

# Study on Early Childhood Discipline in Majalengka-Indonesia

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**ABSTRACT:** Being disciplined is an important quality that children should possess because it is very useful for their life, their daily activities and their future. However, discipline education carried out by teachers and parents nowadays, especially in early childhood, seems to be insufficient. As a pilot study, the researcher was interested to discover how disciplined are the children in Majalengka city, Indonesia. The population of this study was 9,545 playgroup students in the Majalengka city, West Java, Indonesia, with the sample of 1,506 children spread in from 26 sub-districts and 412 institutions; the sample was chosen using random sampling; the data was analyzed using descriptive analysis to identify the mean and standard deviation on each measured discipline method; and questionnaire was used to measure the children's discipline and independence level, consisting of 35 items, but only 22 items to measure the categorized discipline were used (Listiana & Amanah 2017). Based on the result of data analysis, the children's level of discipline are as follows: (1) Students in very high category were 7.30%, (2) Students in high category were 49.80%, (3) Students in moderate category were 30.428%, (4) Students in low category were 11.29%; and (5) Students in very low category were 1.13%.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Young children are in a socially, emotionally, cognitively and spiritually period of rapid development, and specifically the development of their mental and physical abilities progress very rapidly from birth to the age of six years old (2013 PAUD Indonesian Childhood Education Curriculum, 2015). According to research results in the field of neurology conducted by Bloom (2004), an educational expert from the University of Chicago, USA, the development of brain tissue cells in children aged 0-4 years reaches 50%; then 80% at the age of 4-8 years, and 100% at the age of 8-18 years. The results of Cropley's study show that a child born with 100 billion brain cells and, upon entering early childhood age, the connection multiplies several times started from 20,000 prior connections (Permono 1994).

This is what causes children to be able to learn everything from their surroundings naturally. Children always have the desire to understand their environment, to be in control of their own experiences and to make relationships with other children and adults, leads to the child amassing a bank of knowledge about the causes and effects of what they perceive around them within the first 4-5 years of life (Whitebread & Bringham 2013).

What they learn in their surrounding can however be positive or negative. If children live in a positive environment, then they will develop positive charac-

ters and vice versa. Early childhood is the perfect time to instill characters in children (Jalongo 2007), so it is easy for them to develop creativity, capability, behavior and skill. One of the characters that needs to be instilled early on is discipline attitude.

Being disciplined is a very important life lesson for children, because by being accustomed to being disciplined, they will naturally instill positive values and will be accepted by many people. It is in line to Syauqi who states that a nation can only survive when it still has good morality or character, when there is no morality in a nation, which includes being disciplined, the nation will no longer survive (Yatmi 2016). Therefore, the implementation of discipline practices is also important to help and keep children from behavioral problems, criminality, depression and alcoholic problems during adulthood (Socolar et al. 2007).

Disciplining is a process of teaching children normative values and behaviors prevailing in the social environment/society (Wissow 2002). It is in accordance with Smith (2004) who affirms that discipline is the process of teaching children the values and normative behaviors of their society; and it is the guidance of children's moral, emotional and physical development that enabling them to take responsibility for themselves when they are older. As stated by Max (2011), disciplining is an act of shaping and changing behavior, not punishing people. It

emphasizes on the lessons and consequences of an action (Holden 2002).

In order to instill discipline attitude to children, every early childhood education teacher has to develop classroom routines or habit. Wood & Neal (Neal et al. 2015) define habit as:

“A learned, reflex-like behavior that is triggered unconsciously by familiar cues in a person’s context (physical setting, other actions in sequence, time of day). Once formed, a habit may substitute for, or override, conscious decision making in a relevant situation. A habit also blocks conscious awareness and exploration of behavioral choices and triggers rapid relapse to an old way of acting even when a person wants and intends to do something new.”

The prefrontal cortex in people’s brain is heavily engaged in the conscious, effortful learning of new behaviors. Therefore, the classroom routine/habit developed by early childhood education teacher has to have clear goals in order to help children experience discipline habit as a rewarding thing.

Furthermore, Salmon (2010) affirms that teachers’ use of routines is important, not only to give children a sense of security and confidence, but also to create habits of mind as they develop a culture of thinking. Similarly, Salmon (2010) acknowledges that when thinking routines become part of the classroom culture through repeated practice, they create patterns of thinking and learning that become part of the child’s intellectual character.

The form of disciplining children in their early childhood education includes requiring them to come on time for a class; not to get their food or toys while studying; to put their shoes and bags properly; and do the activities in their environment including activities before playing, during play and after playing in accordance with applicable rules that have been agreed in advance. When the above rules have been implemented in a longer period, it is expected that the children will instill their discipline attitude as they grow older.

Furthermore, the rules are also made to develop children’s critical thinking, in order to help them distinguish the good and bad habit. Hence, when the teacher has developed this habit, the children will create their patterns of thinking and learning that become part of their intellectual character (Salmon 2010). Besides, thinking can include many different mental processes, such as compare, infer, explain, and analyze (Salmon 2010).

This can also be successful with teacher’s willingness to be consistent in building the habit in a positive manner. It is in accordance with White bread & Bringham (2013) who affirm that teachers’ warm and positive relationships with their pupils en-

courage and reinforce appropriate self-regulatory behaviors that are important for learning.

However, according to field studies and interviews with some early childhood education teachers in Majalengka’s sub-districts and some research conducted in several places in Indonesia, there are still some children who have not shown the expected disciplined behavior. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting a further study to find out the discipline level of young children aged four to five year old in the playgroups in the Majalengka city.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The approach used in this study is descriptive quantitative with survey method to collect the data on children’s discipline level. The survey was conducted to collect the data through questionnaires by taking samples from a population. The population of this study were 9,545 playgroup students in Majalengka city, with of 1,506 samples taken from 412 play group institutions from 26 sub-districts. The sampling technique used was random sampling.

The measuring instrument used in this study was Young Children’s Disciplined and Independent Behaviors Measuring Instrument developed by Listiana & Amanah (2017). This measuring instrument is specifically designed to measure the development of the disciplined and independent behaviors of young children, which consists of 35 items, but only 22 items to measure the disciplined behavior were used. The system of this measuring tool includes calculating the score of each item in the scale that has been filled by the respondents to obtain a total score that shows the disciplined behavior score of each assessed child. The score of each question ranges from 1 to 5 with the answer choices including: very often have positive value (5 points), often have positive value (4 points), sometimes have positive value (3 points), rarely have positive value (2 points), and never have positive value (1 point). This instrument has passed validity and reliability tests and resulted in high scores, which indicates that this instrument is appropriate to be used for a study. The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis by looking at the mean and standard deviation of every measured discipline method.

## 3. RESULTS

Observation activities were conducted to identify the discipline level of young children in Majalengka city. From 1,506 young children, consisting of 760 data from female children and 746 male children, the following general picture was obtained.

Table 1. Data Analysis Results

Category	Score Range	Number of Children	%
Very high	$x \geq 90.14$	110	7.30
High	$8.38 \leq x < 90.14$	750	49.80
Moderate	$66.62 \leq x < 78.38$	459	30.48
Low	$54.86 \leq 66.62$	170	11.29
Very low	$x < 54.86$	17	1.13
Total		1,506	100

It can be concluded that the young children discipline level in Majalengka city is categorized as high. High discipline is a condition when a child obeys and follows the instructions school. For instance, they do the daily routines in the classroom - they make a line when the activities occurred, they keep clean themselves and look after the environment clean. This is allegedly caused by the way of instilling discipline to children and the understanding of teachers on early childhood discipline are sufficiently high. Nowadays in the Majalengka city, early childhood teachers have begun to understand the importance of discipline on young children, so they emphasize the process of instilling discipline to young children.

#### 4.DISCUSSION

Being disciplined is one of the important behaviors to be instilled in children from their early age and to be developed in everyday life aspects through the interaction and communication between adults and children. Basically, being disciplined is a necessity in early childhood age and it is needed for the sake of progress and changes towards the better (Aulina 2013). Similarly, Lipoff (2011) affirms that young child's brain is ready for positive reinforcement. Communication between adults and children is done to provide instruction, guidance or encouragement that aims at helping children learn to live as social beings and achieve optimal growth and development (Schaefer 1996). As White bread and Bringham (2013) believe that the modeling of behaviors by adults is a powerful means of supporting learning in children. As a result of good communication between children and adult, their relationship will continue and their lives improve.

In relation to aforementioned issue, children should feel secure and valued. In communicating with children, adult should maintain eye contact and interest, respond to what children are saying, and treat them with courtesy and respect (Burnham & Baker 2010).

Discipline attitude in young children is a self-control attitude of children aged 0-6 years in complying with the rules applicable in the children's environment both at home and at school. This is in accordance with Lipoff's (2011) theory that children should be instilled with knowledge and understand-

ing of self-discipline and that certain behaviors are unacceptable. Discipline in young children is necessary to shape their personality. Through discipline, children are introduced to things that are appropriate and inappropriate behaviors.

In addition, discipline also introduces children to their rights and responsibilities; children learn to control them self and realize that social life comes with rules that must be followed, in order to create conducive environment and to form a solid personality (Saputri 2016). This also helps children to develop their thinking ability as they construct knowledge from their prior experience.

For children, the short-term goal of being disciplined is none other than to make them have skill and control. It is done by introducing children to appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Furthermore, the long-term goal of being discipline for children is for the development of self-control without self-influence and self-direction, in which children can direct themselves without external influence and control (Schaefer 1996).

The purpose of the children's self-control is to lead them to learn the skills and values that will prepare them for adulthood when they will ultimately depend entirely on self-discipline (Rohmaniah et al. 2016). This is crucial as Tarullo et al. (2009) define self-control is a skill that children need to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.

There are two ways in disciplining children; positive discipline and negative discipline (Hurlock 1990). Positive discipline is an overarching philosophy that helps a child develops a conscience guided by his own internal discipline and compassion for others (Attachment Parenting International n.d.) It includes giving children an understanding of why they should behave so that there is no pressure or coercion to obey the rules.

Positive discipline in reinforcement can be given in the form of persistent persuasion. It can be done by teacher through giving commands with a reasonable tone of voice and without threat, as well as not giving the "if not" expression on the given commands. Rationalization and respond to the negotiation can also be incorporated in each command but with a controlled tone, clear reasons and friendliness (Berginet et al. 1999). In addition, positive reinforcement through giving children an understanding about the rules and reminding them to follow the rules have been showing good results in disciplining them and making them independent. According to Bergin et al. (1999), effective disciplining involves rational understanding, in which the process requires the understanding of why children should not behave a certain way. If there is a clear reason, children will process the rationale so as to have a behavior standard. Children will also be able to know how to behave later in life and abandon their old behavior that

they consider to be less appropriate (Bergin et al. 1999).

Meanwhile, negative discipline takes place when children are attempting to avoid punishments so that children follow the rules because they do not want to be punished (Smith 2004). Negative discipline in reinforcement given by teachers in this study is in the form of a threat. Smith (2004) describes negative discipline as discipline that “focuses on obedience and the avoidance of punishment. Power assertive disciplinary methods involve application of aversive consequences such as physical punishment, threats or withdrawal of privileges with little justification.” Although reinforcement in the form of threat may make children to behave better, this should be avoided. This is because threat is not the right way to discipline children. According to UNICEF (2008), negative discipline causes physical and psychological pains to the child on the receiving end, as well as other child who witness it.

In regard to this, Innes, Max (2011) stated that the concept of discipline in children is about shaping and changing their behavior, not punishing the children. In addition, according to Yaumi (2014), psychological violence takes place in the form of shouting, talking harshly, tearing students’ paper work, bringing students into conflict, and giving threats. Therefore, this kind of reinforcement should not be done, as it will destroy children’s sense of being loved and wanted.

By knowing and being aware of the differences in disciplinary methods, teachers of early childhood educations are expected to select better ways of dealing with problems to discipline attitude issues.

## 5.CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the discipline level of young children in Majalengka city is high. This is allegedly because the teacher's understanding of early childhood discipline is sufficiently high, which means that the teachers understand that discipline for children is something important to be instilled in kindergarten.

In addition, discipline is a guide for the moral, emotional, and physical development of children that enables children to be accountable to themselves when they grow up. Being disciplined also makes children aware of the limits in terms of what behaviors are accepted and not accepted in the society, what is right and wrong and how to socialize to their surroundings.

This study recommends early childhood education teacher to instill discipline values in the classroom through series of good habit, like coming on time for, not having their food or toys while studying, putting their shoes and bags properly, in order to help children become adult who is responsible of

their of own attitude. As Canadian Paediatric Society (2004) emphasizes that the goal of effective discipline is to foster acceptable and appropriate behavior in the child and to raise emotionally mature adults.

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