



The Role of Daily Routines in Fostering Independence among Children Aged 4–5 Years

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Abstract

Independence is an essential aspect of early childhood development as it supports children's ability to regulate themselves, make simple decisions, and take responsibility for their surroundings. This study aims to analyze the role of daily routines in fostering independence among children aged 4–5 years in a kindergarten setting. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation involving children aged 4–5 years, classroom teachers, and the school principal. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while data trustworthiness was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings revealed that consistently implemented daily routines provided opportunities for children to develop various aspects of independence, including active participation in school activities, the ability to complete tasks without assistance, responsibility for using and organizing learning materials, independence during mealtimes, and emotional self-management. Routine activities such as lining up, praying together, washing hands, eating together, and tidying up learning materials served as effective habituation practices in fostering independent behavior. The findings highlight that daily routines play an important role in supporting the development of independence in early childhood, with consistent habituation and teacher guidance serving as key factors in their effectiveness. This study suggests that integrating daily routines into learning activities can be an effective strategy for strengthening children's independence in early childhood education settings.

INTRODUCTION

The development of independence is one of the essential aspects of early childhood education because it is closely related to children's ability to perform various activities independently, make simple decisions, and take responsibility for themselves and their surroundings. At the age of 4–5 years, children experience a period of rapid development in motor, cognitive, and socio-emotional domains, requiring appropriate stimulation to support their optimal growth and development

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(Al-Mahiroh & Suyadi, 2020). Independence is not limited to self-care skills but also encompasses the ability to regulate behavior, complete simple tasks, solve problems, and manage emotions in various situations. Children who are provided with opportunities to develop independence from an early age tend to be better prepared to meet the learning demands of subsequent educational levels. Therefore, early childhood education plays an important role in providing learning experiences that support the development of these competencies (Engkizar Engkizar et al., 2026; M et al., 2026).

In the context of modern education, fostering independence has become increasingly important as social changes and technological advancements require individuals to adapt and manage themselves effectively from an early age. Children who are accustomed to carrying out activities independently generally demonstrate greater self-confidence and are more capable of completing tasks without relying entirely on adult assistance (Wardani et al., 2021). Early childhood education settings serve as strategic environments for cultivating these abilities because children learn through direct experiences. Through systematically designed activities, children can learn to recognize responsibilities and develop positive habits that support the growth of independence (Bai et al., 2023; Hanifah & Farida, 2023).

One of the strategies commonly implemented in early childhood education to promote independence is the use of daily routines. Daily routines provide children with opportunities to engage in structured and repetitive activities, thereby fostering habits that support independent behavior. Activities such as storing school bags in designated places, washing hands before and after meals, tidying up learning materials, and eating independently can serve as habituation practices that help children understand responsibility for themselves and their surroundings (Wahidah et al., 2022). Consistent repetition of these activities enables children to understand what needs to be done without continuously relying on teachers' instructions. Consequently, daily routines can become an important component of the learning process that supports the development of children's independence (Dozan & Fitriani, 2020).

The implementation of daily routines is closely associated with the role of teachers as facilitators and guides in the learning process. Teachers are responsible for providing examples, guidance, and positive reinforcement when children attempt to perform tasks independently. During the initial stages, some children may still require assistance and direction in carrying out routine activities. However, through appropriate and consistent support, children can develop the confidence needed to perform various activities independently (Slamet, 2020). Furthermore, teachers need to create a supportive learning environment that allows daily routines to be implemented consistently and become an integral part of children's learning experiences (Daud et al., 2023).

Daily routines also contribute to helping children understand the structure of activities within the school environment. Children who are accustomed to following a regular schedule tend to adapt more easily to classroom rules and learning procedures. A consistent activity structure can help children recognize when an activity begins and ends, thereby supporting the development of self-regulation and discipline (Perry et al., 2023). In line with the principles of early childhood development, repeated habituation is considered an effective approach to fostering positive behaviors in everyday life. Therefore, daily routines are often regarded as an important component of early childhood education practices (Nurhidayah & Slamet, 2024).

Previous studies have indicated that daily routines are associated with the development of independence among young children. Children who consistently participate in daily routines tend to demonstrate stronger abilities in self-care, managing personal belongings, and fulfilling simple responsibilities appropriate to their developmental stage (Fitriani et al., 2025). Through routines, children learn to understand the consequences of their actions, such as the importance of tidying up toys after use or maintaining the cleanliness of eating utensils. In addition, routines help children adapt to the school environment because activities are organized in a structured and repetitive manner (Fitriani et al., 2025).

Although numerous studies have highlighted the importance of daily routines in supporting the development of independence among young children, most of them have primarily focused on the outcomes of habituation. Further investigation is needed to understand how daily routines are implemented in everyday learning activities and how these

processes support various dimensions of independence among children aged 4–5 years. Moreover, differences in learning environments across educational institutions may result in variations in the implementation of routines and the forms of independence developed by children. Therefore, research examining the implementation of daily routines in fostering independence among young children remains relevant and necessary.

The kindergarten selected as the research site implements daily routines as an integral part of its learning process. These routines are carried out from the moment children arrive at school until the conclusion of daily activities. Preliminary observations revealed that some children had already demonstrated independent behaviors, such as placing their shoes in designated areas, returning learning materials after use, and eating without assistance. However, other children still required guidance in performing some of these activities. This condition indicates that children's levels of independence vary and require particular attention within the learning process.

The daily routines implemented at the research site include activities such as lining up, praying together, maintaining personal hygiene, eating together, and tidying up materials after use. These activities are designed in accordance with the developmental characteristics of children aged 4–5 years, who are in a crucial phase of developing independent behavior (Yuliana & Oktavianti, 2021). In addition, the school's social environment provides opportunities for children to interact with their peers, enabling them to learn cooperation, follow rules, and regulate their behavior in various learning situations (Gunawan et al., 2018).

Differences in children's levels of independence may be influenced by various factors, including prior learning experiences, habituation practices within the family environment, and individual characteristics (Nurhayati et al., 2020). Children who are accustomed to carrying out activities independently at home generally adapt more easily to routines implemented at school. In contrast, children who are still highly dependent on adult assistance often require more time and intensive support. Therefore, teachers need to apply strategies that accommodate the developmental needs of each child to ensure that the habituation process is implemented effectively (Sulastri et al., 2020).

This study is important because it seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how daily routines are implemented within learning activities and how these routines contribute to the development of independence among children aged 4–5 years. In addition to contributing to the body of knowledge in early childhood education, the findings are expected to serve as a basis for teachers to reflect upon and improve habituation practices that are aligned with children's developmental needs (Adelia et al., 2025). Furthermore, this study is expected to enrich understanding of educational practices that support the development of independent character from an early age (Lestari, 2020).

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study focuses on how daily routines are implemented in learning activities and how these routines contribute to the development of independence among children aged 4–5 years. Accordingly, the objective of this study is to describe the implementation of daily routines and analyze their role in supporting children's ability to regulate themselves, take initiative, and complete tasks independently as part of their overall development of independence in early childhood.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was selected because it enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of daily routines and their role in fostering independence among children aged 4–5 years within a natural learning context (Denny & Weckesser, 2022). The study was conducted in a kindergarten that implements daily routines as an integral part of its learning activities. Data collection was carried out during regular school activities, allowing the researcher to observe the implementation of daily routines as they naturally occurred without altering the children's usual activities. Through the case study design, this research sought to understand the phenomenon contextually by considering the specific circumstances and environment in which it took place (Bingham, 2023; Engkizar Engkizar et al., 2026).

The participants consisted of children aged 4–5 years, classroom teachers, and the school principal, all of whom were directly involved in the implementation of daily routines. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to examine children's independent behaviors during various routine activities at school. Interviews were used to obtain information regarding the implementation of daily routines and the perspectives of teachers and the school principal concerning the development of children's independence. In addition, documentation in the form of activity photographs, daily schedules, and other supporting documents was used to complement and strengthen the data obtained from observations and interviews (Engkizar et al., 2024; Kassymova et al., 2025). The research instruments consisted of observation and interview guidelines developed based on indicators of early childhood independence (Wahidah et al., 2022).

Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Akinyode & Khan, 2018). Data reduction involved selecting and focusing on information relevant to the implementation of daily routines and the development of children's independence. The reduced data were then presented in the form of descriptive narratives to facilitate interpretation. Subsequently, conclusions were drawn gradually and continuously throughout the research process. The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through methodological and source triangulation by comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation, as well as cross-checking data collected from teachers, the school principal, and children (Denzin, 2017). These procedures were undertaken to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Daily Routines

The implementation of daily routines in the classroom began as soon as the children arrived at school. The first observable activity was entering the classroom in an orderly and organized manner, during which the teacher provided brief instructions while ensuring that each child entered the classroom safely. This routine helped establish early discipline and readiness for learning (Sari, 2021). Furthermore, the practice of entering the classroom in an orderly sequence assisted children in understanding boundaries and responsibilities from the beginning of the school day (Misrida et al., 2024).

After entering the classroom, the children were guided to line up and pray together. Lining up not only helped create order but also encouraged children to develop patience and respect for taking turns (Fitriani et al., 2025). Meanwhile, prayer formed part of character and spiritual development by fostering gratitude and mental preparedness before beginning learning activities (Shirley et al., 2025). This practice also contributed to a positive emotional atmosphere, enabling the learning process to proceed more effectively.

The routine continued with handwashing and shared mealtime activities, which formed part of healthy living habits. Teachers consistently guided children to wash their hands properly as an introduction to health education from an early age. Shared meals also provided opportunities to learn social etiquette, such as sharing, waiting in line, and maintaining cleanliness while eating (Febrianti, 2021).

After meals, children were guided to clean up their eating utensils, organize learning and play materials, and return them to their designated places. This practice contributed to the development of independence, responsibility, and concern for the surrounding environment. Overall, the implementation of daily routines was carried out systematically and consistently. Teachers served as role models by demonstrating

appropriate behaviors and providing guidance, ensuring that all activities were conducted in accordance with the intended learning objectives (Ali, 2016).

Observed Independent Behaviors of Children

The observations indicated that children gradually became capable of managing personal tasks independently, such as washing their hands, organizing personal belongings, and preparing learning materials without constantly relying on teacher assistance. These abilities represent important indicators of independence, reflecting children's capacity to manage themselves in everyday activities (Schaack et al., 2020). Moreover, self-care skills developed through school routines contributed to increased self-confidence and independent behavior (de Leeuw et al., 2015).

In terms of social development, children demonstrated the ability to make simple decisions, such as choosing play activities, selecting learning materials, or deciding where to sit. Decision-making is an important component of cognitive development that should be stimulated from an early age, as it helps children develop confidence and the ability to consider alternatives (Warne et al., 2016). When children are given opportunities to make choices, they learn to recognize their own preferences and understand the consequences of their decisions.

Independence was also reflected in children's sense of responsibility toward learning materials and the classroom environment. Children routinely cleaned up toys after use, returned stationery to its proper place, and took care of classroom belongings. Responsibility for materials not only demonstrated basic organizational skills but also supported the development of discipline and environmental awareness.

During mealtime activities, children demonstrated independence by opening their lunch boxes, using eating utensils appropriately, and finishing their meals with minimal guidance from teachers (Öpengin & Sezerel, 2023). In addition, emotional independence was observed through children's ability to manage emotions in simple ways, such as calming themselves after crying, asking for help when encountering difficulties, and expressing feelings appropriately to teachers and peers. These abilities represent important aspects of socio-emotional development because they support self-regulation and positive social interactions. The findings indicate that children were beginning to understand situations, regulate their responses, and express themselves more appropriately.

Changes Observed During the Study

During the study, an increase in children's engagement in classroom routines was observed, particularly in following the established sequence of activities such as lining up, praying together, and preparing learning materials. Children who had previously been less active began to show greater interest and participation in various activities. This finding is consistent with previous studies suggesting that routines can enhance children's sense of security and engagement in the learning process (Anggraini, 2024). Such engagement was further supported by the consistent implementation of routines, enabling children to understand expectations and gradually adjust their behavior over time (Rujiah et al., 2023).

Changes were also observed in children's ability to complete tasks independently, both in individual and group activities. Children who initially required assistance in various activities became capable of completing simple tasks such as pasting, drawing, organizing materials, and finishing games without continuous guidance. This development suggests that routines provided opportunities for children to understand and carry out activity sequences more independently (Solihah & Faizin, 2021). As children became accustomed to consistent activity patterns, they demonstrated greater confidence in completing assigned tasks (Noviyanti & Wahyuningsih, 2024).

Another noticeable change was observed in children's discipline, particularly in following classroom rules, waiting for their turn, and maintaining order during

activities. Children became more organized in returning materials to their designated places, following meal schedules, and returning to their seats after completing activities. These findings suggest that consistent habituation contributes to the development of disciplined behavior and self-control among young children (Febriani et al., 2022; Novia & Rachmawati, 2025; Voronova et al., 2018).

The Role of Daily Routines in Developing Children's Independence

The findings indicate that daily routines play an important role in fostering independence among children aged 4–5 years. Activities that are carried out consistently provide opportunities for children to repeat, understand, and internalize independent behaviors. Routines such as lining up, praying, washing hands, eating together, and tidying up materials provide a structured framework that helps children understand what needs to be done without constantly relying on teacher guidance. As routines are implemented regularly, children learn to recognize patterns of activities and gradually become capable of regulating their own actions. This process was reflected in improvements in self-care skills, task completion, and adherence to classroom rules.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings are consistent with Montessori's view regarding the importance of the prepared environment and repetitive activities as means of fostering independence. Montessori argued that children learn most effectively when provided with opportunities to engage in meaningful activities within a structured environment. The routines implemented at the kindergarten offered children repeated opportunities to practice practical skills, thereby supporting the development of independence.

The findings are also consistent with Erikson's psychosocial development theory, particularly the stage of autonomy versus shame and doubt. At this stage, children require opportunities to perform activities independently in order to develop a sense of competence and self-confidence. Daily routines provided children with opportunities to try, make mistakes, correct their actions, and eventually succeed in completing tasks independently.

When compared with previous studies, the findings support evidence suggesting that routines are associated with the development of children's independence. Earlier studies have shown that repetitive activities such as shared meals, organizing materials, and following classroom schedules can support self-regulation, responsibility, and discipline. The present findings further demonstrate that routines not only help children become more organized but also support task completion skills and emotional independence, such as self-soothing and seeking assistance appropriately.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The findings identified several factors that supported the development of independence through daily routines. These included teachers' consistency in implementing routines, a structured learning environment, parental cooperation, and the availability of facilities and resources that supported learning activities. Among these factors, teacher consistency emerged as particularly important because young children tend to learn through modeling and repeated experiences provided by educators (Janah et al., 2025; Rahmatullah et al., 2021).

On the other hand, several factors were found to hinder the development of independence through daily routines. These included differences in children's characteristics, environmental readiness, time constraints, and home habits that were not always aligned with the routines practiced at school. Children who were not accustomed to performing tasks independently at home generally required a longer period of adjustment to the routines implemented at school.

Implications for Early Childhood Education

The findings suggest that daily routines function not only as a means of

organizing daily activities but also as a learning strategy that supports the development of independence in early childhood. Therefore, teachers should design routines that are consistent, meaningful, and appropriate to children's developmental stages. Schools should also provide learning environments that enable children to engage in activities independently, such as accessible storage areas, safe learning materials, and opportunities for children to participate actively in everyday activities. Collaboration between schools and parents should also be strengthened to ensure that the habits developed at school are reinforced at home. Through continuity between school-based and home-based practices, the development of children's independence can be supported more effectively and sustainably.

CONCLUSION

This study indicates that the implementation of daily routines in the kindergarten serving as the research site contributed to the development of independence among children aged 4–5 years. Consistently practiced routines, such as lining up, praying together, washing hands, eating together, and tidying up materials, provided opportunities for children to develop self-care skills, make simple decisions, complete tasks, and manage their emotions more independently. In addition, daily routines supported the development of discipline, responsibility, and orderly participation in learning activities.

The findings also suggest that teachers played an important role in the implementation of daily routines through guidance, assistance, and role modeling, which helped children understand and practice independent behaviors. The consistent implementation of routines, supported by a conducive learning environment, provided meaningful learning experiences that fostered children's independence in accordance with their developmental stage. Therefore, daily routines may be regarded as a learning strategy that supports the development of independence in early childhood.

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