

## Implementation of Permendikdasmen Number 4 of 2026 in Strengthening Teacher Professionalism in Character Development of Senior High School

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| ARTICLE INFO                                                                                                                                           | ABSTRACT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| <p><b>Keywords:</b></p> <p>Permendikdasmen No. 4/2026</p> <p>Teacher professionalism</p> <p>Character education in high school</p> <p>Model PELITA</p> | <p><b>Purpose</b> - This article examines the implementation of the Regulation of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education (Permendikdasmen) Number 4 of 2026 concerning Protection for Educators and Education Personnel and its contribution to strengthening teacher professionalism in fostering the character of high school students, as well as developing a conceptual model that explains the causal mechanism between legal protection, psychological security, teacher professional agency, and character education.</p> <p><b>Methodology</b> - The research used a qualitative approach with a case study design in one State High School, involving in-depth interviews with sixteen informants, participant observation, and document study. It analyzed the data thematically, with data validity strengthened through source triangulation and member checking.</p> <p><b>Findings</b> - Legal certainty has been proven to form psychological security and self-efficacy of teachers that encourage the courage to uphold discipline, but this change in attitude only manifests into real action when supported by contextual resources in the form of principal's leadership and collegial solidarity; On the other hand, the gap in advocacy literacy and the residual concern about social-digital pressures show the structural limitations of legal instruments in reaching risks beyond the legal-formal realm.</p> <p><b>Contribution</b> - This research fills the gap that has separated the study of teachers' legal protection from the theory of professionalism and character education, with the main contribution being the PELITA Model (Strengthening Regulatory Understanding, Continuous Education and Socialization, Structural Advocacy Services, Collegial Interaction, Transparency and Documentation, and Public Communication Adaptation), a cyclical framework that synthesizes the causal chain of legal protection-psychological safety-teacher agency-character education also offers practical guidance for other high school education units.</p> |

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## INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of national education is inseparable from the central role of teachers as the primary implementers of the learning process, including in fostering students' character. (Krause et al., 2024; Smyk et al., 2022) Teachers not only function as conveyors of teaching materials but also as moral role models who shape students' attitudes, discipline, and personality values in daily school life. This role becomes increasingly complex at the high school level because students are in a transitional phase toward adulthood, making them vulnerable to the influence of social, digital, and environmental factors, thus demanding the presence of teachers who are not only academically competent but also firm and consistent in upholding character values.

The urgency of this problem is underscored by the latest empirical data on the risks teachers face when carrying out their disciplinary function. The Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions recorded a sharp spike in cases of violence in education units, from 15 cases in 2023 to 36 cases in 2024, and jumped to 60 cases throughout 2025 with a total of 358 victims Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions [FSGI] (Amy Edmondson, 2024). In line with that, the Indonesian Education Monitoring Network recorded an increase in cases of violence in educational institutions from 91 cases in 2020 to 573 cases in 2024, with teachers also being harmed in some of these cases, including through the criminalization process due to disciplinary actions they took (Indonesian Education Monitoring Network [JPPI], 2025). Several concrete cases show this pattern in real terms: a sports teacher in Rejang Lebong experienced permanent blindness after being shackled by a student's parents in 2023 for reprimanding students who smoked in the school environment, while an honorary teacher in South Konawe was detained for a week in 2024 on allegations of persecution, which then drew widespread condemnation from teachers throughout Indonesia (Ryn, 2024). Representatives of the Teachers Association of the Republic of Indonesia even warned that this kind of criminalization phenomenon risks making teachers allow student character violations to avoid legal threats, a condition that directly threatens the effectiveness of character education nationally (Hana Dewi Kinarina Kaban, 2023) These data and cases are the background for the urgency of the presence of Permendikdasmen Number 4 of 2026 as a policy response to the accumulation of problems that have lasted for many years.

The Government of Indonesia through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education stipulated Regulation of the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education (Permendikdasmen) Number 4 of 2026 (Mansur, 2025) concerning Protection for Educators and Education Personnel as a refinement of the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 10 of 2017 which is considered not fully in accordance with the legal and social dynamics in the current educational environment. This regulation regulates four pillars of protection, namely legal protection, professional protection, occupational safety and health protection, and protection of intellectual property rights, all of which are implemented based on the principles of non-discrimination, accountability, non-profit, and presumption of innocence. Through this regulation, the state is explicitly present to ensure the safety of teachers in carrying out their professional duties, including when they must take disciplinary action against students (Wilkins et al., 2023).

However, the fundamental question that remains unanswered is how exactly legal certainty, which is abstract and macro, can be translated into the courage and consistency of teachers in the practice of building concrete, micro-level character in the classroom. To answer this question, this study develops and offers the PELITA Model, an acronym for Strengthening Regulatory Understanding, Education and Continuous Socialization, Structural Advocacy Services, Collegial Interaction, Transparency and Documentation, and Public Communication Adaptation as an explanatory framework that will be built gradually throughout this article, rather than presented as a conclusion that suddenly appears at the end. (Ariani et al., 2022; Duan et al., 2024) This model is a representation of the conceptual chain that is the backbone of all the analysis in this study, namely: legal protection forms psychological security and self-efficacy of teachers; psychological security is only realized into real action when supported by the leadership of the principal and collegial solidarity; The support then institutionalized into a consistent agency and professionalism of teachers; and ultimately leads to the practice of sustainable student character development (Wiens et al., 2025) This conceptual chain is summarized in Table 1 and will be the framework that frames the discussion of each finding in the later sections of this article.

**Table 1.** The Conceptual Chain of Research: From Legal Protection to Character Education

|                                                        |                                                              |                                                           |                                                             |                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Legal Protection<br>(Permendikdasmen<br>No. 4/2026) | 2. Psychological<br>Safety<br>& Self-Efficacy<br>of Teachers | 3. Principal's<br>Leadership<br>& Collegial<br>Solidarity | 4. Agency &<br>Professionalism<br>Teachers in<br>Discipline | 5. Character<br>Building<br>Consistent<br>Students |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|

The complexity of this problem is increasing in the digital era, when every teacher's disciplinary action can be recorded, disseminated, and widely discussed on social media without the full context. This phenomenon adds to the psychological burden on teachers because, in addition to formal legal risks, they also face reputational risks that can quickly affect their careers and personal lives and are difficult to control (Yang & Chang, 2026). In such a situation, the existence of regulations that provide legal certainty becomes increasingly relevant. However, the question is whether such legal certainty is really enough to restore the courage of teachers in carrying out the function of character development in its entirety, or whether additional intervention is needed in the aspects of institutional support and teacher digital literacy, a question that is the starting point of this study (Wartenberg et al., 2026).

Answering this question requires a conceptual explanation that integrates five elements studied separately in the literature: legal protection, psychological security, principal leadership, teacher professionalism and agency, and student character education. This research is built on the premise that the five elements form an interrelated causal chain rather than stand-alone variables, and that the explanation of this chain is gradually synthesized throughout this article into a practical model called the PELITA Model. This model is not an additional conclusion drawn at the end of the discussion, but rather an argument structure that builds on this section and develops organically with each finding outlined in the later sections.

The disparity between teachers' professional demands in fostering students' character and the lack of legal security raises a fundamental question: Does the presence of Permendikdasmen Number 4 of 2026 actually strengthen teachers' professionalism in carrying out student character development at the high school level, and what factors support or hinder its implementation at the education unit level? More specifically, the formulation of the problem can be described into three research questions: (1) how is the perception and experience of high school teachers towards the implementation of Permendikdasmen Number 4 of 2026 in the context of student character development; (2) through what mechanism the regulation contributes to strengthening the dimensions of teacher professionalism; and (3) what factors support or hinder the effectiveness of the implementation of the regulation at the level of the education unit.

Based on this description, this study aims to: (1) describe the perception and experience of high school teachers towards the implementation of Permendikdasmen Number 4 of 2026; (2) analyze the mechanism of contribution of the regulation to the strengthening of teacher professionalism in fostering student character through the theoretical framework of psychological security and teacher agency; (3) identify supporting factors and obstacles to their implementation at the level of educational units; and (4) synthesize the findings into a conceptual-practical model that other high school education units can replicate.

### **Teacher Professionalism in Education Policy Perspective**

Teacher professionalism conceptually includes four main competencies, namely pedagogic, personal, social, and professional competencies, which are interrelated in forming quality teaching practices (Ananda et al., 2023). Highlight teachers' professional skills in increasing students' creative learning as a form of pedagogic competence, while Indriawati et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of teachers' professional ethics as the basis for dignified teacher-student interaction, which is a manifestation of personal and social competence (Arar & Taysum, 2020; Hollands et al., 2022) specifically emphasized that teacher professionalism is the basis for the formation of students' character. However, most of these studies treat teacher professionalism as a stand-alone variable, without considering how external conditions, such as legal security and institutional support, shape teachers' capacity to demonstrate it in real classroom practice consistently.

### **High School Student Character Education and Pancasila Student Profile**

Character education at the high school level has its own peculiarities compared to the basic education level, because high school students are in a more complex phase of identity search and are vulnerable to external influences. Lickona (1991) emphasized that effective character education requires exemplary role modeling, consistency, and clear rule enforcement from educators (Joseph-McCatty & Hnilica, 2023) relates the role of driving teachers to strengthening student character through the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile, which is officially described in the Development Guide for the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (Hana Dewi Kinarina Kaban, 2023) as a national frame of reference. Although this framework has provided a clear direction regarding the character dimension to be achieved, the success of its implementation still depends on the readiness and courage of teachers, as the main implementers, and on a sense of security in enforcing consequences for violations of character values; otherwise, character education risks running only symbolically.

### **Legal Protection of Teachers as a Prerequisite for Professionalism**

Several legal studies show that the dilemma between the obligation to discipline students and the risk of criminalization has long been a structural problem in the Indonesian education system (Moran et al., 2024) found that many teachers became less strict with students who violated the rules because they were worried that they would be considered violent by parents and the community (Akhwani & Rahayu, 2021). strengthens this argument by stating that legal reformulation is needed so that teachers have certainty in carrying out disciplinary functions without disproportionate legal risks. However, these studies generally stop at juridical-normative analysis and have not explained, psychologically and empirically, how legal certainty is actually transformed into the courage and concrete actions of teachers in the field.

### **Theoretical Framework: Causal Chains of Legal Protection–Psychological Security–Professional Agency–Character Education**

To elucidate the mechanism behind the relationship between regulation and character-building practices, this study adopts the psychological safety theory developed by Edmondson (1999), which defines psychological safety as the shared belief that the work environment is safe to take interpersonal risks, such as voicing opinions, admitting mistakes, or taking decisive action without fear of being humiliated or receiving negative consequences. This principle is relevant to the context of teachers: the legal protection guaranteed by Permendikdasmen Number 4 of 2026 can be understood as one of the external sources that contribute to teachers' psychological security when taking interpersonal risks in enforcing discipline. A recent study by Christopher M. Fleming et al. (2024) confirms that psychological safety among K-12 educators is significantly associated with staff well-being and organizational context, reinforcing the relevance of this concept. However, its application to the context of legal protection as a source of psychological safety is still rarely studied.

In addition to psychological safety, this study draws on Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, which holds that an individual's belief in his or her ability to control the outcome of an action is also shaped by perceptions of environmental support and consequences. However, psychological safety and self-efficacy alone do not explain how such attitude changes translate into real action. This is where the principal's leadership plays a liaison: an ecological framework of teacher agency (Cong-Lem, 2026; Mark Priestley et al., 2015) explains that professional agency relies on personal, relational, and contextual resources, while a recent distributed leadership study by (Galdames-Calderón, 2023) empirically shows that principals' leadership practices that open up spaces for teacher participation have been proven to increase teachers' professional capacity significantly. In turn, actualized teacher agency and professionalism, as emphasized by Rahayu, Agbale (Davison et al., 2022; Fackler et al., 2021) in a comparative study of teacher professionalism in Asia, including Indonesia, is a prerequisite for consistency in character education practices in the classroom, which Lickona (1991) requires must be carried out through exemplary and consistent enforcement of rules.

These causal chains of five elements, legal protection, psychological safety, principal's leadership, teacher professionalism/agency, and student character education, have been described in Table 1 in the Background section as the main conceptual framework of this study. This framework will be explicitly referenced throughout the Discussion section and ultimately operationalized as a practical model, the PELITA Model,

which is built in stages rather than compiled separately at the end of the article.

**Table 2.** Theoretical Framework: Regulatory Pillars, Psychological Mechanisms, and Stages of the PELITA Model

| Pillar of the Minister of Education No. 4/2026 | Psychological-Theoretical Mechanisms                                                                   | Dimensions of Teacher Professionalism | PELITA Model Stage                              |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Legal protection                               | Lowering interpersonal risk perception (Krause et al., 2024)                                           | Personal and social competence        | P – Strengthening Regulatory Understanding      |
| Professional protection                        | Strengthening career certainty as a contextual resource for agencies (Priestley et al., 2012)          | Professional competence               | E – Continuous Education & Socialization        |
| Occupational safety and health protection      | Maintaining emotional stability as a prerequisite for proportional disciplinary decision-making        | Psychological well-being              | L – Structural Advocacy Services                |
| Protection of intellectual property rights     | Encouraging the actualization of collective agency through coaching method innovation (Cong-Lem, 2026) | Pedagogic-innovative competencies     | I, T, A – Interaction, Transparency, Adaptation |

Although the literature on teacher professionalism, character education, and the legal protection of teachers has developed, the author's research has found no studies that explicitly link the three into a single causal framework explaining how legal protection translates into consistent character-building practices. International teacher agency studies (Cong-Lem, 2026; Priestley et al., 2012) discuss many contextual factors that support teacher agency in the realm of curriculum and pedagogy, but rarely touch on the realm of discipline and character building, which inherently involves the risk of conflict with parents. Similarly, the literature on psychological safety (Christopher M. Fleming et al., 2024) is growing rapidly in the context of school organizations. However, it has not been widely associated with the legal umbrella of professional protection as a source of psychological safety for teachers. On the Indonesian side, the study by Bardach et al. (2022; Moran et al., 2024) describes the problem of the criminalization of teachers from a juridical-normative perspective, but has not qualitatively explored how the newly promulgated protection regulations are actually experienced and interpreted by teachers in the field. This gap is what this research addresses, and it also provides the basis for the development of the PELITA Model as a new conceptual contribution that bridges regulation, psychology, and the practice of character education.

This research adds novelty by directly linking the latest professional protection regulations to the practice of character development among high school students using empirical field data, and by explaining the mechanisms behind this through the framework of psychological security and teacher agency. The main contribution of this research, which has been introduced since this introductory section, is the PELITA Model (Strengthening Regulatory Understanding, Education and Continuous Socialization, Structural Advocacy Services, Collegial Interaction, Transparency and Documentation, and Public Communication Adaptation) a six-stage cyclical framework synthesized from the interthematic relationship patterns of field findings and offered as a practical model that can be replicated by other high school education units in the field operationalizing Permendikdasmen Number 4 of 2026 in the context of character development. Thus, this article enriches the literature on the relationship between professional legal protection, psychological safety, and the personal-pedagogic professionalism of teachers, while providing concrete practical recommendations.

Methodologically, this study also contributes by demonstrating how a qualitative case study design can be used to evaluate the initial impact of a new regulation. This approach is relatively rarely used compared

with the more dominant juridical-normative approach in previous studies on teacher protection.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore in depth teachers' experiences and meanings regarding the implementation of Permendikdasmen Number 4 of 2026 in the context of student character development. The case study design was chosen because it allows contextual exploration of an educational unit by considering the peculiarities of school culture, internal policies, and the dynamics of the teacher-student-parent relationship that are unique in each school.

Research Location and Time

The research was carried out at one State High School in Bandung, which was chosen because it had actively implemented the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project and had a fairly diverse history of student discipline enforcement cases. Data collection is carried out over a period of time, 2026.

Research Participants

The research participants were selected using purposive sampling techniques, with the criteria of direct involvement in the character development process and in handling student disciplinary violations. Participants comprised 16 informants, including 1 principal, 1 deputy principal for student affairs, 2 counseling guidance teachers, 4 homeroom teachers, and 9 subject teachers, with varying periods of employment. The characteristics of informants are briefly presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Characteristics of Research Informants (Illustrative Data)

| Code           | Role/Department                | Tenure     | Remarks                                                                                           |
|----------------|--------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| KS-01          | Principal                      | > 10 years | Determining internal policies related to teacher discipline and advocacy                          |
| WK-01          | Deputy Head of Student Affairs | 8 years    | Handling cases of disciplinary violations and coordinating with parents                           |
| BK-01, BK-02   | Counseling Guidance Teacher    | 5–9 years  | Handle personal character development and student-specific cases                                  |
| WL-01 to WL-04 | Homeroom Teacher               | 3–15 years | The main contact for daily character development in the classroom                                 |
| G-01 s.d. G-09 | Subject Teacher                | 2–20 years | Diverse subject backgrounds and working periods, representing senior teachers and novice teachers |

Data Collection

Primary data was collected through three main techniques, namely: (1) in-depth and semi-structured interviews with all informants; (2) participants' observations of teacher-student interaction in character development activities; and (3) document study in the form of regulatory manuscripts, school discipline, and records of handling student discipline cases in the last school year.

## Instruments

The interview guidelines are prepared based on the four pillars of Permendikdasmen Number 4 of 2026, which are adapted into the context of student character development, as well as indicators of teacher professionalism and psychological safety constructs. The instrument was validated through expert judgment by two academics in education before being used in the field.

## Research Procedure and Data Analysis

The research was carried out through four stages: (1) field orientation; (2) gradual collection of key data with continuous analysis; (3) thematic analysis; and (4) verification through member checking and preparation of final reports.

Interview and document data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. The validity of the data is strengthened through triangulation of sources and techniques, member checking with key informants, and trail audits through systematically documented field notes and interview transcripts.

## FINDINGS

This section presents research findings as main themes that emerge from the analysis of interviews, observations, and document studies, supplemented by illustrative excerpts in each subsection.

*The informant's citations presented in this section are illustrative to demonstrate the structure of qualitative data reporting and must be replaced with a transcript of a real interview if this manuscript is used as the basis for publication.*

**Table 4.** Summary of Thematic Findings (Illustrative Data)

| Theme                                                   | General Description/Description                                                                                                                                    | Manifestations in the Field                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Legal certainty as the basis for the courage to educate | Teachers feel that they have a clear legal umbrella, so that they are more courageous to reprimand and discipline students than before the regulations took effect | The teacher reprimands the violation of discipline directly without waiting for the instructions of the superior                            |
| Structural support of the principal                     | The principal establishes an internal mechanism (an advocacy team and complaint-handling SOPs) that translates regulations into daily practice.                    | There is a reporting and mentoring channel for teachers who face parental complaints.                                                       |
| Regulatory literacy gap                                 | Understanding of non-litigation advocacy mechanisms and of litigation is uneven, especially among beginning teachers.                                              | Some teachers are only familiar with the general regulations and do not understand the technical procedures for filing complaints.          |
| Residue of social anxiety                               | Formal legal protections have not removed informal social pressure from parents or public opinion on social media.                                                 | Teachers remain careful in their choice of words and actions when enforcing discipline.                                                     |
| Changes in character development patterns               | The coaching pattern shifted from avoidance/permissive to a more proactive and documented approach.                                                                | Teachers begin to record character development in writing as a form of accountability.                                                      |
| The role of professional and peer organizations         | Informal solidarity among teachers complements the formal support provided by principals and regulations.                                                          | Teachers share strategies for dealing with parents' complaints, even though support from branch professional organizations remains limited. |

## Legal Certainty as the Basis for Educational Courage

Most of the informants stated that the presence of Permendikdasmen Number 4 of 2026 provides a sense of security that directly affects their courage in upholding discipline and fostering students' character.

*"In the past, I was often hesitant to reprimand students who violated uniform rules or spoke rudely to teachers, afraid that they would be said to be rude by their parents. Now there are clear rules protecting us, so I am more courageous to enforce discipline as long as it is still educational."* (G-04, subject teacher, 8 years of service)

*"The difference is very noticeable. Where we used to rely only on personal wisdom, now there is a legal umbrella that can be used as a reference when parents question the disciplinary action we take."* (WL-02, homeroom teacher, 12 years of service)

## Principal Structural Support

The principal and deputy principal informants explained that they established an internal mechanism to address and follow up on parents' complaints regarding teacher disciplinary actions.

*"As soon as this regulation is issued, we will immediately develop an internal mechanism, a kind of reporting and assistance flow for teachers who face complaints, so that teachers do not face the problem alone."* (KS-01, principal)

*"We also hold a kind of regular forum with homeroom teachers and BK teachers to discuss disciplinary cases that have the potential to cause complaints, so that the handling is more coordinated."* (WK-01, deputy head of student affairs, 8 years of service)

## Regulatory Literacy Gap

Although most informants felt the benefits of regulation, there was a considerable gap in understanding, especially regarding the technical mechanisms of non-litigation advocacy and litigation.

*"I know there are new rules that protect teachers, but to be honest, I do not really understand what the procedure is if there really is a problem, whether to report it to whom, and what the stages are."* (G-07, subject teacher, 2 years of service)

*"The socialization is still limited to short meetings; there is no special training that discusses the technical details of advocacy for teachers."* (BK-02, counseling guidance teacher, 6 years of service)

## Social Anxiety Residue

Some informants said that pressure from public opinion, especially through social media, remains a separate consideration despite the formal legal protections available.

*"The law can protect us, but if the video goes viral and is talked about on social media, the impact on the good name of the school and the teacher's personality is still large. So I remain very cautious."* (WL-03, homeroom teacher, 15 years of service)

## Changes in Character Development Patterns

Some homeroom teachers mentioned that they now record the character development process in writing as a form of accountability.

*"Now every time I deal with the problem of student character, I make a written note, date, incident, action taken, and the result. It helps me if one day I have to explain to my parents or the school."* (WL-01, homeroom teacher, 10 years of service)

## The Role of Professional Organizations and Peers

The informant also highlighted the role of solidarity among peers in strengthening their sense of security, although support from professional organizations at the branch level is still limited.

*"We often share stories between teachers if there is a case that has the potential to become a problem. From there, we learned how best to deal with it. However, from professional organizations in the district, so far, there has been no special assistance related to this new regulation."* (G-02, subject teacher, 14 years of service)

## Cross-Theme Synthesis

Overall, the seven themes identified showed an interrelated pattern: legal certainty served as initial psychological input, principals' structural support and collegial solidarity served as translators of such psychological security into tangible action, while literacy gaps and residues of social concerns served as inhibitors that limited the optimal effectiveness of regulation. This relationship pattern is further analyzed conceptually in the Discussion section.

## DISCUSSION

The following discussion is deliberately assembled following the five conceptual chain nodes that have been introduced in Table 1 in the Introduction section: (1) legal protection, (2) psychological safety and self-efficacy, (3) principal leadership and collegial solidarity, (4) agency and professionalism of teachers, and (5) character development of students. At each node, the discussion departs from the field data of the research itself, not from outside literature, which serves as the main comparative reference; the literature is used solely as a tool to explain why the mechanism works. Each node will also indicate which letter in the PELITA Model was "born" from it, so that the model appears to be the result of a synthesis that grows throughout the discussion, rather than a conclusion that appears suddenly at the end.

### **Node 1→2: How Teachers' Words G-04 and WL-02 Reveal the Psychological Mechanisms Behind Legal Certainty**

When informant G-04 said that he was "hesitant to reprimand" but "is now more bold," this data actually reveals two different psychological conditions at two points in time, rather than simply a statement of satisfaction with regulation. Before the regulations took effect, teachers at the study site consistently described a process like calculating interpersonal risks every time they wanted to reprimand students: the potential for being humiliated, reported, or criminalized was a perceived psychological cost greater than the benefits of enforcing discipline, so the rational choice was to remain silent or permissive. This pattern is precisely described by Edmondson's (1999) concept of psychological safety as a shared belief that the work environment is safe for taking interpersonal risks and in the case of teachers at the site of this study, the new regulation specifically changes one of the variables in the calculation, namely the probability of perceived negative legal consequences, without altering the other social-informal risks that will be discussed in the next node. The WL-02 data reinforce this reading: the teacher explicitly compares "relying on personal discretion" (a condition without a clear external reference, vulnerable to unilateral accusations) with a "legal umbrella that can be used as a reference" (a condition with a defensible external standard), a shift best explained through Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy: the clarity of the consequences of actions increases the teacher's confidence in his or her ability to control the outcome of the disciplinary decisions taken. It is the combination of these two mechanisms, reduced interpersonal risk and increased self-efficacy, that answers the question of "why" teacher courage increases specifically in the domain of discipline enforcement, rather than in other aspects of professionalism that do not involve similar interpersonal risks. The connection from node 1 to node 2 is the origin of the Strengthening of Regulatory Understanding (P) stage in the PELITA Model; it is not recommended outright. However, it arises from the need to deliberately replicate the cognitive processes experienced by G-04 and WL-02 for other teachers who have not had those experiences.

### **Node 2→3: Why G-04 and WL-02 Sense of Security Does not Automatically Happen to All Teachers: The Role of Leadership as a Determinant**

If psychological security alone is enough, all informants should show the same pattern of attitude change. However, the data showed variation: G-07 informants, novice teachers with two years of tenure, knew the regulations broadly but did not show the same level of courage as G-04 or WL-02, who had longer service periods and more intensive interaction with school principals. This variation cannot be explained by psychological safety alone and instead leads to an ecological framework of teacher agency (Cong-Lem, 2026; Priestley et al., 2012), which emphasizes that agency is the result of interactions among personal, relational,

and contextual resources, not a mere individual psychological function. The KS-01 and WK-01 data at the site of this study show that principals actively provide contextual resources, such as standard operating procedures and internal advocacy mechanisms, which are perceived by teachers who interact more frequently with the structure. These findings are consistent with the recent distributed leadership study by (Galdames-Calderón, 2023), which empirically shows in school teachers that principals' leadership practices that open up space for teacher participation and professional development consistently increase the teacher's own leadership and professional capacity reinforcing the argument that the relationship between regulation and teacher professionalism is not a direct relationship, but rather mediated by school leadership as a connecting variables. G-02's data on informal collegial solidarity complements this mechanism as an additional relational resource that works in parallel with formal leadership. However, he himself notes that support from professional organizations at the branch level "has not been specifically mentored," a gap at the meso level that will be discussed further as a structural weakness. This node gave rise to two stages of the PELITA Model simultaneously: Structural Advocacy Services (L), representing the KS-01/WK-01 mechanism, and Collegial Interaction (I), representing the G-02 mechanism.

#### **Node 3→4: From Action to Institutionalized Professional Practice**

The WL-01 data show an advanced stage that has not been explained by the previous two nodes: courage and contextual support alone do not explain why some teachers begin to document their character-building actions in writing. This behavior is a further form of professional agency actualization, as Cong-Lem (2026) explains: the teacher not only accepts the possible conditions (psychological safety and contextual support) but also actively translates them into new practices that can be maintained professionally. WL-01's written documentation can be read as this kind of agentic strategy: not just administrative compliance, but a professional step to convert the psychological safety and contextual support at the previous node into evidence of defensible professionalism in the presence of parents and institutions in line with the emphasis of (Rahayu et al., 2023) that teacher professionalism in the Asian context, including Indonesia, is increasingly required to demonstrate responsible accountability documented, not just teaching competencies in the classroom. This node gave birth to the Transparency and Documentation (T) stage in the PELITA Model.

#### **Critical Analysis: Why Nodes 1-3 Are Not Enough: Structural Limits of Legal Protection on Social- Informal Risk**

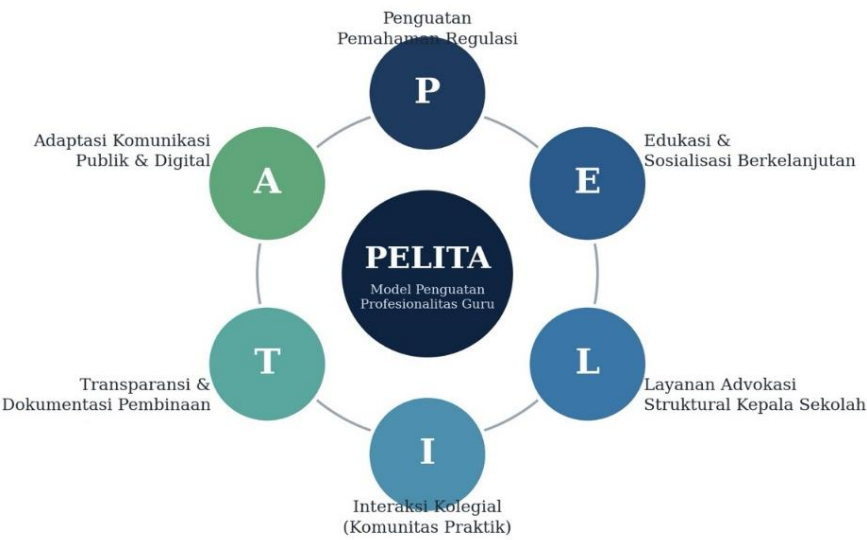
This is where the most critical findings of this research lie: they show the fundamental weaknesses of Permendikdasmen Number 4 of 2026, not just its successes. Data WL-03 "the law can protect us, but if the video goes viral... the impact remains substantial" indicating that the chain of nodes 1 to 3 above ceases to work when the risks faced by teachers shift from formal-organizational risks (which are reached by regulation) to social-informal risks or reputations (which operate through public opinion and social media, completely outside the jurisdiction of any legal instrument). This is not an implementation failure that can be corrected by additional socialization, but rather a conceptual limitation inherent in legal regulation itself: a Permendikdasmen, however well designed, lacks the instrument to control public opinion in the digital space. This critical argument needs to be affirmed because the existing teacher protection literature, including Bardach et al. (2022) and Moran et al. (2024), tends to stop at the "need for regulatory strengthening" recommendation without acknowledging that some of the risks that teachers face are structurally beyond the reach of any regulation.

The second structural weakness is evident in the G-07 and BK-02 data on the gap in advocacy literacy, which should not be reduced to a mere "lack of socialization." This gap reflects a common pattern of top-down policy implementation: regulations are designed centrally by the ministry, while teachers, as frontline implementers, must translate abstract rules into day-to-day micro-actions without detailed technical guidance at the school level. The G-02 data on the lack of assistance from professional organizations at the branch level reinforce this reading: the gap is not at the individual teacher level, but at the support structure at the intermediate level (meso-level) between national policies and school practices, which, at the location of this study, proved not to be working. These two structural weaknesses directly gave birth to the final stage of the

PELITA Model, namely Public Communication Adaptation (A), which is explicitly designed not to perfect regulations, but to fill spaces that structurally cannot be filled by any regulation.

**Synthesis: How the PELITA Model Was Really Formed from the Five Nodes Above**

The PELITA model in Figure 1 is thus not six recommendations that are compiled separately, but the cumulative results of the five nodes discussed above: stage P is born from the psychological safety mechanism in the G-04/WL-02 data (Node 1→2); Level E is an extension of P to reach teachers like G-07 who have not experienced similar cognitive changes; stages L and I were born from data KS-01/WK-01/G-02 regarding the role of leadership and solidarity as a psychological conversion into action (Nodes 2→3); stage T was born from WL-01 data regarding the institutionalization of actions into accountable practices (Node 3→4); and phase A was born directly from a critical analysis of the structural limitations of the regulations in the WL-03, G-07, and BK-02 data. These six stages are cyclical, not linear, because the success of stage A in mitigating social-informal risks in turn reinforces the teacher's psychological safety at Node 1, closing the cycle and starting the next round of reinforcement. The PELITA model is thus an applied representation of the conceptual chain in Table 1 (legal protection-psychological safety-leadership-professional agency-character education) that was introduced in the Introduction section, and not a list of generic recommendations that can be extracted from the data that gave rise to it.



**Figure 1.** PELITA Model: Results of the Accumulation of the Fifth Node of the Conceptual Chain of Legal Protection–Psychological Safety–Leadership–Professional Agency–Character Education

The PELITA model is an initial theoretical-practical proposition based on qualitative data from one educational unit; therefore, its application in other schools needs to be adjusted to their respective contexts and further tested through development research or multi-case studies.

**Theoretical Implications**

This research provides five theoretical contributions. First, regarding the theory of teacher professionalism, this study shows that the framework of the four conventional competencies (pedagogic, personal, social, professional) in line with the emphasis of (Rahayu et al., 2023) that teacher professionalism in Asia increasingly demands the dimensions of accountability and contextual adaptability needs to be complemented by a fifth dimension that is enabling, namely psychological-legal security, as a structural prerequisite that determines the extent to which the four competencies can be Consistently actualized in high-risk domains such as character building. Second, about psychological safety theory (Edmondson, 1999), this study expands the source of psychological safety beyond the organizational/team boundaries that have been the main focus of the literature (including Fleming et al., 2024, which focuses on the K-12 organizational context), by showing that external legal-legal instruments can also serve as a significant source of psychological

safety, while demonstrating the categorical boundaries between formal risks that regulatory can reach and risks social-informal that any legal instrument cannot reach. Third, with respect to the theory of teacher agency (Cong-Lem, 2026; Mark Priestley et al., 2015), this study expands the scope of studies that have been concentrated in the domain of curriculum and pedagogy to the domain of discipline and character development, which inherently entails a higher risk of interpersonal conflict. Fourth, regarding the study of school leadership (Bardach et al., 2022; Moran et al., 2024), this study strengthens the evidence that the principal's leadership is not just an administrative factor but an active mediator that translates the teacher's individual psychological state into collective professional action. Fifth, the PELITA Model itself is proposed as a medium-range theoretical-practical construct that bridges macro-level policy regulation with micro-level classroom practice, filling a gap that has been a limitation of teacher protection studies from a purely juridical-normative perspective (Windari et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2024)

### **Practical Implications**

In practice, these findings recommend that educational units develop internal technical guidelines that translate the PELITA Model into standard operating procedures for character development, complemented by periodic training on non-litigation advocacy mechanisms. Schools also need to institutionalize discussion forums among teachers as a formal community of practice, rather than allowing them to develop spontaneously, and to develop public and digital communication strategies to manage parental and public perceptions, given that the residue of social concerns is beyond the reach of legal instruments alone.

### **Research Limitations**

This study has limitations because it was conducted at a single educational unit and involved a limited number of informants. Hence, the findings and the PELITA Model produced are contextual and not intended to be statistically generalized to all high school education units in Indonesia. In addition, because the regulations under review will take effect only in 2026, this study captures the initial phases of implementation that may differ from long-term dynamics. The researcher is also aware of the reflective position in the process of data collection and interpretation; Member checking and source triangulation are strictly sought to minimize such interpretive biases.

### **CONCLUSION**

This research fills the study gap that has been separating the legal protection of the teaching profession from the theory of professionalism and character education, by empirically showing that Permendikdasmen Number 4 of 2026 functions as a prerequisite for psychological security that allows teachers to actualize their professional agency in fostering the character of high school students, through the causal chain of legal protection psychological security professional agency character education that is not much explicitly articulated in the previous literature. The main contribution of this research is the PELITA Model, a six-stage cyclical framework (Strengthening Regulatory Understanding, Education and Continuous Socialization, Structural Advocacy Services, Collegial Interaction, Transparency and Documentation, and Public Communication Adaptation) which is synthesized directly from the pattern of relationships between the findings, while expanding the theory of teacher professionalism by adding the dimension of psychological-legal security as a structural antecedent that has been under-received attention within the framework of conventional teacher competence. However, given that this study uses a single-case study design at one high school, the findings and the PELITA Model produced are contextual. They are not intended to be generalized directly to all high school education units in Indonesia, but rather as an initial theoretical proposition that is open to further test in a broader context through multi-case or mixed-methods research. As the most urgent action priorities based on the findings, education units and policy makers are advised to first address the regulatory advocacy literacy gap through concrete and scheduled technical training, as this theme has proven to be the most significant weak point that limits all other regulatory benefits, before moving on to follow-up interventions such as the development of digital communication strategies or the institutionalization of a full community of practice.

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