

Habituation method as an effort to form disciplined character in early childhood

Rifasya Nurfadillah¹, Elan^{2*}, Purwati³

¹ Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. Indonesia

² Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. Indonesia

³ Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received September 09, 2025

Revised October 05, 2025

Accepted October 13, 2025

Keywords:

Habituation Method
Character Education
Discipline Character
Early Childhood

Abstract

The problem of low discipline in early childhood is still often found in various early childhood education institutions, characterized by children's lack of ability to obey rules, take responsibility, and be independent. This is due to the inconsistent and unprogrammed application of habituation methods by educators. This study aims to examine the application of habituation methods in shaping the discipline of early childhood through a literature study of six scientific works in the form of four journal articles and two theses. The data were analyzed descriptively through the stages of reduction, categorization, and interpretation. The results of the study show that habit formation methods that are applied consistently, through simple routines and teacher role modeling, are able to shape disciplined behavior in children. Habit formation carried out in the school environment contributes significantly to the character formation of children, especially when supported by parental involvement.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](#) license.



Corresponding Author:

Name Author: Elan

Affiliation, Country: Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia

Email Author: elanmpd@upi.edu

INTRODUCTION

The current phenomenon of character education has become an important issue in the world of education in Indonesia, especially at the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) level. One of the social phenomena that is quite concerning is the increasing number of early childhood children who exhibit undisciplined behavior. Discipline character education is a crucial aspect that needs attention, as it forms the basis of in character building for children. Instilling the value of discipline from an early age can encourage the growth of other positive character values, such as independence, responsibility, cooperation, caring, and honesty (Wuryandani,

et al., 2019). Discipline is a method of guidance that aims to help children develop self-control. The application of discipline, especially in the school environment, provides opportunities for children to understand the boundaries of acceptable behavior. Through this process, children learn to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate actions and receive guidance on how to correct their behavior. Discipline not only functions as a rule that must be obeyed, but also as a means of character education that instills responsibility, orderliness, and respect for others. Thus, the early application of discipline becomes an important foundation for the formation of positive attitudes that will carry over into adulthood.

Although many children have undergone formal education from an early age, in reality, there are still children whose behavior does not reflect discipline, such as difficulty following rules, lack of responsibility, lack of independence, and poor self-control. The emergence of undisciplined behavior in the school environment reflects a serious problem in the process of instilling the values of discipline in students. This condition indicates that the knowledge about character that children acquire at school has not been able to significantly influence the formation of positive behavior in their daily lives (Wuryandani, et al., 2019). This phenomenon is a concern because early childhood is a golden phase in the development of a child's personality and character, which will influence their behavior in the future. In line with Jayawardana's opinion (in Aini, et al., 2023), character education is an important aspect that must be instilled from an early age, as this period is the main foundation for the growth and development of individuals in the future. A person's character is not easy to change, because the process of forming attitudes and behaviors requires time and continuous practice. It takes time to develop habits and behaviors. However, choosing the right method from the beginning and starting as early as possible does not rule out the possibility of instilling good character in a person for the future.

The research problem raised is the weak character discipline in early childhood in various PAUD institutions, which results in many children not yet reflecting discipline, such as difficulty following rules, lack of responsibility, and not yet having good self-control. PAUD institutions are formal schools that can help implement character education for early childhood in the school environment (Mawardah, et al., 2024). Early Childhood Education (PAUD) plays a major role as the foundation for children's development in various aspects, which will have a significant impact on children's future lives (Maryatun, 2016). Meanwhile, according to Sudaryati (2012), Early Childhood Education (PAUD) plays an important role as the initial foundation for the formation of a well-rounded personality, including the development of character, the instilling of good morals, the development of intelligence, joy, skills, and devotion to God Almighty. There are still many PAUD institutions that have not optimally implemented the habituation method, so that important disciplinary values such as responsibility, punctuality, obeying rules, maintaining cleanliness and tidiness, and waiting patiently for one's turn have not become ingrained habits in children (Hasan, in Ihsani, et al., 2018). This can have an impact on children's attitudes, such as frequently breaking class rules, being reluctant to share or wait in line, and having difficulty following the school's daily routine. This issue is of great concern because discipline is the foundation for the formation of positive behavior that influences children's social lives, especially in improving their mental and moral qualities (Mustari, Anggraeni, et al., 2021).

The root cause of weak discipline in children in various early childhood education institutions is the suboptimal and inconsistent methods of habit formation applied by educators. Efforts to shape children's character from an early age are a process that needs to be carried out through the instillation of positive values in everyday life. Children need to be introduced to and accustomed to behaviors that reflect goodness so that they grow up to be people of character. In this process, the role of parents and teachers is an important factor, because both have a major influence in guiding, setting an example, and creating an environment that supports the formation of children's character (Nurhayati, et al., 2024). Habituation methods can be one way for teachers to shape children's character through programmed daily habits (Amalia & Harfiani, 2024). Habituation is a method known in operant conditioning theory that habituates commendable behavior, discipline, diligence in learning, hard work, honesty, and responsibility for everything that has been done (Gunawan, in Machfiroh et

al., 2019). Character habituation such as responsibility, independence, discipline, and honesty are essential for building a foundation of positive behavior for children in the future. Children who are accustomed to positive character traits at an early age tend to be better able to face various challenges in their social environment. However, in practice, not all teachers have the understanding and ability to apply this method consistently and purposefully. This is the root cause of the problem that prevents the formation of strong discipline in early childhood.

The urgency of this research lies in the rarity of consistently and systematically applying discipline habituation methods in early childhood education institutions. Therefore, this research is important to reveal how discipline habituation strategies have been successfully implemented in various kindergartens as an effort to shape discipline in early childhood. This urgency is even greater considering the character education crisis that remains a challenge in Indonesia (Jihad, in Machfiroh, et al., 2019). Based on this, this study aims to examine various applications of habituation methods in shaping the disciplinary character of early childhood based on the results of previous studies.

METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach through a literature review method. This method was carried out by searching for, reading, and analyzing various literature sources related to the research focus. These sources can be scientific articles, academic books, or relevant previous research results, so that they can provide a theoretical and conceptual basis for the research conducted (Mahanum, 2021). This method is used to collect data and information that supports the focus of the study, which is then analyzed descriptively. Descriptive analysis aims to explain and describe the data that has been collected systematically, enabling researchers to gain a deep understanding and compile a comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon being studied (Habsy et al., 2023).

This method was chosen because it allows researchers to examine various previous research results relevant to the character building of early childhood through the habituation method. The research procedure was carried out systematically through several stages, namely identifying the topic and focus of the study, searching for literature in scientific databases such as Google Scholar, selecting literature according to relevance and credibility criteria, and analyzing data through the stages of reduction, categorization, and interpretation. The reduction stage was carried out by selecting article content that was relevant to the focus of the study, then grouping the data based on themes such as forms of habituation, the role of teachers, parental involvement, and the results of implementation. Next, the categorized data is interpreted to find patterns and trends in the findings, which are then presented in a descriptive-narrative manner to systematically describe the similarities and differences between articles (Andre Febrianto, et al., 2024).

The selection of articles and theses in this study was based on several criteria. The first criterion was the theme, namely that the article must discuss the application of habituation methods in the context of character building in early childhood, especially those focusing on the aspect of discipline. Second, the selected articles were scientific works published within the last five years (2018–2024) so that the data analyzed remained up-to-date and relevant to current educational conditions. Third, the types of sources used included accredited national journal articles and theses from universities with good academic reputations. Fourth, journal quality was an important consideration, with priority given to articles with a DOI or published in ISSN journals in the field of early childhood education.

Based on the selection results, a total of six scientific works that met the criteria were obtained, consisting of four journal articles and two theses. Each source was analyzed to find similarities and variations in the application of habituation methods and their impact on the formation of discipline in early childhood. The analysis was conducted using a qualitative descriptive approach, in which each article was coded based on specific thematic focuses such as the form of habituation at school, teacher role modeling, the role of parents, and the results of the application of habituation on children's disciplinary behavior. The coding results

were then compared to identify patterns, similarities, and differences among the sources studied. Through this process, a comprehensive synthesis was obtained regarding the effectiveness of habituation methods in the context of character education for early childhood.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on the analysis of various articles and literature over the past five years, it was found that habit formation methods are one effective approach to instilling discipline in early childhood. The study revealed that the consistent application of habits through routine activities at school, such as arriving on time, tidying up play equipment, lining up neatly, and obeying teachers' instructions, can shape disciplined behavior from an early age. Several scientific articles and research papers, such as journals and theses, were the main references in this study, including the following.

No	Researcher & Year	Main Findings	Similarities	Differences
1	Machfiroh, et al. (2019)	Machfiroh, et al. (2019) Habit formation is achieved through punctuality, returning items, tidying up toys, and queuing to wash hands. Supporting factors: teacher role modeling; barriers: lack of parental cooperation and child maturity.	Both focus on habit formation through routines and teacher role modeling.	This study was conducted at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten in Malang, analyzing 33 cities with general supporting/inhibiting factors. The current study examines these factors in greater depth across several kindergartens.
2	Mawardah & Hariyanti (2023)	Teachers accustom children to be on time, put their shoes in their place, queue, be disciplined when playing, and enter the classroom in an orderly manner. The aim is to build a disciplined character and help children understand good behavior. This study is descriptive in nature. Both studies examine the application of discipline habits in school routines. At Muslimat Buloh II Kindergarten, the current study focuses on national plus institutions with habits that are recognized as models by other schools.	They share a common focus, which is to examine the application of disciplinary habits in routine activities in the school environment. This approach aims to see how daily routines at school can be an effective means of instilling values of discipline in children from an early age.	This research is descriptive in nature. Both studies examine the application of disciplinary habits in school routines. At TK Muslimat Buloh II, the current research focuses on national plus institutions with habits that are recognized as models by other schools.
3	Nurhayati, et al. (2024)	The findings of this study show that the use of the habit formation	Both discuss the habituation method	This research is in the form of action research

- method in cycle I resulted in an average of 70% development in children's disciplinary character, with 17 children classified as Starting to Develop (MB) and 15 children classified as Developing as Expected (BSH). After improvements were made in cycle II, there was a significant increase with an average of 84%, consisting of 13 children in the Developing as Expected (BSH) category and 19 children in the Developing Very Well (BSB) category. Thus, it can be concluded that the application of the habituation method is proven to be effective in improving children's discipline at Sartika Asih Mekarmulya Early Childhood Education Center.
- 4 Puspitasari, et al.. (2023) The school environment has a significant influence on the formation of children's discipline, with a correlation value of $r=0.525$, indicating a moderate relationship. Factors such as physical conditions, social interactions, and the culture formed in the school environment play an important role in fostering discipline in early childhood. Previous research highlighted this relationship through a quantitative approach, while this study focuses on the application of habituation methods through a qualitative approach with case studies, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how the school environment influences children's disciplinary behavior.
- 5 5 Nurindah (2018) The results of this study reveal that the application of habituation methods has proven effective in instilling and shaping character in early childhood. However, this effectiveness is highly dependent on the consistency of teachers in for shaping the discipline of early childhood.
- Both studies examine the formation of discipline in early childhood. This study focuses on the quantitative influence of the school environment, while the current study focuses on the qualitative implementation of habit formation methods through case studies.
- This study focuses on the quantitative influence of the school environment, while the current study focuses on the qualitative implementation of habit formation methods through case studies.
- This study shares similarities in the application of habit formation as the main strategy in shaping discipline in early childhood.
- Focus on the effectiveness of the method and types of habit-forming activities (routine, spontaneous, modeling).

applying good habits, the example set by teachers and the surrounding environment, and support from parents at home. Initially, observation data showed that most children were in the "underdeveloped" category in terms of character (66.66%). However, after the more systematic and consistent application of habituation, there was an increase in positive behavior, such as children becoming accustomed to saying greetings, being more disciplined and independent, being able to help and behave politely towards teachers and friends.

Through the repeated and consistent application of positive habits, children are trained to understand, adapt, and apply disciplined behavior in their daily lives, both at school and at home.

6 Rahayu
(2023)

The instillation of discipline habits is going quite well but is not yet fully optimal. Some children have already shown disciplined behavior, such as arriving on time, tidying up their toys, and queuing orderly. However, there are still children who arrive late, do not wash their hands before eating, and are not yet able to follow the rules consistently. Teachers at Akbar Romanglasa Kindergarten try to apply various habit-forming methods such as setting an example and giving advice, as well as applying rewards and punishments. This method is considered quite effective in influencing children's behavior, although there are still obstacles in terms of consistency of implementation and the influence of the external environment (especially from home and society).

Both apply habit forming methods as an effective way to shape the character of discipline in early childhood.

More emphasis is placed on teacher strategies such as rewards and punishments and the role of teachers in instilling discipline.

Discussion

Based on the analysis of six scientific works, including four journal articles and two theses, it was found that the habituation method is the main effective approach in instilling discipline in early childhood. Although all studies show the effectiveness of habituation, there are important differences in the context of application,

strategies, and results achieved. These differences need to be critically analyzed in order to provide a more in-depth picture of the strengths and limitations of the habituation method.

Research by Machfiroh, et al. (2019) and Mawardah & Hariyanti (2023) shows that habituation through daily routines and teacher role modeling greatly influences children's discipline. However, the results of the study Nurhayati, et al. (2024) show that the effectiveness of habituation also depends on a continuous evaluation system; without reflection and improvement, habituation tends to decrease in effect. Meanwhile, a study by Rahayu (2023) found obstacles in the consistency of implementation and parental involvement, indicating that external factors such as the home environment can weaken the results of habit formation at school. From this comparison, it appears that the effectiveness of habit formation methods is not solely determined by routine activities, but also by the integration between teachers, families, and the school environment.

In addition, differences in approach are also apparent in the forms of habit formation applied. Some studies emphasize the reward system as a form of reinforcement of disciplinary behavior (Rahayu, 2023), while other studies focus on teacher role models as behavioral models (Siti Nurindah, 2018). A critical analysis of these two approaches shows that rewards are effective in the short term because they increase children's motivation, but teacher role modeling has a long-term influence on the internalization of disciplinary values. This is in line with Bandura's social learning theory, which states that children learn through observation and imitation of figures they consider important. Therefore, the success of the habituation method is largely determined by the extent to which teachers are able to be consistent and authentic role models for children.

From the perspective of child development theory, the effectiveness of the habituation method can be explained through behavioristic and constructivist approaches. Based on Skinner's operant conditioning theory, disciplined behavior is formed through repeated and consistent positive reinforcement. When children have pleasant experiences after exhibiting disciplined behavior (e.g., praise or recognition from teachers), they are more likely to repeat that behavior (Skinner, in Bustamam, 2024). Meanwhile, according to Piaget, children aged 4–6 years are in the preoperational stage, where character formation is highly dependent on concrete experiences and repetition of daily activities. Habituation provides these concrete experiences through structured routines. In addition, Vygotsky's theory asserts that children's moral development is shaped through social interaction with adults who function as scaffolding or support. In this context, teachers and parents play a crucial role in providing examples, guidance, and social reinforcement for children's disciplined behavior (Vygotsky, in Kurniati, 2025). Thus, from a theoretical perspective, the habit formation method is effective because it aligns with the cognitive and socio-emotional characteristics of young children who learn through direct experience, repetition, and modeling.

Reflection on the results of this study also needs to be linked to the context of character education in Indonesia. Currently, Indonesia still faces major challenges in instilling the values of discipline, responsibility, and politeness in primary and secondary schools. One of the root causes of this problem is the lack of a strong foundation of habit formation since early childhood education. Character education that is taught conceptually without the practice of habit formation tends to be ineffective (Samsinar, et al., 2022). Therefore, the findings of this study reaffirm the importance of early childhood education as the foundation of national character education. The implementation of habit formation methods in PAUD institutions not only shapes children's behavior at school but also contributes to the formation of a culture of discipline in society. Thus, the results of this literature study have high reflective value for the state of character education in Indonesia, which is still striving to strengthen the moral dimension through the Pancasila Student Profile policy and the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom of Learning) curriculum.

However, several studies also indicate that habituation is not always successful if it is carried out without consistency and cross-environmental collaboration. Teachers who do not understand the psychological principles behind habituation tend to only emphasize routine aspects without meaning. In fact, effective habituation must be based on an understanding of children's developmental characteristics, accompanied by positive communication, appreciation of children's efforts, and support from the family. This shows the need

for a more integrative approach in the application of habituation, not only limited to routine, but also covering the emotional and social dimensions of children.

Thus, this discussion confirms that the habit formation method is effective in shaping the character of early childhood discipline because it is theoretically in line with children's developmental stages and has been proven successful in various early childhood education contexts in Indonesia. The differences in results between studies actually enrich our understanding of the conditions and factors that influence the success of habit formation, especially the role of teachers, consistency, and parental involvement. Therefore, habit formation needs to be implemented in a sustainable, reflective, and collaborative manner so that it truly becomes a contextual and relevant character education strategy in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of six relevant scientific papers, it can be concluded that the habituation method is an effective approach in shaping the character of discipline in early childhood. Its effectiveness lies in the suitability of this method to the developmental stages of children, where learning through repetition, role modeling, and positive reinforcement helps children internalize disciplined behavior naturally. The successful implementation of the habituation method depends heavily on three main factors, namely the role model of the teacher, the involvement of parents in reinforcing habits at home, and a consistent and supportive learning environment. However, the effectiveness of habituation can be hampered by a lack of collaboration between schools and families, inconsistency in implementation by teachers, and differences in children's levels of social-emotional maturity.

Reflectively, the findings of this study show that the habituation method has a broader role than just a strategy for teaching behavior, namely as the main foundation for shaping the character of the nation in line with the values of the Pancasila Student Profile in the Indonesian education system. Therefore, the application of habit formation methods needs to be designed in a planned, continuous manner and involve the cooperation of various parties in order to foster a strong character of discipline from an early age.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to express his gratitude to his supervisor for the guidance, input, and motivation provided in the process of writing this article. The author would also like to express his gratitude () to previous researchers whose works served as the main references in writing this article using the literature study method. It is hoped that this article can contribute to the development of educational science, especially as an effort to build discipline in early childhood that can be carried out by educational institutions, both teachers and parents.

REFERENCES

- Aini, N. Q., Faturahman, N., & Darmawan, D. (2023). The Application of Character Education Reinforcement Through Habituation Methods for the Formation of Independence in Early Childhood at KB Azzahroh Serang. *JECIE (Journal of Early Childhood and Inclusive Education)*, 6 (2), 98–113. <https://doi.org/10.31537/jecie.v6i2.1051>
- Amalia, A. P., & Harfiani, R. (2024). Application of Positive Habituation in Efforts to Improve Children's Character. *Murhum: Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 5 (1), 25–38. <https://doi.org/10.37985/murhum.v5i1.425>
- Andre Febrianto, Rusdy A Siroj, & Hartatiana. (2024). Literature Study: The Foundation for Choosing the Right Research Method. *Journal Educational Research and Development* | E-ISSN: 3063-9158, 1 (2)
- Anggraeni, C., Elan, E., & Mulyadi, S. (2021). Habituation Methods for Instilling Discipline and Responsibility at Ra Daarul Falaah Tasikmalaya. *Jurnal Paud Agapedia*, 5 (1), 100–109. <https://doi.org/10.17509/jpa.v5i1.39692>

- Bustamam, M. (2024). Review of Skinner's Method in Shaping the Behavior of Early Childhood Children at Raudhatul Ula Kindergarten in East Aceh. *Seumubeuet Journal: Journal of Islamic Education*, 3 (1), 11–20. <https://ejournal.yamal.or.id/index.php/jsmbt/article/view/89>
- Habsy, B. A., Mufidha, N., Shelomita, C., Rahayu, I., & Muckorobin, M. I. (2023). Basic Philosophy in Psychoanalytic Counseling: A Literature Review. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Counseling*, 7 (2)
- Ihsani, N., Kurniah, N., & Suprapti, A. (2018). The Relationship Between Habituation Methods in Learning and Discipline in Early Childhood. *Potensia Scientific Journal*, 3 (1), 50–55. <https://doi.org/10.33369/jip.3.2.105-110>
- Kurniati, E. (2025). Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory for Early Childhood. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Studies*, 1 (1), 19–24. <https://www.putrapublisher.org/ojs/index.php/jspaud/article/view/703>
- Machfiroh, L., Desyanty, E. S., & Rahma, R. A. (2019). Character Building of Discipline in Early Childhood Through Habituation Methods at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 33 Kindergarten in Malang City. *Journal of Nonformal Education*, 14 (1), 54–67. <https://doi.org/10.17977/um041v14i1p54-67>
- Mahanum, M. (2021). Literature Review. *Alacrity: Journal of Education*, 1 (2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.52121/alacrity.v1i2.20>
- Maryatun, I. B. (2016). The Role of Early Childhood Educators in Building Children's Character. *Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 5 (1), 747–752. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21831/jpa.v5i1.12370>
- Mawardah, E. Y., & Hariyanti, D. P. D. (2023). Instilling Habits to Develop Discipline in Children Aged 5-6 Years. A Pleasant Transition from Early Childhood Education to Elementary School, 1–14. <https://conference2.upgris.ac.id/index.php/snnpaud/article/view/27>
- Mawardah, E. Y., Prasetyo, A., & Kusumaningtyas, N. (2024). Application Of The Habituation Method To Form Disciplined Character In 5-6 Year Old Children At Tk Muslimat Buloh II. *IJES: Indonesia Journal of Elementary School*, 4(24), 264–270.
- Nurhayati, I., Hidayat, R., & Hidayat, Y. (2024). The Use of Habituation Methods in Shaping the Disciplined Character of 5-6 Year Old Children at Sartika Asih Mekarmulya Early Childhood Education Center. *Intisabi Journal*, 2 (1), 68–87. <https://doi.org/10.61580/itsb.v2i1.53>
- Nurhayati, I., Kurniasih, N., Susanti, S., & Hidayat, Y. (2024). The Effect Of Using The Habituation Method On The Formation Of Disciplined Character In Children At Sartika Asih Early Childhood Education Center, Ciamis Regency, West Java. *Al Ihsan: Journal of Islamic Education for Early Childhood*, 5(1), 44–60.
- Puspitasari, A., Fahmi, F., & Maryani, K. (2023). The Effect of the School Environment on the Formation of Discipline in Children Aged 5-6 Years. *Jurnal Raudhah*, 11 (1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.30829/raudhah.v11i1.2625>
- Samsinar, Fatimah, S., & Adrianti, R. (2022). Character Education for Early Childhood. In *Akademia Pustaka* (Vol. 4, Issue 1). <https://doi.org/10.52266/pelangi.v4i1.816>
- Sudaryati. (2012). The Importance of Character Education for Early Childhood. *Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 1 (1), 11–20. <https://doi.org/10.24114/jud.v7i2.30585>
- Wuryandani, W., Maftuh, B., & Budimansyah, D. (2019). Discipline Character Education in Elementary Schools. *Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 2 (2), 286–295. <https://doi.org/10.21831/cp.v2i2.2168>
- Yusnita, N. C., & Muqowim. (2020). Student-Centered Learning Approach in Instilling Discipline and Independence in Children at Annur I Kindergarten. *Potensia Scientific Journal*, 5 (2), 116–126. <https://doi.org/10.33369/jip.5.2.%p>