

# Application of Role-Playing Methods to Improve the Discipline of Children Aged 5-6 Years at RA Abdullah Padang Sidempuan

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## Abstract

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of role-playing methods in shaping and improving disciplinary behavior of children aged 5-6 years at RA Abdullah Padang Sidempuan. The approach used is class action research (PTK) which is carried out in two cycles, where each cycle consists of stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The subjects in this study were 15 children from group B. Data collection techniques included observation, documentation, and teacher diaries. The results of the analysis showed that the use of the role-playing method had a positive impact on changes in children's discipline behavior. In the early cycle, children tend not to show consistent disciplined behavior. However, after the application of a more targeted method in the second cycle, the child showed an increase in on-time attendance, compliance with rules, and responsibility for completing play activities. Role-playing activities provide hands-on experiences that help children understand the meaning of discipline in a concrete and fun way. Therefore, this method is feasible to be applied as one of the learning approaches to shape children's character from an early age.

**Keywords:** *Role-Playing Method, Disciplinary Behavior, Early Childhood, RA Abdullah Padang Sidempuan, Classroom Action Research, Character Education*

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## Introduction

Early childhood education (PAUD) has a strategic role in shaping the basics of children's character, one of which is discipline. Discipline is an attitude that reflects compliance with the rules and responsibility for the obligations that are had. Early childhood education (PAUD) is an important stage in the formation of children's character and personality. At the age of 5 to 6 years, children are in a period of preoperational cognitive development according to Piaget's theory, where they begin to be able to use symbols, imitate adult behavior, and understand the social rules around them. This time is very strategic to instill basic values, such as discipline, by using an approach that is appropriate to the child's developmental stage.

Early childhood is a very important and decisive developmental period for later life. According to Utami (2018), early childhood is also a unique period of child development to pass through a phase called the sensitive period, the period of egocentric, imitate, group period, exploration period and disobedience.

Discipline is a structure set by adults for a child's life that is designed to allow him to adjust to the real world happily and effectively, discipline enforced by parents and educators is the foundation for the development of children's self-discipline later (Utami, Siregar, & Suzuki, 2024). Discipline is one of the moral values that need to be introduced and habituated from an early age. Discipline is not just about obeying rules, but also about the formation of self-control, responsibility, and the ability to manage behavior independently. Children who are used to discipline tend to be better prepared to face social and academic demands when entering the next level of education. Discipline at an early age is an important foundation in character formation and the habituation of sustainable positive behavior (Khadijah & Harahap, 2025). Discipline is one of the fundamental aspects in the formation of children's character that must be instilled from an early age. Discipline not only has an impact on children's daily behavior, but also plays an important role in the success of children's learning processes and social interactions (Santrock, 2018). At the age of 5-6 years, children are experiencing a period of very rapid social and emotional development. In this phase, they begin to understand the norms, rules, and consequences of their actions. Therefore, the development of discipline at this age is very crucial so that children can grow up to be responsible individuals and able to control themselves.

Positive discipline helps children build strong and lasting discipline, communicate desires clearly, and set mutually agreed upon rules and boundaries. This allows children to learn to adapt easily and comply with societal norms in the future (Rezeki and Utami, 2025). However, the application of discipline in early childhood often faces various challenges, especially related to learning methods that are not appropriate and unattractive to children. Children's discipline needs to be formed from an early age, in order to be able to face their future life (Harahap & Utami, 2023). Early childhood has the characteristics of learning through play and social interaction. They tend to get bored easily and need a creative and fun learning approach to get the message out about discipline can be conveyed effectively (Brown & Larson, 2019). Therefore, the learning method used must be able to accommodate these needs.

Role-playing also provides a strong stimulation to the social-emotional aspects of children, such as empathy, communication, and self-control, which are important foundations in shaping disciplined behavior. In the context of learning, the application of role-playing methods is not only fun, but also leads children to meaningful learning that is contextual and applicative.

The role-playing method is a learning strategy that involves children to act out a certain character or situation that reflects real life. In the context of early childhood education, role play allows children to understand various social roles, express themselves, and learn to follow the rules and responsibilities inherent in these roles. This activity stimulates the child's

emotional, social, and cognitive involvement in an integrated manner. The role-playing method is one of the most relevant approaches to be applied in early childhood learning. Role-playing allows children to experience firsthand situations that contain discipline values, such as following rules, respecting turns, and being responsible for the roles they play (Kim & Park, 2021). By role-playing, children not only learn in theory, but also feel and practice these values in a real and fun social context. This makes it easier for children to understand and internalize the concept of discipline. Through role-playing, children are invited to experience first-hand experiences, which encourage the development of social, emotional, and cognitive abilities. This method helps children to learn to interact with others, hone communication skills, and practice self-control in fun and contextual contexts. In addition, role-playing is also an effective medium to introduce norms and rules, so that it can indirectly shape children's discipline.

Some recent studies have also shown that the application of role-playing methods has a significant positive influence on improving early childhood discipline. For example, Setiawan (2022) in his research found that children who participated in learning with the role-playing method showed an increase in terms of adherence to rules and self-control compared to children who learn without this method. In addition, role-playing can also develop children's communication, empathy, and cooperative skills, all of which contribute to the creation of a learning environment that is more conducive to discipline.

RA Abdullah Padang Sidempuan as an early childhood education institution has a strategic role in implementing innovative and effective learning methods. Seeing the importance of discipline in child development and the potential of role-playing methods, the application of this method at RA Abdullah is expected to be the right solution to improve the discipline of children aged 5-6 years. Thus, the children at RA Abdullah are not only academically ready, but also characterfully ready to enter the next level of education.

Therefore, this study focuses on the application of role-playing methods as an effort to improve the discipline of children aged 5-6 years at RA Abdullah Padang Sidempuan. It is hoped that the results of this research can contribute to the development of an effective learning model for early childhood education and become a reference for educators in optimizing the formation of discipline character in children.

## **Research Methods**

This study took subjects from students aged 5-6 years at RA Abdullah Padang Sidempuan, the research was carried out in February - April of the 2024/2025 Academic Year, namely in class B which amounted to 15 children. Actions to improve early childhood discipline are carried out using the role-playing method which is the object of research. The research method used in this study is action research. Action research is research that is carried out using a systematic method starting from collecting data and implementing actions in order to improve the quality of service. Especially in the field of education, Mills explained that action research aims to improve the quality of the educational environment, learning and the way students learn. This research was conducted on a group of communities in a natural setting on a cyclical and continuous basis. Products in the form of improving service quality. The research procedure begins with planning, action, observation and reflection which is carried out in a cyclical manner.

## **Results and Discussion**

Based on the results of a study carried out through a classroom action research (PTK) approach on children aged 5-6 years at RA Abdullah Padang Sidempuan, it is known that the application of the role-playing method is able to make a significant contribution in shaping children's discipline attitudes. This research lasted for two months, from February to April of the 2024/2025 academic year, and was carried out in two cycles, each consisting of four stages:

planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The number of students involved in this study was 15 children in group B.

In the first cycle, teachers and researchers arrange learning activities with role-playing scenarios based on roles that are familiar to children, such as being a teacher, doctor, police, and cleaner. In its implementation, teachers provide briefings and examples of behavior that reflect discipline, such as arriving on time, carrying out tasks to completion, following the rules of the game, and tidying up props after playing. However, the results of observations show that the majority of children have not displayed the expected disciplined behavior. Many children arrive late, lack order during activities, do not complete the assigned roles, and tend to leave the toys alone. However, some children begin to show interest in this method, for example by imitating the role played by the teacher, or simply following the rules of the game.

Reflections from the first cycle show that children still need more time and a more engaging approach so that they can understand and apply discipline values consistently. Teachers and researchers agreed that improvements need to be made at the planning stage, such as adding role variation, actively involving children, and using a more contextual approach to make activities more in line with children's interests.

The second cycle was carried out with more careful planning. Children are given the opportunity to choose for themselves the role they want to play and be involved in prepare the required props. In addition, teachers also apply reinforcement strategies in the form of praise and simple rewards to motivate positive behavior. In the implementation of the second cycle, the changes that occurred were very noticeable. Children seem more enthusiastic about participating in activities, arrive early, follow the teacher's directions better, and show high involvement in completing their roles. In the process of playing, they begin to understand the importance of rules, cooperate with friends, and appreciate turns. In fact, children start tidying up the toys with their own awareness after the activity is over without needing to be reminded.

Reflections at the end of the second cycle show that role-playing methods are effective in helping children understand and apply disciplined behaviors. Through direct experience gained while playing, children can more easily absorb the values they want to inculcate. They learn to be responsible, follow the rules, and complete tasks to completion in a fun learning atmosphere. Not only that, teachers also find it easier to evaluate children's character development because their behavior appears naturally when role-playing.

Overall, the progress seen from the first cycle to the second cycle showed a positive improvement. If previously many children showed less disciplined behavior, then at the end of the second cycle, most children have experienced behavioral changes for the better. Therefore, role-playing methods can be considered an effective approach to instill a disciplined attitude in early childhood. This approach is not only fun, but also provides meaningful experiences that are able to shape the character of children from an early age.

Thus, it can be concluded that the use of role-playing methods in the learning process is very useful to improve the discipline of children aged 5-6 years at RA Abdullah Padang Sidempuan. This method facilitates learning that is not only academically oriented, but also forms social values and positive character that children need to face the next level of education and social life.

## **1. Implementation of Role-Playing Methods in Learning Activities**

The application of the role-playing method is carried out by involving children in activities that mimic real situations, such as becoming teachers, doctors, or family members.

Each activity begins with an explanation from the teacher about the role to be played and what are the responsibilities in the role. The children then divide roles and start playing according to the predetermined scenario.

The teacher accompanies the children during the activity, gives direction when needed,

and provides positive reinforcement when the child shows a disciplined attitude, such as waiting for a turn or obeying the rules. This activity takes place regularly, and each meeting ends with a question and answer session or light reflection to find out what the child understands from the role that has been played.

This method turns out to be very interesting for children. They appear active, enthusiastic, and fully engaged in each play session, indicating that role-playing is an appropriate approach for 5–6-year-olds.

## **2. Changes in Discipline Behavior in Children**

After the regular application of the role-playing method, there is a fairly noticeable change in children's discipline behavior. Previously, children often did not follow the rules of the class, were reluctant to queue, or did not tidy up toys. However, after several role-playing activities, they began to show a more orderly attitude and were willing to follow the rules.

For example, children who play the role of police officers become more aware of the importance of following the rules and invite their friends to do the same. Children also get used to waiting for their turn to speak, not grabbing toys, and completing tasks according to the roles given.

Based on the observation results, there was an increase in the discipline indicators, both in terms of attitude and action. This shows that the role-playing method has a positive impact on the formation of disciplined behavior in early childhood.

## **3. The Effective Impact of Role-Playing**

The role-playing method has proven to be quite effective in fostering discipline attitudes in children. Children learn not only from the teacher's direction, but also through direct experience and social interaction during play. In role-playing, children are faced with situations that require them to follow the rules and be responsible according to their roles.

The success of this method is influenced by several factors, including the selection of themes that are close to the child's daily life, the teacher's skills in guiding, and a pleasant learning atmosphere. On the other hand, some challenges such as children who find it difficult to follow the flow of play or are not confident when performing also appear, but can be overcome with a gradual approach and intensive assistance from teachers.

## **4. The Effect of Role Playing on Children's Social and Emotional Interactions**

In addition to helping improve discipline, role play also strengthens children's social and emotional abilities. Through this activity, children learn to recognize their own feelings and those of others, speak politely, and solve small problems that arise during play. Children are also trained to respect friends, share, and work together in groups.

Role-playing activities create an atmosphere that supports children to express themselves, learn to listen, and understand the consequences of each action. Children who were initially shy began to interact more daringly, and dominant children learned to control themselves.

## **Conclusion**

Through the implementation of classroom action research carried out in two cycles on 15 children aged 5–6 years at RA Abdullah Padang Sidempuan, it was understood that the use of role-playing methods can significantly improve early childhood discipline. In the first cycle, most children still show undisciplined behavior, such as arriving late, not complying with the rules, and not completing the assigned roles. After improvements were made to the design of activities and implementation in the second cycle, there were quite striking positive changes. Children begin to show punctuality in attendance, obedience to the teacher's directions, and

responsibility in carrying out tasks and tidying up the toys.

The application of the role-playing method provides space for children to experience the values of discipline directly in a fun play atmosphere. Through this activity, children will more easily understand the concepts of rules, responsibilities, and the importance of regularity in behavior. It is also easier for teachers to evaluate the development of children's characters through their interactions while playing. Based on the results achieved, the role-playing method can be used as one of the effective learning strategies in instilling discipline attitudes in early childhood and should be applied sustainably in early childhood institutions.

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