

Formation of Prosocial Behavior in Early Childhood Through the Habituation Method at TK ABA Gunung Tua

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the formation of prosocial behavior in early childhood through the habituation method at TK ABA Gunung Tua. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed. The research participants consisted of the principal, teachers, and children selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. The findings revealed that the habituation method was integrated into daily learning activities through routines encouraging sharing, helping, cooperation, empathy, and caring for peers and the environment. Teachers played significant roles as role models and facilitators by demonstrating prosocial behavior, providing positive reinforcement, and creating opportunities for children to practice social values in everyday activities. The implementation of the habituation method effectively enhanced children's willingness to share, help others, cooperate, and demonstrate empathy and social concern. The success of the program was supported by teachers' consistency, a positive school culture, and exemplary behavior, while differences in parenting styles and children's developmental characteristics were identified as the main challenges. The study concludes that the habituation method is an effective strategy for fostering prosocial behavior as an integral part of character education in early childhood.

Keywords: *prosocial behavior, habituation method, character education, early childhood, social-emotional development.*

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3rd International Conference Epicentrum of Economic Global Framework (ICEEGLOF)
Theme: Cross-Sector and Cross-Disciplinary Strategies for Achieving the SDGS
<https://proceeding.pancabudi.ac.id/index.php/ICEEGLOF>

Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) represents a strategic phase in children's character development, including the cultivation of prosocial behavior, which serves as a fundamental basis for social life. During the *golden age* of development, children exhibit a high level of sensitivity to their social environment. Consequently, values such as sharing, helping others, empathy, and cooperation should be nurtured optimally from an early age. Prosocial behavior is one of the key indicators of children's socio-emotional development, reflecting their ability to interact positively with others.

Prosocial behavior in early childhood does not emerge naturally but develops through continuous learning processes and social interactions. Developmental psychologists argue that prosocial behavior is influenced by environmental factors, including parenting practices, peer interactions, and learning experiences within educational settings. Therefore, Early Childhood Education institutions play a crucial role in providing learning environments that facilitate the development of children's prosocial behavior through appropriate educational strategies.

One effective approach to fostering prosocial behavior is the habituation method. This method emphasizes the consistent repetition of positive behaviors until they become established habits. Through habituation, children gradually learn to perform prosocial actions spontaneously without external prompting. Activities such as sharing food, helping classmates, cooperating in group activities, and demonstrating concern for the surrounding environment are examples of prosocial behaviors that can be effectively developed through habitual practice.

Previous studies have demonstrated that structured and consistent habituation significantly improves prosocial behavior among young children. Furthermore, learning environments that provide appropriate role models and positive reinforcement contribute substantially to strengthening such behaviors. Teachers, as primary role models, exert considerable influence in instilling prosocial values through exemplary conduct and daily interactions with children.

Despite these advantages, several challenges remain in fostering children's prosocial behavior. These include inconsistent implementation of habituation practices, limited family involvement, and inadequate instructional strategies. As a result, children's prosocial development often fails to reach its full potential.

TK ABA Gunung Tua, an Islamic-based Early Childhood Education institution, plays an important role in promoting children's prosocial behavior through habituation practices integrated into daily learning activities. This implementation provides an interesting context for investigating how prosocial behavior is cultivated and identifying the factors that influence its development.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the development of early childhood prosocial behavior through the habituation method at TK ABA Gunung Tua. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the field of early childhood character education and practically to educators in designing effective instructional strategies for fostering children's prosocial development.

Literature Review

2.1. Prosocial Behavior in Early Childhood

Prosocial behavior refers to voluntary actions intended to benefit others, including helping, sharing, cooperating, and demonstrating empathy. Within the context of early childhood education, prosocial behavior constitutes an essential component of socio-emotional development that should be nurtured from an early age. According to Eisenberg and Mussen (1989), prosocial behavior encompasses various actions aimed at improving the well-being of others without expecting personal rewards.

During early childhood, prosocial behavior develops through social interaction and learning experiences acquired from the surrounding environment. Hurlock (1978) argued that children's social development is strongly influenced by experiences within both the family and school environments. Therefore, supportive and nurturing environments are essential for promoting prosocial behavior.

Empathy serves as a fundamental basis for prosocial behavior. Children who are capable of understanding the emotions of others are generally more likely to demonstrate helping behaviors and social concern. Yusuf (2011) emphasized that empathy development in early childhood is closely associated with positive emotional experiences and constructive social interactions.

2.2. The Habituation Method in Early Childhood Education

The habituation method is widely recognized as an effective approach to children's behavioral development. This method emphasizes continuous repetition of positive behaviors until they become established habits. In Early Childhood Education, habituation is implemented through structured and consistent daily routines.

According to Suyadi (2010), habituation is an educational process involving repeated practice that gradually establishes stable behavioral patterns. Habituation encompasses not only cognitive development but also affective and psychomotor domains. Consequently, it represents an effective strategy for character formation in young children.

Wiyani (2013) further argued that the success of habituation largely depends on consistency, role modeling, and supportive learning environments. Teachers and parents should collaborate in implementing habituation practices to ensure children experience consistent guidance both at school and at home.

2.3. Habituation as a Strategy for Developing Prosocial Behavior

The habituation method plays a significant role in fostering prosocial behavior among young children. Through repeated practice, children gradually internalize prosocial actions until they become part of their daily routines. Behaviors such as sharing, helping peers, and cooperating with others can be cultivated through structured habitual activities.

Research indicates that consistent habituation increases both the frequency and quality of children's prosocial behavior. Moreover, positive reinforcement provided by teachers further strengthens these behaviors. Children who receive appreciation for positive actions are more likely to repeat similar behaviors in the future.

From the perspective of Islamic education, habituation is also regarded as a primary method for character and moral development. Values such as mutual assistance (*ta'awun*), compassion, and social responsibility are cultivated through direct practice in everyday life. This demonstrates that habituation contributes not only to social competence but also to children's moral and spiritual development.

2.4. Theoretical Perspectives: Social Learning Theory and Behaviorism

The development of prosocial behavior through habituation can be explained using both Social Learning Theory and Behaviorist Theory. Social Learning Theory, proposed by Bandura, argues that children learn by observing and imitating the behaviors of others. Consequently, teachers function as influential role models whose prosocial behaviors are likely to be imitated by children.

Meanwhile, Behaviorist Theory suggests that behavior is shaped through stimulus-response mechanisms reinforced by positive consequences. Within the habituation process, positive reinforcement—including praise and appreciation—increases the likelihood that children will repeat prosocial behaviors.

The integration of these two theoretical perspectives suggests that prosocial behavior develops not only through repeated practice but also through consistent modeling and reinforcement.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the process of developing prosocial behavior among young children through the habituation method. This approach was selected because the research focuses on processes, meanings, and the dynamics of naturally occurring social interactions within educational settings. Through this approach, the researchers obtained a comprehensive understanding of how habituation was implemented to foster prosocial behavior at TK ABA Gunung Tua.

The study was conducted at TK ABA Gunung Tua. The research participants consisted of teachers, young children, and the school principal. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their experience and knowledge relevant to the research objectives. Teachers served as the primary implementers of habituation activities, children were observed as the main subjects of prosocial behavior development, and the principal acted as a supporting informant by providing information regarding school policies and educational programs. The research focused on four main aspects: (1) the implementation of the habituation method, (2) forms of children's prosocial behavior, (3) the role of habituation in promoting prosocial behavior, and (4) supporting and inhibiting factors affecting its implementation. These areas of focus enabled a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of habituation in developing prosocial behavior among young children.

Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participant observations were conducted to examine children's daily learning activities and social interactions. In-depth interviews with teachers and the school principal explored habituation strategies, learning activities, and challenges encountered during implementation. Documentation, including lesson plans, photographs of learning activities, and children's developmental records, served as supporting data.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of qualitative analysis consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and focusing on information relevant to the research objectives, followed by descriptive presentation of the findings. Conclusions were continuously verified throughout the research process to ensure the credibility of the findings.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, source triangulation and methodological triangulation were employed. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from teachers, the principal, and observational findings, whereas methodological triangulation compared data collected through observations, interviews, and documentation. In addition, member checking was conducted by confirming the research findings with participants to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the interpreted data.

Results

4.1. Implementation of the Habituation Method in Developing Children's Prosocial Behavior

Based on the findings obtained through observations, interviews, and documentation, this study revealed that the habituation method at TK ABA Gunung Tua has been integrated into all learning activities as the primary strategy for fostering prosocial behavior among young children. Habituation is implemented not only during core instructional activities but also throughout children's daily routines, from the moment they arrive at school until learning activities conclude. Teachers believe that prosocial behavior cannot be effectively developed merely through explanations or verbal advice; instead, it must be cultivated through authentic experiences that are repeatedly and consistently practiced.

Observational findings indicated that every morning children were encouraged to greet teachers and classmates, shake hands, and exchange greetings before entering the classroom. Following the opening session, teachers invited children to pray together, recite short chapters of the Qur'an, and discuss simple messages emphasizing kindness, helping others, and maintaining environmental cleanliness. During classroom activities, teachers consistently provided opportunities for children to work collaboratively in groups, share learning materials, take turns using educational resources, and assist classmates experiencing difficulties.

Teachers explained that habituation was implemented through simple activities closely related to children's everyday experiences. For example, when a child experienced difficulty organizing learning materials, teachers refrained from providing immediate assistance and instead encouraged other children to offer help voluntarily. Likewise, during snack time, children were encouraged to share food and drinks with classmates who had forgotten to bring their meals. According to the teachers, the continuous repetition of these activities gradually enabled children to demonstrate prosocial behavior spontaneously without external prompting. Documentation further demonstrated that habituation activities had been systematically incorporated into the Daily Lesson Plan (RPPH), the school's habituation program, and the annual academic calendar. Photographic documentation illustrated children's active participation in sharing activities, collaborative classroom cleaning, cooperative block-building exercises, and assisting peers in completing learning tasks. These findings indicate that habituation has evolved into an integral part of the school's culture, supporting children's socio-emotional development.

These findings are consistent with Suyadi (2010), who argued that habituation is an effective educational approach in early childhood because positive behaviors develop through continuous and repeated practice. Similarly, Wiyani (2013) emphasized that consistent habituation contributes to the formation of enduring character and behavioral patterns in children.

4.2. Forms of Prosocial Behavior Developed Through the Habituation Method

The findings indicate that implementing the habituation method positively contributed to the development of various forms of prosocial behavior among young children. Based on classroom observations, the most frequently observed behaviors included sharing, helping, cooperation, caring, and empathy.

a. Sharing

Sharing behavior was evident when children willingly lent stationery, shared food during snack time, and took turns using educational toys. At the beginning of the semester, teachers reported that several children were reluctant to share because they exhibited a strong sense of ownership over personal belongings. However, through consistent daily habituation, children gradually understood that sharing is both enjoyable and beneficial for others. Observations showed that when one child forgot to bring colored pencils, several classmates spontaneously offered their own supplies without being prompted by the teacher. This behavioral change suggests that sharing gradually became an internalized habit.

b. Helping Behavior

Observational data indicated that children increasingly demonstrated helping behaviors, including carrying classmates' bags, arranging classroom chairs, assisting peers in putting on shoes, and collecting learning materials after classroom activities. Teachers explained that these behaviors did not emerge spontaneously at the beginning of the school year but gradually developed through teacher modeling and consistent habituation practices. Teachers consistently praised children who voluntarily helped others, thereby encouraging the repetition of such behaviors. These findings support Eisenberg and Mussen (1989), who identified helping

behavior as one of the primary indicators of prosocial development fostered through supportive social experiences and learning environments.

c. Cooperation

Cooperative behavior developed through various group-based activities, including block construction, collage making, role-playing, classroom cleaning, and collaborative project work. Observations demonstrated that children gradually learned to divide responsibilities, wait for their turns, respect their peers' opinions, and complete group assignments with minimal conflict. Teachers noted that repeated collaborative activities enabled children to appreciate teamwork and recognize the importance of achieving shared goals collectively. Morrison (2012) similarly argued that cooperative learning experiences promote children's social competence, communication skills, and sense of responsibility within group settings.

d. Caring and Empathy

Empathy development was reflected in children's willingness to comfort classmates who were crying, console friends who appeared sad, and assist teachers in maintaining classroom cleanliness. Teachers also encouraged children to pray collectively for sick classmates and create simple greeting cards to express their concern. Interview findings revealed that children gradually developed the ability to recognize others' emotions and respond appropriately to their peers' emotional needs. These observations suggest that habituation fosters not only observable prosocial actions but also children's emotional sensitivity. This finding is consistent with Yusuf (2011), who emphasized that empathy serves as the foundation of prosocial development by enabling children to understand and respond positively to the needs of others.

4.3. The Role of the Habituation Method in Developing Prosocial Behavior

The findings demonstrate that the habituation method plays a crucial role in fostering prosocial behavior among young children at TK ABA Gunung Tua.

First, habituation serves as a medium for internalizing social and moral values. Through repeated daily activities, children gradually learn that sharing, helping, cooperating, and caring for others are essential aspects of everyday life. These values are not only understood cognitively but are also practiced directly through authentic learning experiences.

Second, habituation reinforces positive behavior through teacher role modeling. Classroom observations revealed that teachers consistently demonstrated prosocial behavior before encouraging children to imitate it. Teachers habitually expressed gratitude, apologized when appropriate, assisted children experiencing difficulties, and treated every child fairly. Consequently, children naturally imitated these behaviors during interactions with their peers. Third, habituation was strengthened through the application of **positive reinforcement**. Teachers regularly provided verbal praise, motivational encouragement, and positive recognition whenever children displayed prosocial behavior. Such reinforcement increased children's motivation to repeat these desirable behaviors in subsequent situations.

Fourth, habituation contributed to the establishment of a positive classroom culture. The learning environment became increasingly conducive because children developed habits of cooperation, mutual respect, and constructive conflict resolution through effective communication.

These findings support Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which explains that children acquire behaviors by observing role models, including teachers and peers (Santrock, 2011). Likewise, Behaviorist Theory suggests that behavior is strengthened through consistent reinforcement, explaining why repeated positive reinforcement successfully promotes the development of prosocial behavior.

4.4. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Developing Prosocial Behavior Through Habituation

The study identified several factors supporting the successful implementation of the habituation method. These include teachers' consistency in implementing habituation activities, exemplary teacher behavior, a religious and supportive school culture, and strong leadership from the school principal in integrating character education into the curriculum. In addition, many parents continued the habituation practices introduced at school, thereby reinforcing children's prosocial development at home.

Nevertheless, several challenges were also identified. The most significant obstacle was the inconsistency of habituation practices within the family environment due to differences in parenting styles. Some parents tended to prioritize children's academic achievement over their social development, resulting in limited reinforcement of prosocial behavior at home. Furthermore, individual differences in children's developmental characteristics required teachers to adopt diverse instructional approaches when promoting prosocial behavior.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the habituation method represents an effective strategy for developing prosocial behavior in early childhood when implemented consistently and supported by teacher role modeling, positive reinforcement, and a conducive learning environment. Continuous habituation successfully nurtures children's willingness to share, help others, cooperate, care for peers, and demonstrate empathy as integral components of their character. These findings further indicate that prosocial behavior is not the result of isolated instructional activities but rather emerges through an ongoing process of character education grounded in meaningful daily social experiences.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the habituation method implemented at TK ABA Gunung Tua plays a significant role in fostering prosocial behavior among young children through a continuous and systematic educational process. Habituation is incorporated into various daily learning activities, including sharing, helping others, cooperating, demonstrating empathy, and showing concern for peers and the surrounding environment. These practices are not limited to routine classroom activities but have become embedded within the school's culture of character education.

The findings further indicate that the successful development of prosocial behavior is influenced by several key factors, including teachers' exemplary conduct, the provision of positive reinforcement, opportunities for children to practice prosocial behaviors directly, and the creation of a supportive learning environment. Repeated habituation enables children to develop the ability to share, assist peers, cooperate effectively in groups, respect others, and demonstrate empathy toward the social conditions around them. Consequently, the habituation method contributes not only to observable social behaviors but also to the internalization of positive character values in children's everyday lives.

Finally, this study highlights that the effectiveness of habituation is strengthened by the consistent implementation of school programs, a religious and character-oriented school culture, and teachers' commitment to serving as positive role models. Conversely, differences in parenting practices, inconsistent habituation at home, and variations in children's developmental characteristics remain challenges that require further attention. Therefore, strengthening the partnership between schools and families, alongside maintaining consistency in implementing habituation practices, is essential for optimizing the development of prosocial behavior as an integral component of early childhood character education.

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