

The Role Of Teachers In Developing The Independence Of Children Aged 5-6 Years Through The Class Rules Program Habitat Method

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Abstract

Independence is one of the essential aspects of early childhood socio-emotional development that should be nurtured through consistent habituation. Teachers play a crucial role in creating a learning environment that encourages children to perform daily activities independently. This study aimed to describe the role of teachers in fostering the independence of Group B children aged 5–6 years through the habituation method of classroom rules at TK Negeri Serikandi Karang Bajo and to identify the obstacles encountered during its implementation. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. The participants consisted of the principal and Group B teachers, comprising a total of four informants: one school principal and three Group B homeroom teachers. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings revealed that teachers acted as facilitators by providing a supportive learning environment, as mentors by guiding children in implementing classroom rules, and as motivators by providing encouragement and positive reinforcement. Habituation activities included lining up before entering the classroom, wearing and arranging shoes independently, washing hands, eating together, tidying learning materials, disposing of waste properly, and taking responsibility for personal belongings. The main obstacles included children's low self-confidence, dependence on parents, differences in individual characteristics, and limited habituation practices at home. The study concludes that consistent habituation supported by active teacher involvement effectively promotes the development of independence among early childhood learners.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is a crucial foundation for developing quality human resources from the earliest stages of life. During this period, children develop rapidly, necessitating appropriate stimulation to optimize all aspects of development, including religious and moral values, physical motor skills, cognitive skills, language skills, social-emotional skills, and the arts. One socio-emotional aspect that requires attention is independence. Independence is not only defined as a child's ability to carry out daily activities without assistance, but also encompasses the ability to take initiative, take responsibility for tasks, control emotions, and adapt to the social environment [1]. Therefore, developing independence is an important indicator in preparing children for the next level of education [2].

The development of independence does not occur naturally, but develops through a continuous learning process. Children need opportunities to try, make mistakes, receive guidance,

and repeat experiences consistently until they become habits [3]. Habitual strategies are an effective approach because they provide children with real-life experiences in carrying out various activities independently. Simple activities, such as putting on their own shoes, washing their hands, tidying up play equipment, disposing of trash properly, and taking care of their own belongings, are forms of habituation that gradually build a child's sense of responsibility, discipline, and self-confidence [4], [5].

The success of habituation is greatly influenced by the role of the teacher. Teachers are not only tasked with delivering learning materials but also creating a learning environment that provides opportunities for children to learn independently [6]. Teachers act as facilitators who provide meaningful learning experiences, as guides who provide direction according to the child's developmental needs, and as motivators who provide positive reinforcement so that children dare to complete tasks independently [7]. Recent research shows that teachers' consistency in providing role models, learning opportunities, and positive reinforcement contributes to increased responsibility, self-confidence, and children's ability to complete daily activities without excessive dependence on adults [8].

One form of habituation implementation in PAUD units is through a class rules program. This program contains agreements that are consistently applied in daily learning activities so that children understand expected behavior while at school [9]. Class rules not only serve to maintain order but also serve as a means of developing character, discipline, responsibility, and independence. When rules are consistently applied and exemplified by teachers, children will more easily understand the consequences of each action and become accustomed to completing activities independently [10], [11]. Various studies have examined the role of teachers in developing independence in early childhood. Research by Afifuddin et al. [8] explains that teachers act as facilitators, role models, motivators, and consistent rule-makers in building children's independence habits [11]. Contextual learning with teacher support can increase children's initiative, responsibility, and adaptability. Wahyuni and Al Rasyid's research [12] also revealed that teacher professionalism influences the success of developing independence through continuous habituation.

However, most previous research has focused on the general role of teachers in fostering children's independence. Studies specifically integrating teachers' roles as facilitators, guides, and motivators through the implementation of classroom rules programs as a habit-building strategy are still relatively limited. Furthermore, there has been little research that has in-depth identified the inhibiting factors teachers face in implementing classroom rules programs to foster children's independence in early childhood education settings.

Based on the results of initial observations at Serikandi Karang Bajo State Kindergarten, the school has implemented a classroom rules program through various routine activities, such as lining up before entering the classroom, putting on and tidying up shoes independently, washing hands before and after eating, tidying up play equipment, throwing garbage in its place, and taking care of one's own belongings. The program is implemented repeatedly as part of the habituation process. However, there are still some children who show dependence on teachers and parents, lack confidence in completing simple tasks, and have not consistently obeyed classroom rules. This condition shows that the implementation of habituation still faces various challenges that require the right teacher strategies.

Based on the description, this study has novelty by examining the implementation of the habituation method through a class rule program in fostering the independence of children aged 5-6 years through an in-depth analysis of the role of teachers as facilitators, guides, and motivators, while identifying inhibiting factors that influence its implementation in Serikandi Karang Bajo State Kindergarten. The results of the study are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of early childhood education studies and become a practical reference for teachers in designing effective habituation strategies to increase children's independence. In contrast to previous studies that focused more on the role of teachers in general, this study specifically examines the implementation of the habituation method through a class rule program by analyzing

the role of teachers as facilitators, guides, and motivators while identifying inhibiting factors. Compared to Afifuddin et al. [8], who described teachers' general roles as facilitators, role models, motivators, and rule-makers without linking them to a specific habituation program, and Arnia et al. [11], who examined habituation broadly without disaggregating the distinct roles teachers perform within it, this study's specific contribution lies in integrating these three roles into the operational stages of a single, concrete habituation instrument, the classroom rules program, and in systematically documenting the internal and external factors that constrain its implementation. This integrative and context-specific framing distinguishes the present study from prior research on habituation and child independence, which has tended to treat teacher roles and habituation strategies as separate lines of inquiry.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of teachers in fostering independence in Group B children aged 5–6 years through the habituation method of the classroom rules program at Serikandi Karang Bajo State Kindergarten. This approach allows researchers to examine phenomena naturally based on experiences, actions, and interactions that occur in the school environment.

Data analysis was conducted interactively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions according to the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model [13]. The research was conducted at Serikandi Karang Bajo State Kindergarten, North Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province. The research location was selected purposively because the school has implemented a habituation method through a class rules program as a strategy to foster independence in early childhood. The research subjects consisted of the principal and Group B teachers who were directly involved in the implementation of the class rules program. In total, four informants were involved: one school principal and three Group B homeroom teachers, each responsible for a different Group B classroom at the school. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, considering their ability to provide information in accordance with the research focus. The principal was chosen because he has authority in planning and managing school programs, while the three group B teachers were selected because they played a direct role in implementing habituation in the classroom on a daily basis.

The research data consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to observe the implementation of the classroom rules program and children's independent behavior during the learning process. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal and group B teachers to obtain information regarding program implementation, the role of teachers, and factors that support or hinder the development of children's independence. Documentation was used to supplement the data in the form of photos of activities, learning materials, school programs, and other documents related to the research.

The primary instrument in this study was the researcher, while supporting instruments included observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and documentation sheets. The observation guideline was structured around five indicators used to identify children's independence: (1) performing self-care tasks (e.g., wearing and tidying shoes, washing hands) without adult assistance, (2) taking initiative to begin an activity without being prompted, (3) persisting in completing a task despite initial difficulty, (4) taking responsibility for personal belongings and shared learning materials, and (5) complying with classroom rules consistently across sessions. Each indicator was rated on a checklist as either "independent," "requires guidance," or "dependent" during repeated observations of routine habituation activities. The interview guideline, developed for the semi-structured interviews with the principal and Group B teachers, consisted of open-ended questions organized around four themes: the design and implementation of the classroom rules program, the specific strategies teachers used in their roles as facilitators,

guides, and motivators, the observable indicators teachers themselves used to judge a child as independent, and the internal and external factors perceived to support or hinder that independence. The researcher played a direct role in collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data, thus requiring accuracy, objectivity, and consistency throughout the research process. Data validity was achieved through source triangulation and technical triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the principal and group B teachers, while technical triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. This process aims to increase data credibility so that the research results can be scientifically accounted for.

Data analysis was conducted from the beginning of data collection until the research was completed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions. In the data reduction stage, researchers selected, focused, and simplified data according to the research objectives. The data was then presented in narrative form to facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships between findings. The final stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions based on the entire data that had been systematically analyzed, resulting in credible findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Role of Teachers as Facilitators in Cultivating Children's Independence

The results of the study indicate that teachers at Serikandi Karang Bajo State Kindergarten carry out their role as facilitators by providing a learning environment that supports the development of children's independence through the implementation of the habituation method of the class rules program. This role is realized by providing opportunities for children to carry out various activities independently, providing learning resources that are appropriate to the children's needs, and creating a safe, comfortable, and conducive learning atmosphere. Based on the results of observations, habituation is carried out consistently every day through various routine activities, such as lining up before entering the classroom, storing bags in their place, wearing and tidying their own shoes, washing hands before and after eating, tidying up play equipment, disposing of trash in its place, and taking care of their own belongings. These repeated activities help children form habits of responsibility for themselves.

Interviews with teachers in group B revealed that teachers did not immediately assist children when they encountered difficulties, but instead first allowed them to try to complete the task independently. Assistance was provided only after several attempts when children truly experienced difficulties. Furthermore, teachers integrated habituation into all learning activities so that children not only obeyed class rules but also understood the purpose of each rule. Through this habituation, children learned discipline, responsibility, and reduced dependence on adult assistance. A teacher in group B stated: "We always give children the opportunity to try first. If they can't do it, then we provide a little help so that children become accustomed to being independent."

The findings of this study align with Sardiman's theory [7], which states that teachers, as facilitators, are tasked with providing learning conditions that enable students to actively build their knowledge and skills through direct learning experiences. In the context of early childhood education, this role is realized by providing learning experiences that are appropriate to the developmental characteristics of children so that they have the opportunity to develop their potential optimally. This finding is also supported by research by Arnia et al. [11], which states that consistent habituation can improve children's abilities to meet their own needs, make simple decisions, and be responsible for daily activities. In line with this, Lastari et al. [14] explain that teachers who provide opportunities for children to try independently contribute to increasing children's self-confidence and responsibility during the learning process.

The researcher's analysis shows that the success of teachers as facilitators is not only determined by the availability of learning resources, but also by the teacher's consistency in providing opportunities for children to learn through direct experience. Teachers at Serikandi

Karang Bajo State Kindergarten do not take over tasks that should be done by children, but rather provide direction, time, and opportunities so that children are able to complete tasks according to their developmental abilities. Continuous habituation forms a meaningful learning experience so that independent behavior gradually develops into a habit that is inherent in the child. Thus, the role of teachers as facilitators through the habituation method of the class rules program makes a positive contribution to the development of independence in group B children aged 5-6 years at Serikandi Karang Bajo State Kindergarten. Teachers not only provide a conducive learning environment, but also create learning experiences that encourage children to take initiative, be responsible, disciplined, and confident in carrying out various daily activities independently.

3.2 The Role of Teachers as Guides in Cultivating Children's Independence

The results of the study indicate that teachers at Serikandi Karang Bajo State Kindergarten carry out their role as mentors by providing direction, assistance, and guidance in stages during each activity to familiarize children with the classroom rules program. Based on observations, teachers provide examples before the activity begins, then guide children when storing bags, putting on and tidying shoes, washing hands, tidying up play equipment, and disposing of trash properly. Guidance is carried out consistently so that children become increasingly accustomed to following classroom rules and carrying out daily activities independently.

Interviews with teachers in Group B showed that the guidance process was tailored to each child's characteristics and abilities. Children who were already independent were given only supervision and reinforcement, while children who were still experiencing difficulties received more intensive guidance. Teachers also used simple language, provided direct examples, and repeated instructions if the child did not understand the activity. When a child forgot to put away toys or didn't wash their hands before eating, the teacher didn't immediately take over the task, but instead provided reminders and gave the child the opportunity to complete it on their own. This approach helped children learn from experience, allowing them to understand responsibility for each activity they undertake. The teacher explained: "Every child is different. Some can do it right away, while others need to be guided several times to get used to it." The findings of this study align with Sardiman's theory [7], which states that teachers as mentors are tasked with providing direction, guidance, and assistance according to students' needs so they can develop their potential and overcome learning difficulties according to their developmental stage. In the context of early childhood education, gradual guidance aims to foster children's self-confidence, responsibility, and ability to complete tasks independently. This finding is also supported by research by Arnia et al. [11], which states that guidance through habituation activities can improve children's ability to meet their own needs, as well as research by Lastari et al. [14], which shows that gradual guidance without taking over children's tasks can increase children's self-confidence and responsibility.

The researcher's analysis shows that the success of teachers as mentors is influenced by consistency in providing guidance and the ability to understand the characteristics of each child. Teachers at Serikandi Karang Bajo State Kindergarten do not force children to immediately be able to perform all activities independently, but rather provide them with opportunities to learn through a gradual process. This approach creates a positive learning experience so that children feel safe to try, are not afraid to make mistakes, and are encouraged to continue developing their independence. Thus, continuous guidance through the method of habituating the class rules program has a positive contribution to the development of independence in group B children aged 5-6 years at Serikandi Karang Bajo State Kindergarten. Teachers help children develop the ability to manage themselves, be responsible for tasks, obey class rules, and build self-confidence in carrying out various daily activities independently.

3.3 The Role of Teachers as Motivators in Cultivating Children's Independence

The results of the study indicate that teachers at Serikandi Karang Bajo State Kindergarten play a role as motivators in fostering children's independence through providing

motivation, positive reinforcement, and appreciation for every child's effort while following the class rules program. Based on the results of observations, teachers consistently provide praise, words of encouragement, applause, thumbs up, and simple rewards when children succeed or dare to try to do activities independently, such as putting on their own shoes, putting their bags in their place, washing their hands, tidying up play equipment, and throwing away trash in its place.

Interviews with group B teachers revealed that motivation was provided continuously through simple, positive phrases, making children feel valued, more confident, and encouraged to repeat independent behaviors in their daily lives. The teacher stated, "We always encourage children, for example by saying, 'Come on, you can do it,' or giving praise when they succeed in doing it themselves." The results of the observation also showed that motivation is not only given when children succeed, but also when children experience difficulties. Teachers provide encouragement and guidance so that children do not give up easily and continue to try to complete tasks independently. This approach creates a positive, safe, and supportive learning atmosphere so that children dare to try again and are more active in participating in habituation activities.

The findings of this study align with Sardiman's theory [7], which states that teachers, as motivators, are tasked with fostering enthusiasm for learning, fostering self-confidence, and providing encouragement so that students can optimally develop their potential. In this study, motivation is realized through positive reinforcement that helps children overcome feelings of doubt and dependence, thus increasing their confidence in carrying out various activities independently. This finding is supported by research by Arnia et al. [11], which states that giving praise, rewards, and verbal motivation can increase the independence of early childhood. Similarly, Lastari et al. [14] explain that motivation provided by teachers can increase children's courage to take initiative and take responsibility for the tasks they undertake. Qadafi et al. [15] also emphasize that emotional support from teachers contributes to the development of independence, discipline, and self-regulation skills in early childhood.

The researcher's analysis shows that the motivation provided by teachers not only serves as a form of appreciation for children's success, but also as a strategy to build confidence that every child can develop. Teachers value the learning process more than the final result so that children feel safe to try, are not afraid to make mistakes, and are encouraged to continue developing their independence through habituation activities. Thus, the role of teachers as motivators makes a significant contribution to the success of the habituation method of the class rules program in fostering independence in group B children aged 5-6 years at Serikandi Karang Bajo State Kindergarten. Through motivation, positive reinforcement, and appreciation given consistently, teachers successfully foster self-confidence, responsibility, discipline, and independent behavior in children.

3.4 Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Teachers' Role in Cultivating Children's Independence

The research results show that the implementation of the classroom rules program habituation method at Serikandi Karang Bajo State Kindergarten has a positive impact on the development of children's independence. However, teachers still face several obstacles that affect its effectiveness. Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, these inhibiting factors come from internal factors within the child and external factors related to the family environment and learning conditions at school.

a. Internal Factors

Internal factors include low self-confidence and low concentration skills in some children. Observations show that some children are still hesitant to perform activities independently, such as putting on shoes, tidying up toys, and completing assignments without teacher assistance. Furthermore, some children are easily distracted, requiring teachers to repeat instructions several times. This condition causes the guidance process to take longer and requires teachers to provide support tailored to each child's individual needs. These

findings align with Arnia et al. [11], who state that the development of independence is influenced by psychological readiness, self-confidence, and a child's ability to control their behavior. Qadafi et al. [15] also explain that teacher support and learning opportunities can gradually increase a child's self-confidence and self-regulation skills.

b. External Factors

The most dominant external factor is the suboptimal habituation within the family environment. Based on the interview results, the teacher explained that some parents still often help their children with activities that they could actually do themselves, such as putting on shoes, carrying bags, and tidying up learning equipment. The teacher stated, "At school, children are accustomed to being independent, but at home, some parents still directly help, so children become accustomed to being dependent." As a result, the habits implemented at school are not always continued at home, so the development of children's independence is less than optimal. Furthermore, the large number of children in a class means that teachers experience limitations in providing individual guidance to all children. This finding is supported by Lastari et al. [14], who state that the successful development of independence requires synergy between schools and families. Nisviati and Sianturi [16] also explain that the effectiveness of early childhood learning is influenced by teacher competence, the learning environment, and family involvement.

The researchers' analysis shows that these various inhibiting factors do not hinder the overall implementation of the habituation method, but rather represent challenges that need to be addressed through collaboration between teachers, schools, and parents. Teachers have endeavored to provide gradual support, ongoing motivation, and maintain communication with parents so that the habituation implemented at school can be continued at home. In this way, inhibiting factors can be minimized, ensuring that the process of developing children's independence continues optimally.

c. Critical Synthesis of Findings

Taken together, the three roles examined in this study, facilitator, guide, and motivator, are not independent categories but function as an integrated cycle that mirrors Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding: teachers first structure the environment (facilitator role), then calibrate the level of assistance to each child's zone of proximal development (guide role), and finally withdraw that assistance while sustaining effort through affective reinforcement (motivator role). This sequencing extends Sardiman's [7] framework, which treats the three functions as parallel tasks of a teacher rather than a developmental sequence tied to a single habituation activity. It also refines Arnia et al.'s [11] claim that consistent habituation alone improves independence: the present findings suggest that habituation is effective only when the type of teacher support shifts as the child's competence grows, since children who continued to receive the same level of direct assistance despite repeated practice, as seen among the least confident children in the Internal Factors findings, showed comparatively slower progress toward independent task completion. At the same time, the finding that home practices frequently undercut school-based habituation complicates Lastari et al.'s [14] argument that school-family synergy alone explains successful independence-building; in this study, synergy was not consistently present, yet children still made measurable gains at school, suggesting that the classroom rules program can partially compensate for inconsistent habituation at home, at least within the bounded, teacher-supervised setting of the kindergarten. This nuance is not fully addressed in prior habituation research and points to a boundary condition worth testing in future studies: how much of the independence gained through school-based habituation transfers to, or is contingent on, the home environment.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that teachers play a crucial role in fostering independence in group B children aged 5–6 years through the classroom rules program at Serikandi Karang Bajo State Kindergarten. These roles include facilitators, guides, and motivators. As facilitators, teachers

provide a supportive learning environment and provide opportunities for children to engage in various activities independently. As guides, teachers provide direction and guidance tailored to the child's characteristics. As motivators, teachers provide positive reinforcement in the form of praise, appreciation, and encouragement, fostering children's self-confidence in daily activities.

This study also found that the implementation of the classroom rules program still faces several obstacles, including internal factors such as low self-confidence and concentration skills among some children, and external factors such as suboptimal family habits and teachers' limited ability to provide individual guidance. However, consistent implementation of the habituation method and collaboration between teachers and parents can support optimal development of children's independence.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted in a single kindergarten with a limited number of informants (one principal and three Group B teachers), so the findings describe the specific context of Serikandi Karang Bajo State Kindergarten and cannot be generalized to other early childhood settings without further verification. Second, data on children's independence were obtained primarily through teacher interviews and researcher observation rather than direct, standardized measurement of individual children, which may introduce a degree of subjectivity despite the source and technique triangulation applied. Third, the study captured teachers' roles and children's independent behavior within a single academic period and therefore does not reveal whether the gains in independence observed at school are sustained over a longer term or after children transition to the next level of education. Future research is recommended to involve multiple kindergartens with a larger and more diverse group of informants to test the transferability of these findings, to incorporate standardized child-level independence measures alongside qualitative observation, and to employ a longitudinal design that follows children's independence beyond a single habituation period, including into the early years of primary school. Further studies could also examine more directly how school-based habituation interacts with, or is undermined by, habituation practices at home, an interaction this study identified as an external inhibiting factor but did not measure in depth.

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