

Instilling Discipline to Enhance Social-Emotional Development in Early Childhood

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the role of discipline in enhancing social-emotional development in early childhood. The method employed is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), which analyzes various articles and journals related to the discipline of social-emotional development in young children. The findings suggest that consistent, democratic discipline, grounded in role modeling and daily routines, has a positive impact on children's social-emotional development. Additionally, good collaboration between parents and teachers is a crucial factor in the successful instillation of discipline. The conclusion reveals that instilling discipline from an early age provides a strong foundation for shaping children's social-emotional development, supporting their optimal growth and well-being. The implications of this study highlight the importance of applying appropriate discipline in family and early childhood education environments to promote healthy social-emotional development in children.

Kata Kunci

Disiplin;
Perkembangan Sosial
Emosional;
Anak Usia Dini

Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini untuk mengkaji peran disiplin dalam meningkatkan perkembangan sosial emosional pada anak usia dini. Metode yang digunakan adalah Systematic Literature Review (SLR) dengan menganalisis berbagai artikel dan jurnal terkait sikap disiplin serta perkembangan sosial emosional pada anak usia dini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa disiplin yang diterapkan secara konsisten, demokratis, berbasis keteladanan, dan rutinitas harian berkontribusi positif terhadap perkembangan sosial emosional anak. Selain itu, kolaborasi yang baik antara orang tua dan guru juga menjadi faktor penting dalam keberhasilan penanaman disiplin. Kesimpulan mengungkap bahwa penanaman sikap disiplin sejak dini dapat menjadi fondasi yang kuat dalam membentuk karakter sosial emosional anak untuk mendukung perkembangan mereka secara optimal. Implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah pentingnya penerapan disiplin yang tepat dalam lingkungan keluarga dan pendidikan anak usia dini guna mendukung tumbuh kembang sosial emosional yang sehat pada anak-anak.

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INTRODUCTION

The growth period in early childhood is often referred to as the golden age, during which children experience rapid and significant growth and development. This phase is crucial for their lives, especially if their growth is optimized through the provision of appropriate education (Magh'firoh et al., 2024). According to the National Education System Law (2003) No. 20, early childhood refers to children aged 0-6 years. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is essentially education organized to facilitate children's overall growth and development, emphasizing the development of all aspects of a child's personality (Arthur-Kelly et al., 2017). Therefore, ECE provides children with opportunities to develop their personality and potential to the fullest. As a consequence, ECE institutions must offer a variety of activities that support different developmental aspects, including cognitive, language, social, emotional, physical, and motor skills.

One way to foster educational success in children's growth and development is by enhancing their social-emotional development, which can be achieved through the application of discipline (Pascual Ochando, 2024). The specifications of social-emotional intelligence development indicate that a child's level of achievement in social-emotional development involves understanding etiquette and politeness in accordance with local cultural values, comprehending rules and discipline, and demonstrating empathy (Permendikbud, 2014). Based on the statement above, one aspect that needs improvement in children is discipline.

Discipline is a behavioral training process that shapes an individual's behavior in daily life, resulting from a long-term nurturing process that begins at an early age, both within the family and continuing in school education (Rahayu & Bahri, 2025). Discipline education for young children is vital in shaping good character and behavior from an early age (Ahmad et al., 2024). In addition to fostering good character and behavior, discipline teaches children to take responsibility for their actions in family, school, and community settings. Implementing discipline early on helps children become responsible for themselves (Motimona & Maryatun, 2023). Research by Rohita et al. (2023) also confirms that instilling discipline linked to meaningful activities can improve children's ability to manage emotions and build positive social relationships.

Social-emotional development in children is a process through which children learn about themselves, their relationships with others, and how to manage and respond to their feelings and emotions (Lewis & Granic, 2010). It is an essential aspect of a child's holistic development, involving a complex interaction between social and emotional aspects (Dewi et al., 2020). As educators, it is crucial to understand children's social-emotional development to guide them effectively, thereby helping them develop their social and emotional skills (Coelho et al., 2016). In early childhood, children learn to understand and adapt to rules, as well as how people and their surroundings interact with them (Agustina et al., 2022). It is essential to recognize that the process of social-emotional learning in children extends beyond simply following the teacher's guidance, also to include observing and imitating the teacher's behavior. They observe how the teacher manages emotions, handles problems, describes expectations, and more. Given that children learn by watching the actions and behavior of adults, parents or teachers can teach them by providing examples of disciplined behavior. This method is more effective than simply telling children what to do, as children are keen imitators of behaviors they observe being successful.

Disciplinary behavior helps children develop self-control over their actions (Rahmawati & Utomo, 2024). For instance, when a child sees trash in the classroom, they will throw it in the trash bin. The child's behavior of noticing the trash and immediately disposing of it is an example of self-control in taking the appropriate action. Research by Sari & Kurniawan (2023) reveals that the implementation of democratic discipline in ECE institutions significantly impacts the development of empathy and social responsibility in children. Additionally, Putri et al. (2024) emphasize that discipline developed through daily routines is more effective than punishment in building self-control in young children. This shows that discipline is not just a tool for controlling behavior, but an essential pedagogical strategy in the

social-emotional development of young children (Fiese & Everhart, 2008; Wildenger et al., 2008). Therefore, the discipline instilled from an early age helps children develop self-control, recognize wrong behavior, and correct it. In line with recent research findings, the consistent, democratic, and example-based instillation of discipline has been shown to significantly contribute to the social-emotional development of young children.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of instilling discipline on enhancing social-emotional development in early childhood. This study aims to explore how consistent, democratic, and example-based discipline, along with daily routines, contribute to the formation of children's social-emotional character. Furthermore, this research aims to identify the importance of collaboration between parents and teachers in instilling discipline that supports optimal social-emotional development in children. Therefore, this research is expected to provide insights into the effective implementation of discipline in supporting the social-emotional development of young children.

METHOD

The method employed in this research is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), a method used to review and analyze previous research related to a specific topic or phenomenon (Rachmawati, 2024). The researcher collects data by searching for literature studies through Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, and Publish or Perish using keywords such as discipline, social-emotional development, and early childhood over the last five years. Relevant articles are then screened and analyzed thematically to explore the relationship between the instilling of discipline and social-emotional development in early childhood. Through this analysis, the researcher gains a deeper understanding of the topic under study, identifies gaps in previous research, and establishes a strong foundation for future studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of the literature review indicate that instilling discipline in early childhood has been proven to enhance social-emotional development. This is consistent with research indicating that the instilling of discipline in early childhood is significantly related to social-emotional development, particularly in the areas of emotion regulation, empathy, and self-control. A longitudinal study conducted by Zhou (2021) demonstrated that consistent and supportive discipline positively contributes to a child's ability to manage emotions and build healthy social relationships. Similar findings were also presented by Rimm-Kaufman & Wanless (2022), who emphasized that discipline practices based on habituation and teacher modeling in ECE environments can enhance children's social-emotional readiness sustainably.

The results of the analysis based on previous research related to discipline and social development in early childhood can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Literature Review Analysis

No.	Author(s) & Year	Research Title	Research Findings
1	Hayati & Wafa (2021)	The Use of Reward Stickers in Instilling Discipline in Children	This study shows that the use of reward stickers can be explored as one form of rewards provided by teachers in learning activities. The study also covers several aspects of reward sticker strategies, including their role in motivating children, the discipline aspects developed, children's responses to reward stickers, and the appropriate timing for giving reward stickers.
2	Hikmawati et al. (2023)	Parenting Styles in Early Childhood Education for	The study indicates that the parenting style found in farming families is democratic parenting combined with a transactional style. This transactional parenting

No.	Author(s) & Year	Research Title	Research Findings
3	Sari et al. (2025)	Developing Children's Socio-Emotional Behavior	involves agreements between parents and children regarding children's actions, along with specific sanctions if agreements are violated. This method facilitates parental guidance and fosters positive socio-emotional behaviors such as responsibility, independence, and discipline.
4	Mooduto et al. (2025)	Instilling Discipline Character Values in Children Aged 5-6 Years at TK Negeri 26 Buton, Sumber Sari Village, Siotapina District	The study shows that discipline is instilled through role modeling, routine habituation, clear rule-setting, rewards, and collaboration with parents. Routine activities include arriving on time, lining up before entering class, placing shoes on racks, praying, coloring, arranging name letters, presenting work, taking turns playing puzzles, tidying up toys, and disposing of trash properly. These activities develop children's orderliness, responsibility, independence, and self-confidence.
5	Sahara et al. (2023)	The Importance of Instilling Discipline in Children Aged 5-6 Years at RAT Al Ishlah School, Gorontalo	This study applies positive reinforcement to improve discipline and character in children. Positive reinforcement is given verbally (such as affirmation words like "very good" and "excellent") and nonverbally (thumbs-up gestures, smiles, and gifts). Therefore, the study aims to enhance children's discipline through reinforcement strategies.
6	Oktaviani et al. (2023)	The Role of Parents in Developing Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood	The findings indicate that parents play several roles in developing early childhood emotional intelligence: (1) as educators, (2) as caregivers, (3) as motivators, and (4) as role models.
7	Utami et al. (2021)	Parents' Efforts in Shaping Discipline Character in Early Childhood	The study emphasizes that discipline character needs to be instilled from early childhood because it positively impacts children's development, including self-control. In shaping discipline character, parents need to make efforts such as providing habituation and direct examples of disciplined behavior.
8	Nurfadila et al. (2023)	Family Parenting and the Development of Discipline Character in Early Childhood	The study shows that children's discipline character development is influenced by parenting styles. Different parenting styles—authoritarian, democratic, and permissive—have different effects on children's future development.
9	Ayunita et al. (2023)	Discipline in Emotional Regulation of Early Childhood	The results indicate that training discipline and emotional regulation in early childhood requires cooperation between parents and teachers in providing attention and affection so children feel comfortable and secure. Environmental factors and daily habits also significantly influence children's personality development and discipline implementation.
10	Rahayu et al. (2024)	The Implementation of Queue Culture in Improving Early Childhood Socio-Emotional Development	This study aims to identify improvements in children's discipline through queue culture via routine activities, spontaneous activities, role modeling, and programmed activities. Positive impacts of queuing habits include increased discipline, patience while waiting, and a sense of shame in cutting in line.
		The Implementation of Character Education in	The findings show that character education in early childhood education helps shape children's personality

No.	Author(s) & Year	Research Title	Research Findings
	Kindergarten Socio-Emotional Development	Children's	and morals from an early age. Children who receive character education tend to have better social skills. Character education is implemented daily through indoor and outdoor activities, with most students developing as expected in self-awareness, personal responsibility, responsibility toward others, and prosocial behavior.

The researchers' strategy for conducting this literature review involved using Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, and Publish or Perish platforms. In the initial stage, the researchers identified 33 sources as potential references for the literature review in this study. However, after a screening process using the keywords '*discipline*,' '*socio-emotional development*,' and '*early childhood*,' and considering the relevance of the literature to the research objectives, 15 sources were selected as the primary references for this literature review.

Based on the analysis of various literature studies summarized in Table 1, it can be concluded that instilling discipline in early childhood is a holistic and continuous process that involves the active roles of teachers, parents, and the child's surrounding environment. Research findings indicate that effective strategies for fostering discipline include routine habituation, adult role modeling, the provision of rewards and positive reinforcement, the implementation of clear rules, and democratic and communicative parenting styles. Discipline instilled from an early age has been shown not only to function as a means of behavioral control but also to contribute significantly to children's social and emotional development, including responsibility, independence, emotional regulation, social cooperation, and self-confidence. Furthermore, the findings emphasize the importance of collaboration between parents and teachers in ensuring consistent discipline practices at home and at school, thereby enabling children to experience coherent learning environments that optimally support the development of disciplined character.

Discussion

Based on a synthesis of the selected literature, it can be concluded that instilling discipline as an effort to foster socio-emotional development in early childhood can be carried out through reward-based strategies implemented by teachers in school, as well as through the habituation of democratic parenting patterns as a form of agreement between children and parents regarding children's actions or habits. Such approaches help children regulate their emotions and encourage the development of disciplined behavior (Zuhara, 2025). One of the key factors in training discipline and socio-emotional development in early childhood is the need for collaboration between parents and teachers in implementing routine rules and habitual practices that children must follow both at home and at school. This collaboration helps children become accustomed to existing rules and routines, thereby fostering disciplined behavior across different environments.

Ahmad et al. (2024) emphasize that discipline instilled from an early age plays a crucial role in shaping children's social character, particularly within the context of value-based education and local cultural settings. Accordingly, this reinforces the view that instilling discipline in early childhood serves not only as a means of behavioral control but also as a fundamental foundation for adaptive and sustainable socio-emotional development (Swapna & Nagarajan, 2023).

Disciplinary behavior formed at school develops through continuous habituation practices, such as beginning learning activities with prayer. This habit of praying is carried out daily before lessons, and teachers must consistently implement this practice so that children become accustomed to praying before learning. Disciplinary behavior is developed to help children overcome inappropriate behaviors. Teaching children values such as responsibility, integrity, and patience is an essential part of instilling

discipline and character. Emotional and social growth supports the development of positive discipline by integrating these aspects within a child-friendly environment (Rohita et al., 2023).

Therefore, this literature review emphasizes the need for collaboration between parents and teachers to jointly support the instillation of discipline in children, both at school and at home, as discipline in early childhood plays a crucial role in supporting children's social and emotional development. Discipline that is applied positively, consistently, and in accordance with children's developmental stages helps children understand rules, develop self-control, and take responsibility for their behavior. Through disciplinary habituation, children learn to recognize emotions, wait their turn, comply with shared agreements, and respect others.

Discipline also fosters a sense of security and self-confidence, as children understand clear boundaries within their environment. Children become more capable of engaging in social interactions, cooperating with peers, and expressing their feelings appropriately. Furthermore, discipline instilled through adult role modeling, warm communication, and positive reinforcement can promote empathy, independence, and emotional regulation in children (Engel et al., 2023; Tillott et al., 2024).

Thus, instilling discipline from an early age not only shapes orderly behavior but also serves as an essential foundation for children's socio-emotional development, enabling them to grow into independent, responsible individuals who can adapt effectively within their social environments.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrate that discipline is not an inherent trait, but rather a skill that must be cultivated through consistent, contextually relevant, and developmentally appropriate practices. Children do not automatically develop discipline on their own; instead, it requires a conscious effort to guide them in the right direction. Discipline, when taught early on, plays a crucial role in helping children build essential life skills, such as self-control, empathy, responsibility, independence, and the ability to interact positively with others. Establishing routines, setting clear expectations, and maintaining consistency are key components of fostering discipline, which in turn contributes to the child's ability to make responsible decisions and act appropriately in various situations.

Effective discipline should not be focused solely on punishment, but rather on promoting positive behaviors through role modeling, reinforcing daily routines, and offering rewards for appropriate actions. This positive approach to discipline helps children understand the value of their actions and the impact of their choices on both themselves and others. Positive reinforcement encourages children to repeat good behaviors, fostering a sense of achievement and self-worth. Moreover, the role of communication in this process cannot be underestimated. Warm and supportive communication from both parents and teachers is crucial for fostering a trusting environment in which children feel secure enough to express themselves and are receptive to learning new behaviors.

The collaboration between parents and teachers is crucial in instilling discipline in children. Both parties must collaborate to uphold the same values and expectations, whether at home or in school. This partnership ensures that the child receives consistent messages and experiences across different settings, making it easier for them to internalize and apply the concepts of discipline in their daily lives. A democratic parenting style, clear rule enforcement, and the establishment of structured routines, such as waiting in line, praying before studying, and tidying up toys, all contribute significantly to the child's socio-emotional development. When discipline is applied positively and continuously, it provides a strong foundation for children to grow into confident, responsible, and emotionally intelligent individuals capable of navigating the complexities of their social environments.

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