators emerged repeatedly across observations and interview data, demonstrating that the implementation of the SIBERTA Program created continuous opportunities for students to regulate their behavior through structured routines and shared responsibilities.

The first indicator, responsibility, was demonstrated through students' ability to complete assigned communal duties without continuous supervision from teachers. Students carried out environmental maintenance activities according to predetermined schedules, including sweeping school yards, cleaning classroom corridors, mopping floors, and maintaining outdoor areas. Field observations showed that students generally performed these responsibilities independently and cooperatively. Interviews with teachers



further revealed that students became increasingly aware of their responsibility to maintain shared learning spaces and no longer relied heavily on teacher reminders to complete routine tasks.

The second indicator, risk management, was reflected in students' ability to identify environmental problems and respond appropriately. During daily activities, students independently managed waste disposal, collected scattered garbage, transported waste to designated collection points, and ensured that classrooms and surrounding areas remained clean and organized. When unexpected situations occurred, such as overflowing trash bins or untidy communal areas, students demonstrated initiative in solving these problems collaboratively without waiting for direct instructions. These observations indicate that students became accustomed to responding proactively to challenges encountered during routine school activities.

The third indicator, **\*\*initiative\*\***, emerged through students' willingness to begin assigned activities voluntarily. Observation data showed that students independently prepared cleaning equipment, organized work groups, and immediately started routine activities after arriving at designated locations. They voluntarily retrieved brooms, dustpans, mops, buckets, and other cleaning equipment without being individually instructed by teachers. Interviews with participants also indicated that students gradually developed the habit of identifying tasks requiring immediate attention and acting independently to complete them, demonstrating increasing confidence in carrying out responsibilities.

The fourth indicator, autonomous decision-making, was evident in students' ability to make collective and individual decisions while carrying out the SIBERTA Program. During environmental maintenance activities, students discussed task distribution, determined appropriate cleaning strategies, and coordinated responsibilities within their groups without relying entirely on teacher direction. Observations also showed that students independently decided how to organize and maintain school facilities, including arranging ornamental plants, cleaning the surrounding areas, and ensuring that shared spaces remained orderly. These activities required students to negotiate responsibilities, solve practical problems, and make decisions collaboratively in achieving common objectives.

The fifth indicator, self-reflection, appeared through students' ability to evaluate their own performance and recognize areas requiring improvement. Interviews revealed that students routinely reflected on whether assigned responsibilities had been completed properly and identified aspects that needed to be improved during subsequent activities. During observations, students were frequently seen rechecking cleaned areas, returning equipment to its designated

storage location, and correcting incomplete tasks without being instructed by teachers. Teachers also reported that students became increasingly capable of recognizing their own shortcomings and demonstrated greater awareness of their personal contributions to maintaining the school environment.

The sixth indicator, consistency, was reflected in students' sustained commitment to carrying out routine responsibilities throughout the implementation of the program. Daily observations indicated that students consistently participated in scheduled environmental maintenance activities, beginning with preparing cleaning equipment, completing assigned duties, and ensuring that waste was disposed of appropriately. These routines were implemented regularly and became part of students' everyday school activities. The continuity of these practices demonstrated that students were able to maintain positive behavioral patterns over time rather than performing tasks only under direct supervision.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the SIBERTA Program established a structured school environment that enabled students to practice self-regulated learning through continuous daily habituation. The integration of communal responsibilities into everyday school routines provided students with repeated opportunities to exercise responsibility, manage challenges, initiate actions, make autonomous decisions, evaluate their own performance, and maintain consistent behavioral habits. Across multiple sources of evidence, these six indicators consistently emerged as the primary manifestations of students' self-regulated learning during the implementation of the program.

## **Discussion**

The findings demonstrate that the SIBERTA Program effectively fostered students' self-regulated learning by embedding responsibility, initiative, decision-making, self-reflection, risk management, and behavioral consistency into everyday school routines. These findings reinforce the argument that self-regulation is not solely developed through cognitive learning strategies implemented in classrooms but also through continuous behavioral experiences within supportive educational environments. Previous studies have primarily emphasized the contribution of instructional approaches, self-directed learning, digital learning environments, and motivational factors to the development of self-regulated learning (Held & Mejeh, 2024). While these studies have established the importance of learner-centered instruction, the present findings indicate that a structured school culture can complement classroom learning by providing authentic opportunities for students to repeatedly practice self-regulation in real-life situations. Daily habituation transformed self-regulation from an abstract psychological construct into observable behaviors manifested



through students' routine responsibilities and interactions. This finding extends existing perspectives by demonstrating that school culture functions as a practical mechanism through which self-regulated learning can be continuously reinforced beyond formal instructional settings (Pylväs et al., 2022).

The six indicators identified in this study also provide empirical support for ecological and social cognitive perspectives, which argue that individual behavior develops through continuous interactions between personal characteristics and environmental conditions (David et al., 2024). Students did not acquire responsibility, autonomous decision-making, or behavioral consistency through isolated learning activities; instead, these competencies gradually emerged through repeated participation in structured communal responsibilities integrated into their daily school experiences. Unlike previous studies that largely focused on improving self-regulated learning by strengthening individual motivation, metacognitive awareness, or technological learning support (Eko et al., 2025), this study demonstrates that environmental conditioning and collective habituation constitute equally important mechanisms for promoting learning independence. The school environment functioned as a behavioral ecosystem where repeated routines encouraged students to internalize positive habits until they became part of their everyday conduct. These findings suggest that sustainable self-regulation depends not only on students' internal capacities but also on the consistency of environmental support that encourages independent and responsible behavior.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that strengthening students' self-regulated learning requires comprehensive school-wide interventions rather than relying exclusively on classroom pedagogy. The SIBERTA Program illustrates how integrating routine communal responsibilities into school culture enables students to practice responsibility, collaboration, leadership, and reflective thinking within authentic contexts encountered every day. Such an approach is particularly relevant for vocational education because future graduates are expected to demonstrate independence, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities in dynamic workplace environments. Theoretically, this study broadens the conceptual understanding of self-regulated learning by positioning school culture as an integral component of behavioral development rather than merely as a contextual background for learning. Consequently, educational institutions may benefit from designing structured habituation programs that consistently reinforce positive behavioral patterns alongside academic instruction, thereby creating educational ecosystems that simultaneously promote character development, learning autonomy, and long-term professional readiness (Sirk, 2025).

The novelty of this study lies in its reconceptualization of self-regulated learning as a competence that can be systematically cultivated through a school-wide habituation program rather than being treated primarily as an outcome of classroom instruction or individual psychological characteristics. Previous studies have predominantly examined self-regulated learning through instructional strategies, digital learning environments, self-efficacy, or metacognitive interventions, whereas evidence regarding the contribution of school culture has remained relatively limited (Zuo et al., 2024). By examining a structured habituation program embedded in students' daily routines, this study demonstrates that repeated participation in communal responsibilities creates continuous opportunities for students to internalize responsibility, initiative, autonomous decision-making, reflective thinking, and behavioral consistency. This perspective expands the current understanding of self-regulated learning by emphasizing that sustained behavioral development emerges from the interaction between individual agency and a supportive educational environment. Accordingly, the findings provide a broader framework for explaining how school culture serves as an active mechanism for strengthening students' learning autonomy and independent character beyond formal instructional processes.

The findings also contribute to educational theory and practice by providing empirical evidence that school culture constitutes a strategic component in developing students' independence within vocational education. From a theoretical perspective, this study enriches the application of Social Cognitive Theory and ecological perspectives by illustrating how reciprocal interactions between students and their everyday educational environment facilitate the development of self-regulation through repeated behavioral experiences rather than isolated learning activities (Sins et al., 2023). From a practical perspective, the results suggest that schools should integrate structured habituation into their character education policies by creating routine activities that encourage students to assume responsibility, collaborate with peers, solve authentic problems, and evaluate their own performance. Such interventions can complement classroom instruction and provide meaningful contexts in which students continuously practice independent learning behaviors. For vocational schools in particular, integrating character formation into daily school routines may enhance graduates' readiness to adapt to the demands of higher education, professional training, and rapidly changing workplaces.

Despite these contributions, the findings should be interpreted within the scope of a qualitative case study that examined a single school context. The results provide an in-depth understanding of how a structured habituation program supports students' self-regulated learning; however, the transferability

of the findings to other educational settings may depend on differences in institutional culture, leadership, and program implementation. Future studies may therefore expand this line of inquiry by employing comparative case studies across multiple vocational schools or by adopting mixed-methods and longitudinal designs to examine the long-term influence of school culture on students' self-regulated learning and character development (Hemmler & Ifenthaler, 2024). Such investigations would provide stronger empirical evidence regarding the sustainability and generalizability of school-based habituation programs. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature by demonstrating that a structured school culture, supported by consistent daily habituation and shared responsibility, represents an effective and sustainable approach to fostering self-regulated learning and strengthening students' independence in vocational education.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the SIBERTA Program serves as an effective school-based habituation strategy for fostering students' self-regulated learning and establishing a sustainable ecosystem of independence in vocational education. The most significant finding is that students developed responsibility, risk management, initiative, autonomous decision-making, self-reflection, and behavioral consistency through continuous participation in structured daily routines embedded within the school culture, indicating that self-regulation is strengthened not only through classroom instruction but also through consistent environmental conditioning. This study contributes to the literature by extending current perspectives on self-regulated learning beyond instructional and psychological approaches, highlighting school culture as a strategic mechanism for cultivating independent learning behaviors and character development in vocational education. Nevertheless, the findings are limited by the use of a qualitative single-case design, which may restrict their transferability to other educational contexts. Future research should employ comparative, longitudinal, or mixed-methods designs involving multiple vocational schools to examine the long-term effectiveness and broader applicability of school-wide habituation programs in promoting students' self-regulated learning and independent character development.

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