




# Strategy for Cultivating Independence Through the Essential Method of Habitual Behavior in Early Childhood

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## Abstract

This study aims to examine the strategy of cultivating independence in children aged 5–6 years through the Essential Behavioral Habituation Method at Rainbow Kids Kindergarten, Cibitung District, Bekasi Regency, West Java. The novelty of this study lies in the use of the Essential Behavioral Habituation Method concept which emphasizes the internalization of the value of independence through consistent, structured, and continuous habituation in various children's daily activities. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing techniques. The results showed that the cultivation of independence was carried out through four forms of habituation, namely routine habituation, spontaneous habituation, role models, and programmed habituation. The implementation of this method encourages the development of children's abilities in self-care, obeying rules, making simple decisions, and being responsible for daily tasks and activities. Supporting factors for success include teacher consistency and a conducive school environment, while the main obstacles come from differences in family parenting patterns and a lack of continuity in habituation at home. Research findings show that the Essential Behavioral Habituation Method is effective as a strategy to strengthen the independence of early childhood through a gradual and continuous process of forming behavior.

## INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is the first phase of life and plays a crucial role in human growth and development. Between the ages of 0 and 6, children are undergoing rapid growth and development across all aspects, including physical, motor, cognitive, language, social-emotional, and moral and religious values.

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According to (Iswantiningtyas et al., 2023), children who receive appropriate stimulation will be able to think and act independently according to their developmental stage. This condition requires early childhood education institutions to design learning programs that focus not only on academic aspects, but also on the development of character and independence of children comprehensively and continuously. According to (Aini, 2023), changing someone's personality takes a long time, so instilling good character in someone requires taking the right steps and must be started as early as possible. The experiences and stimulation obtained by children during this golden period will form the foundation of development in the future, including the foundation of the ability to be independent, which is very necessary for children to face the challenges of social and academic life (Nurma, Sari, & Gustina, 2024).

Independence is an important character trait that needs to be instilled from an early age. Etymologically, independence comes from the root word "mandiri," which in the Big Indonesian Dictionary means the state of being able to stand alone without relying on others. According to Erikson (in Monks, 2002), independence is an effort to free oneself from parents with the aim of finding ego identity, namely development towards a stable individuality that can stand alone. In early childhood, independence is evident in behaviors such as being able to tidy up toys, put on shoes alone, follow class rules, and complete simple tasks without always needing teacher assistance (Agustin, Widiatsih, & Afandi, 2025). These characteristics are essential for children to develop self-confidence, social adaptability, and readiness for the next level of education (Agustin et al., 2023). Therefore, cultivating independence from an early age is a priority that cannot be ignored.

Low levels of independence in early childhood can have various negative impacts on their overall development. Children who lack independence tend to rely heavily on the help of parents, teachers, and friends for daily activities. This condition can hinder the development of self-confidence because children feel unsure of their abilities (Multahada, 2021). One effective strategy for instilling independence in early childhood is through behavioral conditioning. This conditioning is an educational process carried out intentionally through repeated, consistent, and structured activities to shape certain behaviors or attitudes until they become ingrained habits.

According to Dadan Suryana (2018), habituation in early childhood education is a process of instilling positive values and behaviors that are carried out consistently through daily activities, not just repetitive routines, but as an educational strategy that aims to shape children's character from an early age through direct experience. Behavioral habituation has several forms, namely routine habituation, spontaneous habituation, habituation through role models, programmed habituation, and habituation in everyday life or *life skills*. All forms of habituation aim to help children develop good behavior from an early age, gradually and sustainably (Kadi dkk., 2023).

Various previous studies have examined the role of habituation in shaping early childhood independence, but studies that deeply discuss the essence of behavioral habituation as a process of internalizing values in the context of specific PAUD institutions are still very limited. (Sari and Nurhayati, 2020) found that routine habits such as tidying up toys and queuing can gradually increase children's independence, but have not examined the essence and meaning of habituation actions for children. (Rahmawati et al., 2021) demonstrated the role of teachers in shaping independence through role models, but have not yet explained specific behavioral habituation strategies.

Putri and Hidayat (2022) demonstrated the effectiveness of the habituation method in shaping positive social behavior, but did not prioritize independence. Fauziyah (2023) and Wulandari & Suryani (2024) examined the school environment

and the influence of habituation on independence, but their studies were quantitative and did not delve deeply into the process. Thus, there are significant gaps that need to be filled through this research.

Based on initial observations and preliminary interviews at Rainbow Kids Kindergarten in Cibitung District, it was found that most children aged 5–6 years still show a high level of dependence on teachers and parents in various daily activities, such as putting away bags, tidying up toys, queuing, and completing simple tasks. This condition indicates that independent behavior has not yet become a fully ingrained habit in the children.

Therefore, an appropriate strategy is needed through the implementation of behavioral habits so that children are accustomed to carrying out various activities independently, responsibly, and are able to manage themselves according to their developmental stage. This study aims to examine in depth the strategy of instilling independence through the essential method of behavioral habits in children aged 5–6 years at TKIT Rainbow Kids, so that it can contribute to the development of more meaningful and sustainable early childhood character education practices.

## METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a case study. According to Moleong (2022), qualitative research is a research method that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words obtained from people or observable behavior. This approach focuses on the meaning and process of the research, rather than on testing or measurement, as is the case with quantitative research. The case study approach was chosen because this research focuses on one educational institution, namely TKIT Rainbow Kids, thus allowing the researcher to describe in detail how the strategy of instilling independence through the essential method of behavioral habituation takes place in the institution in a real and contextual manner. The research was conducted at TKIT Rainbow Kids.

The research implementation period began in March 2026, encompassing the initial observation phase, data collection, analysis, and reporting of research results. Research subjects were selected randomly. *purposive*, namely by deliberately selecting subjects who have relevant and in-depth information related to the research focus. The main subjects include class teachers and students aged 5–6 years enrolled in group B of Rainbow Kids Kindergarten. Research data was obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. Next, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis by identifying, grouping, and interpreting themes that emerged from the results of data collection. The analysis process was carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. This can be seen in the following graphic:



**Figure 1. Research Flow**

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques. First, observation, which involves direct observation of the classroom learning process during the activity. Observation guides were developed based on indicators of children's independence in routine, spontaneous, and exemplary activities. Second, interviews, which involve direct interviews with class teachers to gather in-depth information regarding behavioral habituation strategies to instill independence in children. Third, documentation, which involves collecting data in the form of

photographs of learning activities, RPPH documents, and field notes throughout the research.

Data analysis in this study uses an interactive analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman (in Sugiyono, 2020), which consists of four stages: (1) collecting data from the field through interviews, observations, and documentation; (2) data reduction, namely summarizing, selecting, and focusing on data that is considered important and relevant to the research objectives; (3) presenting data in the form of narrative descriptions, matrices, or simple tables to make it easier for researchers to understand patterns and relationships between data; and (4) drawing conclusions based on the analysis of the data that has been reduced and presented. To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses a triangulation technique that utilizes three sources of cross-data collection, namely observation, interviews, and documentation

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the Institution and Initial Conditions of Children's Independence. Based on initial observations at Rainbow Kids Kindergarten, the learning process still shows that a number of children are unable to carry out various activities independently. Upon arrival at school, some children are still assisted by their parents or teachers in placing their bags and learning materials in the designated areas. Upon entering the classroom, some children still need to be directed by the teacher to line up and wait their turn in an orderly manner. During learning activities, a number of children still frequently ask for teacher assistance in completing tasks that could actually be done independently according to their age, such as completing worksheets, retrieving stationery, or tidying up equipment after the activity is finished. Children tend to wait for instructions from the teacher and lack the initiative to start or complete tasks independently (Minahali, Sutisna, & Rawanti, 2025).

Initial conditions found in the field indicated a gap between the ideal of child-centered learning and the reality of learning practices in the field. After playtime, some children were still unfamiliar with tidying up their play equipment and only did so after receiving instructions or reminders from the teacher. In routine daily activities such as putting on and taking off shoes and disposing of trash properly, several children still needed assistance or direction from the teacher. Children also appeared inconsistent in following classroom rules without supervision.

Strategies for Cultivating Independence Through Behavioral Habits. Based on observations and interviews conducted during the research at Rainbow Kids Kindergarten, it was found that teachers implemented four main forms of behavioral habits to instill independence in children. First, routine habits, namely activities carried out regularly every day as part of the daily schedule at school, such as praying before and after studying, washing hands before eating, tidying up toys after use, putting things away in their place, lining up orderly, and saying hello. These repeated activities help children understand the importance of discipline and responsibility in everyday life. Second, spontaneous habits, namely habits carried out when certain situations arise that require an immediate response from the teacher, for example when a child forgets to say thank you or when a child wants to share with a friend so that the teacher immediately provides positive reinforcement in the form of praise (Nurhayati, Hidayat, Lastari, Kurniasih, & Susanti, 2024).

Third, habituation through role models, where teachers and parents provide examples of good behavior because young children tend to imitate what they see, such as speaking politely, maintaining cleanliness, arriving on time, and being patient. Modeling is the most effective way because children learn from what they witness and experience every day. Fourth, programmed habituation, namely habits that are specifically designed in the planning of learning activities, such as independence

training in the form of putting on their own shoes and tidying up learning tools that have been included in the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH). The teacher also explained that children's independent behavior varies because it is influenced by habits implemented in the family environment, so cooperation between teachers and parents is a key factor in the success of habituation strategies.

This is in line with the opinion of (Rahmi, Ramadhan, & Asniyah, 2026) who stated that children learn through the process of imitation (modeling), where the behavior seen from their surroundings will be recorded and then reproduced by children in their daily lives. In the context of habituation in schools, the example of teachers and parents is the main factor that shapes children's behavior because they tend to use adults as the main role models in acting. The findings of this study are in line with the view (Srianita, Heriyanti, & Rahmi, n.d.) who stated that habituation in early childhood education is a process of instilling positive values and behaviors that are carried out consistently through daily activities, where behaviors that are often seen, heard, and done repeatedly will be more easily ingrained into habits. Strategies that are implemented consistently and supported by a positive environment have been proven to be able to shape children's independent character gradually and sustainably (Yuliani, Cahyono, & Rusdiani, 2024).

**Implementation of Behavioral Habits in Daily Routine Activities.** The results of the study indicate that the implementation of behavioral habits in daily routine activities at Rainbow Kids Kindergarten is carried out in a structured and integrated manner in each learning session. The routine activities carried out include a series of activities designed to continuously instill the values of independence, responsibility, and discipline. Prayers before and after activities are carried out consistently to instill religious values and gratitude.

Getting children into the habit of greeting and addressing others teaches them politeness and respect for others. Washing hands before and after meals instills clean and healthy habits. Tidying up toys after use teaches responsibility and environmental awareness, while putting things away in their proper place fosters order and discipline. Waiting in line in an orderly manner teaches children patience and self-control.

Based on the results of interviews with class teachers, information was obtained that instilling independence through routine habituation activities has a significant impact on children's behavioral development. Some children who were initially very dependent on teacher assistance gradually began to be able to carry out simple activities independently after the implementation of habituation consistently. Teachers also emphasized that consistency and role models from teachers are the main keys to the success of this habituation strategy. This finding is in line with research by Sari and (Rahmi & Anggraeni, 2024) which shows that daily routine habits such as tidying up toys and queuing can gradually increase the independence of early childhood in PAUD institutions, as well as research by Aini et al. (2023) which explains that children's independence develops optimally when children are given the opportunity to carry out activities independently in a supportive atmosphere.

**The Role of Teachers in Cultivating Independence in Children.** The role of teachers in the process of cultivating independence in early childhood at Rainbow Kids Kindergarten is crucial and crucial. Observations show that teachers not only act as instructors but also as facilitators, motivators, and behavioral models that children observe and imitate. Teachers design learning activities that provide space for children to try, fail, and learn from their own experiences without always being directly assisted. (Elan & Fathy, 2025). In daily learning, teachers consistently remind children to engage in independent activities through guiding questions, such as "Who can tidy up their own toys?" or "Let's try putting on our own shoes first." This

approach encourages children to take initiative and take responsibility for their own actions according to their developmental stage.

Teachers also play an important role in fostering cooperation with parents so that habits developed at school can be continued and strengthened in the home environment. (Awaludina et al., 2025). According to teachers, differences in parenting styles are one factor that influences a child's level of independence. Some children are accustomed to receiving help from their parents in daily activities, so when they're at school, they tend to wait for help from their teachers. (Harmiasih, Nurhayati, & Supriyadi, 2023). Therefore, intensive communication between teachers and parents is a crucial component of an effective strategy for fostering independence. This finding supports the research of Rahmawati et al. (2021), which showed that teachers have a significant influence on the development of children's independence, and Sulaeman et al. (2025), which stated that children who are trusted to complete their own tasks will have better control over their actions.

The instilling of independence in children at Rainbow Kids Kindergarten is carried out through four habituation strategies: routine, spontaneous, exemplary, and programmed habituation. These four strategies are consistently applied in daily activities, thereby fostering independence, discipline, and responsibility in early childhood. The success of these habituation strategies is greatly influenced by the role of teachers as facilitators, motivators, and role models, as well as the support and cooperation of parents. Thus, children's independence develops gradually through repeated habituation processes and a supportive environment, both at school and at home. This can be seen in the following image:



**Figure 2. Child doing an assignment**



**Figure 3. Child listening to the conversation.**

## CONCLUSION

Based on research regarding the strategy of fostering independence through the method of habituating behaviors in children aged 5–6 at TKIT Rainbow Kids (Cibitung District, Bekasi Regency, West Java), it can be concluded that this strategy has a significant positive impact on the development of independence in early childhood. First, the implemented behavioral habituation strategy encompasses four primary forms: routine habituation, spontaneous habituation, habituation through role modeling, and programmed habituation, all consistently integrated into daily learning activities. Second, the application of these habituation strategies carried out repeatedly, consistently, and purposefully has proven effective in enhancing children's abilities to care for themselves, follow rules, queue in an orderly manner, tidy up belongings, and take responsibility for daily activities without constant reliance on assistance from teachers or parents. Third, the teacher's role as a facilitator and role model is crucial to the strategy's success; teacher consistency in implementing these habits and active collaboration with parents are key factors in the program's effectiveness. Challenges identified include variations in family parenting styles affecting children's independence levels and a lack of optimal consistency in habituation practices between the school and home environments. Overall, the behavioral habituation method proves effective and relevant as a strategy for fostering independence in early childhood in a gradual and sustainable manner, while also making a tangible contribution to character education development in early childhood education institutions

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