

## TEACHER'S EFFORTS IN DEVELOPING EARLY CHILDHOOD SOCIAL - EMOTIONAL SKILLS THROUGH THE CULTIVATION OF DISCIPLINE AT TK NEGERI MELATI LAMPEONG

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### Abstract

Discipline is crucial to be taught to children from an early age so they can achieve optimal social and emotional development. Nowadays, teachers play a prominent role in shaping children's discipline at school because many parents lack the skills. This qualitative study aims to describe the efforts made by teachers in instilling values of discipline in children at Melati Lampeong State Kindergarten so that their social and emotional development can flourish optimally. The informants in this study were 7 teachers, 1 school principal, and 28 parents of students. Data collection techniques were conducted through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Qualitative data were analyzed using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Hubberman). Data were presented in themes identified through the analysis process. Data validation was conducted through source triangulation, member checks, and the use of data collection tools. The research findings indicate that teachers at Melati Lampeong State Kindergarten implement various efforts such as modeling disciplined behavior, establishing clear routines, and using positive reinforcement to foster children's discipline. Consistency and modeling by teachers are important. This study's findings recommend further research on the relationship between discipline cultivation and social-emotional well-being involving collaboration between schools and families.

**Keywords:** early childhood education, discipline, social-emotional.

### INTRODUCTION

Early childhood presents a unique window for social and emotional skill development. Social and emotional competence in young children has been described as an emerging ability to establish secure relationships with both adults and peers, experience, regulate and express emotions, explore the environment, and learn. This development occurs within the context of family, community and culture.

According to experts in neuroscience, psychology, and pedagogy, early childhood represents a critical developmental window, often referred to as the "golden age". It is characterized by rapid and foundational growth across multiple domains. At birth, a child possesses approximately 100 billion brain cells, with the formation and strengthening of neural connections highly influenced by nutrition, health, and environmental stimulation (Center on the Developing Child, 2024; Batcheler, 2023). The development of intelligence during early childhood encompasses motor, cognitive, language, and social domains, all of which are deeply dependent on the quality of educational services and the availability of supportive facilities (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2023). The more enriched and responsive the learning environment, the more optimal a child's intellectual, emotional, and social maturity becomes in preparing for subsequent stages of education (Untung et al., 2023; Harvard University, 2024).

Social skills are a critical aspect of early childhood development and can be fostered in early childhood education (ECE) settings as a foundation for building harmonious peer relationships. Healthy friendships are more easily established when children possess confidence and the ability to face challenges and resolve problems independently. The development of social skills in early education aims to promote children's capacity for positive interactions within their social environment. Blewitt et al. (2018) emphasize that curriculum-based interventions in early childhood programs significantly enhance children's social-emotional competencies. The development of these skills depends on various factors, including the child's individual characteristics and interaction experiences with parents, teachers, and the broader learning environment.

Teachers play a pivotal role in cultivating social skills in the classroom and contributing to children's sense of social responsibility through practices such as fostering a sense of belonging, encouraging helpfulness and tolerance, and establishing discipline through habituation. Personality formation in early childhood is also shaped by the internalization of discipline. Studies by Hermahayu et al. (2025) and Pertiwi & Yuliantina (2024) highlight that the ways in which parents and educators teach discipline influence not only children's current behavior, but also their long-term emotional regulation, social skills, and mental health.

Conceptually, discipline can be defined as compliance with agreed-upon rules and expectations, making it a crucial value to be instilled from an early age (Aulina, 2021). Through the habituation of discipline, children learn to act in accordance with the norms accepted by society and their social group (Diniyati, 2023). The objectives of discipline education in early childhood encompass both short-term and long-term goals (Azfa' et al., 2024; Sahidun, 2022; Lukitasari, 2021; Murano, Sawyer, & Lipnevich, 2020). In the short term, discipline helps children develop self-control by understanding acceptable versus unacceptable behaviors. In the long term, it aims to build more advanced self-regulation as children grow.

However, shaping discipline to early age children is always challenging due to some reasons. Nurma et al. (2024) found that discipline problems in PAUD often stem from inconsistent parenting, lack of teacher training in behavior management, and diverse student backgrounds. Teachers reported challenges such as tantrums, refusal to follow routines, and peer conflicts. Destiana et al. (2024) emphasizes that children's indiscipline was caused by inconsistent parenting at home and internal factors such as hyperactivity in children. Furthermore, Urban (2022) argues that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted early childhood systems worldwide, leading to increased behavioral challenges. Many children returned to school with reduced self-regulation and social-emotional skills, requiring educators to rethink discipline frameworks. Additionally, the 2023 World Bank report on early childhood

education in Indonesia underscores the widespread absence of structured behavior management frameworks in unaccredited PAUD centers, citing this deficiency as a core challenge to sustaining quality learning environments. Collectively, these findings suggest that while positive behavior development is a national priority, systemic gaps in home-school consistency and institutional resources continue to impede the cultivation of discipline in early learners.

Teachers play a pivotal role in fostering discipline in early childhood education, not only as instructors, but also as mentors who shape children's prosocial behavior. They are responsible for cultivating a structured and supportive learning environment that encourages the internalization of disciplinary habits. This is achieved through a range of pedagogical strategies, including the establishment of consistent routines, the application of logical consequences, and the modeling of exemplary conduct. Within this framework, it becomes essential to critically examine how discipline is instilled by educators in early learning settings, particularly in relation to developmental appropriateness and cultural context.

TK Negeri Melati Lampeong was selected as a relevant subject for this study due to its consistent implementation of behavior habituation programs within the early childhood education setting. The primary aim of this research is to explore the strategies employed by teachers in instilling the values of discipline among children at TK Negeri Melati Lampeong. This study adopts a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. Data will be collected through direct classroom observations, interviews with teachers, and documentation of learning activities conducted at the school.

This research seeks to generate a comprehensive understanding of teachers' efforts to promote disciplinary values while contributing to the development of a more effective and applicable model for character education in early childhood. Additionally, the findings are expected to provide practical recommendations for educators, parents, and school administrators in designing learning programs that consistently foster disciplined behavior in children's daily lives.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative method to convey the teachers' efforts in cultivating discipline toward early age students at TK Negeri Melati Lampeong. The qualitative method had been chosen as it possible for the researchers to obtain a comprehensive understanding regarding the phenomenon at school through a systematic descriptive analysis. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of teachers' efforts in instilling discipline values in early childhood at TK Negeri Melati Lampeong, North Barito, Central Kalimantan. The main focus of this study is to reveal the strategies, approaches, and challenges faced by teachers in the learning process that integrates discipline values.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling, involving individuals directly engaged in the discipline-learning program. The research subjects comprised one principal and seven teachers from TK Negeri Melati Lampeong who were actively involved in the instructional process, as well as 28 parents, serving as educational partners in promoting disciplinary values both at home and at school.

Data collection techniques were conducted through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Qualitative data were analyzed using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Hubberman). Data were presented in themes identified through the analysis process. Data validation was conducted through source triangulation, member checks, and the use of data collection tools.



Observations were conducted to examine children's behavior during daily classroom activities and to assess teacher interactions in implementing disciplinary strategies. In-depth interviews were carried out with teachers to explore their methods, approaches, and experiences in fostering children's discipline. Document analysis was employed to obtain written data such as activity schedules, classroom rules, and instructional materials related to discipline habituation. The instruments used included observation guidelines, interview protocols, and documentation checklists.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Based on data gathered through observation, interviews, and documentation, several key findings emerged regarding teachers' efforts to instill the value of discipline in children at TK Negeri Melati Lampeong. These findings can be categorized into two main themes: the strategies employed by teachers to cultivate discipline among children, and the challenges encountered in the process.

### **Strategies for Instilling Discipline**

The collected data revealed that teachers at TK Negeri Melati Lampeong adopt various strategies to foster discipline in children. These include the implementation of structured daily routines, modeling of appropriate behavior, the use of positive behavior reinforcement approaches, and the integration of learning media.

#### ***Implementation of Daily Routines***

Teachers at TK Negeri Melati Lampeong implement highly structured daily routines to help children learn the value of discipline. Activities such as naptime, communal meals, and learning sessions are carried out on a fixed schedule. Children are taught to follow these routines responsibly, which fosters a habit of discipline in their daily lives. This finding aligns with the study by Haerani, Prasetyo, and Indra (2024), which emphasizes that a consistent "morning routine" program can enhance student discipline through teacher modeling. Similarly, Diniyati (2023) highlighted that habitual practices such as greeting teachers, tidying up toys, and adhering to scheduled activities are effective methods for instilling discipline character in children. This is also in line with the views of Maria Montessori (in Hajee, 2022), who asserted that the consistent application of daily routines in early childhood supports the development of self-discipline and strengthens children's understanding of time and responsibility.

#### **Teacher Role-Modeling**

Teachers at this kindergarten highlight the importance of modeling behavior in cultivating discipline. They consistently demonstrate positive examples such as punctuality, cleanliness, and adherence to school rules which children tend to imitate. The findings indicate that efforts to instill discipline at TK Negeri Melati Lampeong are strongly influenced by both the implementation of structured routines and the exemplary behavior demonstrated by the teachers. This is consistent with the theories proposed by Berk (2013) and Albert Bandura (b. 1925), both of whom argue that clear routines and teacher role models are key to teaching discipline to young children. Moreover, Lickona (in Suroso &

Husin, 2024) emphasizes that discipline in children can be fostered through consistent examples set by adults in this context, the teachers themselves.

### ***Positive Behavior Reinforcement Approach***

Teachers also adopt a positive reinforcement approach, such as giving praise and rewards to children who demonstrate disciplined behavior. This strategy aims to motivate children to remain disciplined and adhere to established rules. Positive reinforcement in educating children about discipline, such as offering praise and rewards can be tailored to suit their age and developmental stage. The following are examples of rewards based on the theory of B.F. Skinner (1904–1990) in Leeder (2022) that teachers at early childhood institutions can use to encourage consistent discipline:

1. **Verbal Praise:** Directly praising children who exhibit disciplined behavior, such as “Well done, you’ve neatly put away your toys!” or “Great job arriving on time!” reinforces desired behaviors and strengthens their willingness to behave consistently.
2. **Stickers or Badges:** Awarding stickers or badges as recognition. For instance, children who follow daily routines or specific rules receive a sticker or badge as a symbol of achievement. This system can be visualized through a progress chart to track each child’s development.
3. **Special Time with the Teacher:** Giving children one-on-one time with the teacher such as playing together or sitting close during certain activities provides them with a sense of being valued and appreciated for their disciplined behavior.
4. **Choice of Favorite Activities:** Children who demonstrate consistent discipline can be allowed to choose their preferred activity, like selecting a song to sing, picking a game to play, or choosing a book to read with the class.
5. **Social Acknowledgment:** Recognizing children publicly in front of their peers for example, announcing their achievements in following rules offers social reinforcement and instills a sense of pride in the acknowledged children.
6. **Points System:** Implementing a point-based system, where children earn points for displaying disciplined behavior. After accumulating enough points, they can exchange them for small rewards such as toys, storybooks, or additional playtime.
7. **Small Physical Gifts or Toys:** Giving small tangible rewards that the child enjoys, such as a small toy or item, after they reach a target, like consistently following rules for a full week.
8. **Selecting Group Activity Partners:** Disciplined children may be given the privilege to choose their teammates during group activities, which fosters a sense of trust and responsibility.

The consistent application of these reward systems is crucial so that children can understand the link between disciplined behavior and the recognition they receive. This helps form long-term positive habits both at school and in everyday life.

This study also shows that positive reinforcement is effective in improving children’s discipline, as discussed by Bandura (in Fourie & Schlebusch, 2024). According to his theory, praise and rewards serve as powerful motivators for children to improve their behavior, including in the area of discipline. Similarly, Skinner (in Fourie & Schlebusch, 2024) emphasized that positive reinforcement increases the likelihood of disciplined behavior in early childhood.

### ***Use of Instructional Media***

The instructional media used by teachers also play a significant role in instilling discipline. The use of visual aids, songs, and stories with moral messages about discipline influences children's understanding of these values. This is supported by Haryanto (2020), who emphasized the effectiveness of story-based learning media in promoting discipline in early childhood. Haryanto argued that stories embedding moral values—such as discipline—can help children understand and apply these behaviors in their daily lives. The media employed in his study included illustrated storybooks that conveyed discipline through characters who consistently followed rules and routines.

These findings are consistent with those of Rahmawati (2021), who found that the use of visual media and moral narratives could enhance children's awareness and comprehension of discipline. Media featuring engaging illustrations also increased children's interest in engaging with the learning material. Overall, the use of media such as images, songs, and stories has been shown to be effective in instilling the value of discipline among children. This aligns with several theoretical perspectives that highlight the essential role of media in making learning both enjoyable and contextual. Rahmawati (2021) noted that instructional media that are attractive and relevant greatly support children in understanding and applying discipline in their everyday lives. Thus, the media-based approach to teaching discipline is considered highly effective and is well supported by existing theories and empirical evidence.

### **Challenges in Instilling Discipline**

Based on interview findings, teachers reported several challenges in instilling discipline among young children. A key obstacle relates to the diverse family backgrounds of the students, which underscores the importance of adopting more individualized approaches in early childhood education. According to Piaget (1972) and Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) in Fourie & Schlebusch (2024), children are at different stages of development and therefore require strategies tailored to their specific developmental needs. In this context, some children who struggle to follow classroom rules may require additional attention and more patient guidance from teachers.

This study aligns with findings by Wijayanti (2018), who emphasized that collaborative approaches between teachers and parents can accelerate the development of children's discipline. However, the present research adds a new dimension by highlighting the need for consistency between school and home education. It shows that while the strategies implemented by teachers are effective, certain challenges persist—particularly the inconsistency of rule enforcement at home, which influences children's behavior in school.

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study demonstrate that teachers at TK Negeri Melati Lampeong have successfully instilled the value of discipline in young children through several effective strategies, including the implementation of structured routines, consistent behavioral role-modeling, and positive approaches such as praise and rewards. Moreover, the use of engaging learning media contributed to helping children gain a more comprehensive understanding of the importance of discipline.



These findings suggest that the strategies employed by the teachers may serve as a model for character education development, particularly in instilling the value of discipline within early childhood education institutions. The implementation of similar strategies in other educational settings holds strong potential for improving the quality of learning and supporting the formation of disciplined character from an early age.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the scope of research was limited to a single institution (TK Negeri Melati Lampeong), thus the findings may not be generalizable to broader educational contexts. Second, the relatively short duration of the study may have restricted the depth of analysis regarding the dynamics of the discipline-building process. In addition, this research has yet to account for the influence of external factors, such as the role of family and the home environment, which also contribute significantly to children's disciplinary development.

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