

The Role of Parents in Instilling Discipline in Early Childhood within the Family Environment of Tanah Rata Village, Kajang District, Bulukumba Regency

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ABSTRACT

Discipline formation in early childhood, particularly at the ages of five to six, represents a critical stage in character development, where parents serve as the primary educators within the family. This study aimed to describe the parental role in instilling discipline, identify the parenting styles applied, and analyze the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing this process within the community context of Tanah Toa Village, Kajang District, Bulukumba Regency. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and documentation involving eight parent participants. The data were analyzed through stages of reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing, using source triangulation to ensure validity. The results revealed that parents have a central role in fostering discipline by modeling positive behavior, establishing consistent routines, and applying reinforcement aligned with cultural norms. Three main parenting styles emerged: authoritarian, permissive, and democratic, with the democratic style being the most conducive to promoting self-discipline and emo

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1) INTRODUCTION

Early childhood discipline is a fundamental aspect of behavioral development and moral formation. At the age of five to six, children are in a highly sensitive developmental period often referred to as the golden age, during which environmental influences play a decisive role in shaping their moral awareness, self-control, and independence. The rapid advancement of science and technology in today's globalized era has intensified the challenges of character education, particularly in family settings where children's exposure to external stimuli is difficult to regulate. Without consistent guidance from parents, children may easily lose direction and become susceptible to negative behavioral patterns or moral deviation. Hence, instilling discipline in early childhood is not only a pedagogical necessity but a social and ethical imperative for maintaining cultural and moral integrity amid modernization.

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Within the educational context, the family represents the primary and most influential environment for instilling discipline. Parents serve as the first educators, bearing the responsibility to guide, nurture, and model virtuous behavior. Indonesian legal frameworks, such as Law No. 23 of 2002 on Child Protection (amended by Law No. 35 of 2014) and Law No. 17 of 2022 on Education and Educational Services, emphasize parents' obligation to ensure children's education, protection, and moral development. These regulations align with global conventions, notably the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which underscores the right of children to holistic development within a supportive family environment. Thus, discipline rooted in parental involvement forms the foundation for moral and behavioral stability in children and strengthens their ability to adapt within broader social systems.

From a theoretical standpoint, discipline should not be perceived as coercion but as a continuous learning process that encourages internalized self-regulation. Baumrind's seminal framework on parenting styles identifies three major approaches authoritarian, permissive, and democratic each exerting distinct effects on children's behavioral outcomes (Baumrind, 1991). Authoritarian parents tend to emphasize obedience through rigid control, while permissive parents prioritize emotional warmth but may lack structure. Democratic parenting, however, integrates affection with reasonable control and dialogue, fostering responsibility and autonomy. Studies show that parents who model consistency and engage in open communication tend to raise children who are self-disciplined, cooperative, and confident, whereas inconsistent or overly harsh parenting often leads to defiance and low emotional resilience.

Despite broad recognition of the family's formative influence, empirical evidence indicates persistent gaps between parental ideals and everyday practice. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) highlights Japan's family-based discipline model as exemplary in cultivating children's independence through early responsibility in school and community life. Conversely, many Indonesian families face difficulties maintaining consistent disciplinary routines due to occupational demands, fragmented communication, or generational differences in parenting expectations. These challenges are further compounded in rural and traditional settings, where extended family structures and local customs mediate child-rearing practices. Consequently, understanding parental roles within culturally specific contexts such as indigenous societies becomes

essential for developing effective educational interventions that reconcile traditional values with modern expectations.

The central research problem addressed in this study concerns the extent to which parental roles determine the success of discipline formation among early childhood learners in rural communities, particularly in Tanah Toa Village, Kajang District, Bulukumba Regency. The overarching inquiry explores how parental patterns, consistency, and engagement affect children's moral and behavioral growth. In addressing this problem, the study adopts an interpretive-descriptive approach that foregrounds parents' lived experiences, cultural influences, and educational responsibilities. The general aim is to illuminate the mechanisms through which parents instill discipline in their children, the factors that facilitate or hinder this process, and how cultural heritage informs disciplinary practices in indigenous contexts.

The inquiry further hypothesizes that the effectiveness of discipline in early childhood is shaped not merely by behavioral correction but by the moral, emotional, and relational quality of parental interaction. In this regard, the study aligns with Bandura's social learning theory, which asserts that behavior is learned through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. The implication is that parental modelling more than verbal instruction constitutes the most potent source of moral learning. The research assumes that consistent, democratic, and culturally grounded parenting will result in more sustainable disciplinary habits and character development among children.

Previous scholarly efforts have explored related dimensions of this topic. Martsiswati & Suryono (2014) emphasize the complementary roles of parents and educators in fostering discipline through example and guidance, while Wulandari underscores that parental involvement correlates directly with academic success and emotional stability in children. The parental role within Islamic educational philosophy, asserting that parents bear both moral and spiritual responsibility for nurturing virtuous offspring. Chatib and Basruddin (2019) identify exemplary behavior and consistent routines as the most effective instruments for inculcating discipline, and Ruli (n.d.) stresses the indispensable role of parents as moral models in shaping children's attitudes and life skills. These studies collectively affirm that discipline formation begins at home and depends heavily on parental integrity, communication, and cultural congruence.

However, despite substantial literature, a significant research gap remains in understanding how indigenous parenting systems particularly in the Ammatoa Kajang community mediate the

development of disciplinary values. The Ammatoa people adhere to Pasang Ri-Kajang, a traditional code that governs moral behavior, environmental stewardship, and social order. Within this system, discipline is not framed as punitive but as moral alignment with communal and ecological harmony. Yet, few studies have examined how such indigenous philosophies interact with modern educational paradigms or how parents in these communities negotiate between traditional authority and contemporary educational ideals. This study, therefore, seeks to bridge that gap by exploring parental discipline practices in Tanah Toa within both cultural and educational dimensions.

The present research aims to achieve several objectives: first, to describe the roles parents play in instilling discipline among early childhood learners; second, to identify the specific parenting styles employed and their behavioral implications; and third, to analyze the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence disciplinary success within the community. The study's novelty lies in its integration of ethnopedagogical insights with psychological and educational frameworks, providing a culturally contextualized understanding of discipline as both a moral and social construct. It posits that the internal consistency of parental role modeling, coupled with harmonious family communication and cultural adherence, constitutes the primary determinant of children's moral discipline.

This research is justified by its potential to contribute to both theoretical discourse and practical policy. Theoretically, it expands current models of parenting and discipline by incorporating indigenous epistemologies into early childhood education. Practically, it provides culturally sensitive recommendations for parents, educators, and policymakers to strengthen family-based character education. Although the study does not formally propose a hypothesis due to its qualitative nature, it operates on the assumption that consistent and culturally grounded parenting fosters more disciplined, independent, and morally resilient children. The scope of this inquiry encompasses the socio-cultural and educational dynamics of families in Tanah Toa Village, offering insights that may be extrapolated to comparable rural or indigenous communities across Indonesia.

2) METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to provide an in-depth understanding of parental roles in instilling discipline among early childhood children within the Ammatoa traditional community in Tanah Toa Village, Kajang District, Bulukumba Regency. The qualitative descriptive method was selected for its suitability in exploring complex social and cultural phenomena that cannot

be adequately captured through quantitative approaches. This methodological choice aligns with ethnographic and phenomenological traditions in qualitative research, which prioritize rich, contextualized descriptions of human experiences (Creswell, 2013). Ethnography and participatory observation are particularly effective when examining parenting behaviors and disciplinary practices within traditional communities, as these methods enable researchers to immerse themselves in the field, observe natural interactions, and interpret parenting practices within their cultural contexts. Thus, this study emphasizes a holistic understanding of discipline as practiced and transmitted through local parenting norms, values, and behaviors.

The research was conducted in Tanah Toa Village, located within the Ammatoa Kajang customary area, Bulukumba Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. This community is renowned for its strong adherence to local customs (*adat*) and the Kajang philosophy of life, known as *Kamase-masea*, which promotes simplicity, mutual respect, and moral discipline. These cultural foundations make the Ammatoa community an ideal setting for examining how traditional parenting practices contribute to early childhood discipline formation. Conducting the research in such a culturally specific environment allows for an in-depth examination of how parenting values are intertwined with customary law, moral codes, and social expectations. Following ethnographic research traditions, prolonged engagement within the field was essential to build trust, ensure cultural sensitivity, and obtain authentic insights into daily parenting behaviors and disciplinary interactions.

Participants in this study comprised eight parents residing in Tanah Toa Village who have children aged between five and six years. These participants were selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability technique that focuses on individuals who possess specific knowledge relevant to the research objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015). The selection criteria included being a biological parent or guardian of a child in early childhood, actively involved in caregiving and discipline within the household, and recognized by the community as adhering to traditional parenting practices. To enrich the diversity of perspectives, snowball sampling was also employed, wherein initial informants recommended additional participants who met the study criteria (Naderifar et al., 2017). This approach facilitated access to participants who were otherwise less visible or difficult to reach, especially in a close-knit traditional community. Additionally, maximum variation sampling ensured representation of various socio-economic backgrounds and family structures to capture the nuanced dynamics influencing parenting and discipline (Rana et al., 2023). Combining these sampling techniques ensured

both depth and diversity of data, aligning with the principle of triangulation as discussed by Dinkel et al. (2021) and Williams et al. (2020), thereby enhancing the credibility of the study.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, focusing on parenting roles, disciplinary strategies, cultural beliefs, and daily routines. This method allowed parents to express their experiences and reasoning behind their practices (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). Interviews were recorded with participants' consent and later transcribed for analysis. The researcher engaged in participatory observation within the community, observing family interactions, children's behavior, and parental responses in natural settings. This approach aligns with the ethnographic emphasis on lived experience and contextual understanding (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). Observations captured both verbal and non-verbal cues essential to understanding disciplinary processes. Supporting documents such as local regulations, community teaching materials, and religious texts were reviewed to provide supplementary insights into the socio-cultural framework of discipline in the Ammatoa community.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), involving three concurrent activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During data reduction, transcripts and field notes were carefully examined to identify recurring themes and patterns related to parental roles, disciplinary strategies, and influencing factors. The categorized data were then organized into matrices and charts to facilitate systematic comparison and interpretation during the data display phase. Emerging themes were continuously refined and validated against the data until theoretical saturation was achieved through conclusion drawing and verification. This iterative process allowed for dynamic interaction between data and interpretation, ensuring that conclusions were grounded in empirical evidence.

To ensure credibility, dependability, and confirmability, the study employed multiple forms of triangulation. Data source triangulation involved gathering information from multiple participants across diverse family structures, enabling cross-validation of findings (Dinkel et al., 2021). Methodological triangulation was achieved by combining interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure that findings were corroborated across data types (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). Investigator triangulation through peer debriefing with academic advisors and fellow researchers reduced potential bias in data interpretation (Williams et al., 2020). Furthermore, theory

triangulation was applied by interpreting findings through both sociocultural and educational theoretical lenses, consistent with Carter et al. (2014), to enrich interpretative depth. Additional strategies to maintain trustworthiness included member checking, where participants reviewed transcribed data and interpretations to ensure accuracy (Williams et al., 2020), and thick description to provide contextual richness that enhances transferability (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). Reflexive journaling was maintained throughout the research process to acknowledge and mitigate researcher biases (Nottingham et al., 2017).

Ethical integrity was central to all research activities. Participants were fully informed about the purpose and procedures of the study before providing written or verbal consent. The researcher maintained confidentiality by anonymizing participant identities and ensuring that data were securely stored. Participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any point without consequence. Cultural sensitivity was prioritized throughout the research process, and engagement with community leaders and elders was conducted prior to fieldwork to gain approval and ensure respect for local customs, aligning with recommendations from (Shade et al., 2025). Data collection activities adhered to ethical principles outlined in the Indonesian National Research Ethics Guidelines. While the qualitative design allows for rich contextual insights, the small and purposively selected sample limits generalizability to other communities, and the findings should be interpreted as context-specific rather than universally representative. However, triangulation and member-checking procedures helped mitigate potential limitations and strengthen the validity of the study.

3) RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a) The Role of Parents in Instilling Discipline in Early Childhood

The research results show that parents play a central role in instilling discipline in early childhood in Tanah Toa Village, Kajang District, Bulukumba Regency. Parents function as the primary educators who instill the value of discipline through guidance, habituation, and role modeling. Field findings reveal that children are accustomed to engaging in routine activities such as washing their hands before and after eating, waking up early, throwing garbage in its proper place, and tidying up their toys after use. These habitual practices gradually shape disciplined behavior that becomes firmly embedded from an early age.

The role of parents in instilling discipline is reflected in three main aspects: (1) providing positive guidance toward children's behavior; (2) fostering disciplined habits in daily activities; and (3) serving as role models who act in accordance with the values they teach. Observations show that children who receive consistent guidance and positive examples from their parents are better able to regulate themselves and understand responsibility compared to those raised with inconsistent parenting patterns. This aligns with Bandura's social learning theory, which posits that children learn through observing and imitating significant figures in their lives.

These findings support previous studies that affirm the significant influence of active parental involvement in children's educational processes on character and discipline development Martsiswati & Suryono (2014) emphasized that parents serve as the primary motivators and facilitators in children's education, while Chatib & Basruddin (2019) added that role modeling is an effective method for teaching discipline through everyday actions. Thus, the role of parents in Tanah Toa Village is not only instructive but also reflects the social and religious values of the local community.

b) Parenting Styles in Instilling Discipline

The study identified three main parenting styles practiced by parents in Tanah Toa Village: authoritarian, permissive (tolerant), and democratic. The authoritarian style emphasizes absolute obedience to rules, often accompanied by punishment or strict reprimands. Children raised under this style tend to show high levels of compliance but are often reserved and lack self-confidence. The permissive style is characterized by tolerance and the absence of firm boundaries; parents rely more on advice and understanding, making children feel comfortable but often less aware of behavioral limits. The democratic style, on the other hand, combines control and warmth, encouraging open communication and giving children opportunities to express their opinions.

Based on interview results, the democratic parenting style proved to be the most effective in shaping children's discipline. Children from democratic families demonstrated disciplined behavior without feeling pressured and showed better social and emotional competence. This style aligns with (Baumrind, 1991) concept of *authoritative parenting*, where a balance between authority and warmth encourages children to internalize values of discipline and responsibility. This finding is also consistent with Halpenny et al. (2010), who stated that parenting styles that address children's emotional needs foster more positive and stable disciplined behavior.

In the cultural context of the Ammatoa community in Tanah Toa Village, local values such as respect for parents, simplicity, and adherence to customary traditions strengthen the implementation of democratic parenting. The integration of local cultural values with modern parenting principles makes the process of instilling discipline more relevant and effective within the community's social context.

c) Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Instilling Discipline

The research findings indicate that the supporting factors in fostering discipline include: (1) parental role modeling and consistency; (2) cooperative support from the extended family; and (3) a conducive social environment. Parents who demonstrate disciplined behavior in their daily lives serve as role models for their children. In addition, mutual understanding among fathers, mothers, and other family members strengthens the implementation of household rules.

Conversely, the inhibiting factors include: (1) inconsistency in enforcing rules by parents; (2) differences in parenting styles among family members; and (3) an unsupportive social environment. Some parents, as expressed by informants Puang Marni and Puang Holong, stated that excessive indulgence from grandparents often weakens the enforcement of discipline. This situation reflects intergenerational challenges as explained by Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, in which interactions among layers of the family microsystem can create inconsistencies in parenting patterns.

d) Relationship Between Findings and Empirical Literature

The findings of this study reinforce empirical evidence that parents are the primary agents in shaping children's discipline (Gershoff, 2002; Devlin et al. 2018). In the context of Tanah Toa Village, the application of democratic parenting integrated with local cultural values demonstrates that universal parenting principles can be adapted to social and cultural contexts. Research by Sondhi & Indumanthy (2025) affirms that non-punitive parenting practices passed down across generations contribute to the development of sustainable disciplined behavior. Furthermore, studies by Shukla et al. (2024) and Fitri et al. (2025) show that daily routines, such as maintaining cleanliness and punctuality, help children internalize the value of discipline.

In terms of success indicators, observations of children's behavior in Tanah Toa Village reveal that consistently taught discipline leads to improvements in compliance, responsibility, and self-

regulation findings consistent with Feldman & Klein (2003) and Karreman et al. (2006), who found a positive relationship between parental warmth and children's self-regulation abilities.

e) Synthesis and Research Implications

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the success of instilling discipline in early childhood is strongly influenced by the active role of parents, the appropriateness of parenting styles, and the support of family and social environments. The democratic parenting style, which combines control and affection, proved to be the most effective within the context of the Tanah Toa community. This success is further supported by consistent role modeling and the application of local cultural values that emphasize collective responsibility and respect for rules.

The practical implication of this study is the need to raise parental awareness about the importance of early discipline through family and community education programs. Culturally based interventions, as recommended by (McIllduff, n.d.) and Shanley et al. (2024), can serve as effective strategies to harmonize traditional values with modern child development principles. Thus, this study not only contributes theoretically to the field of early childhood parenting research but also offers a practical foundation for strengthening the family's role in children's character education.

The findings of this study reveal that parents play a decisive role in shaping early childhood discipline through consistent modeling, guidance, and reinforcement within the family structure. The results from Desa Tanah Toa demonstrate that the family serves as a fundamental arena for instilling behavioral norms that later influence children's social, moral, and academic development. This finding aligns with the perspective that discipline is not merely about control but about creating meaningful learning experiences that foster self-regulation and responsibility. As observed, the parents' efforts to integrate daily routines, moral values, and cultural teachings reflect a deeply rooted indigenous pedagogy that emphasizes learning by example and community involvement. This supports the argument that family-based education is a vital foundation for early childhood development, particularly in rural or traditional societies where cultural norms strongly shape social behavior.

The parenting styles observed authoritarian, permissive, and democratic reflect Baumrind's theoretical framework, which outlines the spectrum of parental control and responsiveness. While authoritarian parenting in Desa Tanah Toa ensured compliance through strict rules and sanctions, it often limited children's autonomy and confidence. Conversely, permissive approaches fostered

emotional security but risked producing inconsistency in rule adherence. The democratic model emerged as the most effective, harmonizing structure with empathy and open communication. This resonates with Worthman et al. (2016), who emphasize democratic parenting as conducive to developing critical thinking and self-discipline. Furthermore, it echoes (Trisetiawati et al., 2025), who argue that ethnoparenting rooted in cultural wisdom enhances emotional maturity by balancing affection and boundaries. Thus, the study supports the notion that culturally adaptive and democratic parenting can successfully promote discipline without undermining children's independence.

These findings also reinforce the insights from Mehmood et al. (2025) regarding the integration of indigenous cultural practices in early childhood education. In Desa Tanah Toa, discipline is not an isolated behavioral goal but part of a holistic system that involves the entire community. Parents, elders, and extended family collaboratively shape the child's character through consistent routines and collective supervision, reflecting a communal approach similar to indigenous models globally. Such integration of cultural heritage and social learning underscores the interdependence between local wisdom and formal education, offering a practical example of how early childhood education can honor cultural identities while fostering modern developmental competencies. The observed parental strategies, which blend traditional values with adaptive parenting, reveal an implicit curriculum of respect, cooperation, and accountability embedded within community life.

However, the study also uncovers several inhibiting factors that complicate discipline formation. Internal challenges such as inconsistent role modeling and conflicting parenting approaches within extended families often dilute the effectiveness of parental guidance. These findings align with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, suggesting that inconsistencies across the microsystem and mesosystem can create confusion in children's behavioral expectations. Similarly, external influences such as peer groups and technological exposure, may disrupt children's focus and adherence to family norms if not mediated by strong parental presence. These contextual constraints reveal that discipline cannot be sustained solely through rule enforcement but must be supported by coherence and communication among family members and the broader community.

The research thus extends the literature on culturally embedded parenting by illustrating how indigenous communities operationalize values of respect and obedience through everyday interactions. It also highlights the importance of parental consistency and the reinforcement of positive behaviors, as supported by Bandura's social learning theory. When children observe

disciplined behavior modeled by parents, they internalize those values through imitation and reinforcement. This process of observational learning complements formal education by embedding moral discipline within the lived experiences of the child. Consequently, the parental role transcends individual instruction, becoming a moral compass that guides social integration and emotional regulation.

In a broader context, the findings contribute to global discourse on the relationship between cultural heritage and modern early childhood education. The study supports the literature statement that insights from indigenous parenting can significantly inform early childhood education policy by offering culturally responsive frameworks that value identity, community, and collaboration. Yet, as Wahyuningsih (2017) and Reza (2020) emphasize, more empirical work is needed to examine how these cultural dimensions can be systematically incorporated into educational curricula. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of indigenous-based parenting on children's socio-emotional outcomes and evaluate how these approaches can be adapted within contemporary educational systems. In conclusion, the case of Desa Tanah Toa demonstrates that the intersection of tradition and education forms a dynamic space for cultivating discipline that is both culturally rooted and developmentally sound, reaffirming the enduring relevance of parental guidance as the cornerstone of moral and behavioral education.

4) CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that parental involvement plays a crucial role in shaping early childhood discipline through consistent guidance, positive reinforcement, and exemplary behavior within a harmonious family environment. Among the identified parenting styles authoritarian, permissive, and democratic the democratic approach proved most effective in cultivating discipline without undermining the child's autonomy. The success of discipline formation is supported by both internal factors, such as consistent parental role modeling, and external factors, including community and cultural support. Conversely, internal inconsistencies and differing parenting views among family members can hinder discipline development. The main contribution of this study lies in highlighting the interdependence between parenting consistency, local cultural values, and children's character formation in rural communities. These findings expand the discourse in early childhood education by demonstrating how discipline is culturally situated and socially reinforced. Future research could

explore comparative analyses between traditional and urban parenting contexts or investigate the integration of local wisdom into early childhood character education frameworks.

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