

# How Are Parents Disciplining Their Preschool Children?

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## Abstract

The way parents disciplining their children become a hot issue in parenting practices, viewed from the aftereffect of disciplining. The purpose of this study was to investigate types of parents' disciplining behaviour on their preschool children. Participants were assessed using Dimension of Discipline Inventory (DDI, form P) with some modifications. Fifty six mothers and eight fathers with children from 3-6 y.o were participated in this study. The age range of participants is from 27 y.o until 46 y.o (mean = 35 y.o). The participants' level of education was varied from High School to Doctoral, with various ethnic backgrounds. Survey method was used in this study. They completed a demographic form and were asked about parents responsibility in disciplining their children behaviour by children that parents perceived as undesirable behaviour and needed to be changed (both minor and serious), and discipline behaviours they used. Participants' answers were recorded and categorized, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The answers of scale items were counted and grouped into 9 discipline method scales: corporal punishment, psychological aggression, diversion, explain/teach, reward, deprivation of privileges, penalty task and restorative behaviour, ignore misbehaviour and monitoring; and also into 4 factors of higher order: aggressive discipline, positive discipline, penalty, and supervision. The result showed that most of participants shared responsibility equally with the other parent. Children behaviours that perceived as minor by parents are like hard to wake up in the morning and do not like to tidy up after playing, and children behaviours that perceived as serious are like hitting, lying, and throwing things. From four types of disciplining behaviour, most of participants used positive discipline, followed by supervision, penalty, and last is aggressive discipline.

**Keywords:** parents, discipline method, misbehaviour, preschool children

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Parents become the main individual for their children (Farokhzad, 2015). In order to make their children socialize well, mother and father teach them how to act properly based on norms in their society. Baumrind and Thompson (2002, in Nixon & Halpenny, 2010) explained that through discipline, parents try to induce children to behave in accordance with parental standards of appropriate behaviour, and make child disciplinary practices become a necessary part of child-rearing (Zottis, et al., 2014).

As younger children enter their phase of exploring their world, with limited cognitive processes, sometimes they do what parents do not want them to do. According to Piaget's cognitive theory, children aged 3-6 years old are in

preoperative stage (Santrock, 2011). Children find it difficult to differentiate the reason behind events (Santrock, 2011; Trumbull, 2007), besides that, they are still focused on their own perspective (egocentrism). What parents need to do is to direct child's behaviour into what they expected by correcting child's undesirable behaviour.

Disciplining has influence to children's development, the way parents imposing discipline methods will impact to children's behaviour when they are older. Some researchers also noted that the intervention will be more successful if it is given to the younger ones (Dishion & Patterson, 1992; Kazdin, 1987, 1993, in Arnold, McWilliams, & Arnold, 1998).

Taking correction is needed not only to respond child's misbehaviour, but also to encourage desired child's behaviour (Socolar, 1997). This phenomenon can be seen easily in our daily lives. Parents tend to react in various ways as soon as their children

misbehave; such as yelling, ignoring, advising, warning, spanking, and many more, depend on the misbehaviour itself.

Some discipline methods which involve physical punishment to get compliance immediately were associated with increased aggression, delinquent and antisocial behaviour in children (Gershoff, 2002, in Fung & Lau, 2009). This kind of methods is not necessary to be used if we notice the negative effect later on. A cultural stereotype comes up with an idea that Asians use corporal punishment very frequently and believe in its effectiveness (Shan, Hawkins, & Whee, 2006).

There are so many discipline techniques that parents can do to correct children's behaviour. Straus and Fauchier (2013) formed 9 discipline method scales which can be grouped into 4 factors of higher order for each parental figure, which are corporal punishment and psychological aggression into aggressive discipline; diversion, explain/teach, and reward scale into positive discipline; deprivation of privileges and penalty task and restorative behaviour into penalty; and ignore misbehaviour and monitoring into supervision. This research was conducted to find out what methods that parents usually use in order to discipline their children by DDI.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers tried to define discipline in many ways; Nixon and Halpenny (2010) defined discipline as teaching processes about proper behaviours, values, and norms in society to children. Through discipline, children are expected to be more aware about limitation on how they behave, what behaviour that can be accepted, and how they can relate to their world (Smith, 2004).

Straus and Fauchier (2013) emphasized an aspect of disciplining according to Socolar (1997) that is corrective discipline. Corrective discipline itself is behaviour by parents in response to, and intended to correct, perceived misbehaviour by a child. Nine discipline methods of corrective discipline can be reduced into 4 factors as mentioned before.

Furthermore, misbehaviour is defined as behaviour by a child that parent perceives as undesirable and needs to be changed, both child's behaviour that parent wants child to cease, or something the child does not do what parents want them to do (Straus & Fauchier, 2013). Refers to child development stages by Santrock (2011), children aged 3-6 years old are in preschool stage. With cognitive limitation and still developing,

somehow whether child's behaviour can be identified as misbehaviour is still arguable.

## 3 METHOD

### 3.1 Variable

Variable used in this research was corrective discipline, which refers to behaviour by parents in response to, and intended to correct, perceived behaviour as undesirable by a child (Straus & Fauchier, 2013). This variable was measured by Dimension of Discipline Inventory (DDI) form P.

### 3.2 Participants

Characteristic of the population was parents of children aged 3-6 years old. The sampling method of was using non-probability sampling; in this research we used accidental sampling. Total participants are 64 people, consisted of different proportion of mothers and fathers. Some participants completed the questionnaire via online questionnaire and others were recruited in kindergarten in Bandung using paper and pencil form. The distribution of the number of participants on the basis of gender, educational background, and ethnic background are given below:

Table 1. Distribution of the participants on the basis of gender

Gender	Number of Participant	Percentage
Mother	56	87.5%
Father	8	12.5%
Total	64	100%

Table 2. Distribution of the participants on the basis of educational background

Educational Background	Number of Participant
Junior High School	1
Senior High School	2
D1/D2/D3	2

Table 2. Cont.

S1	45
S2	12
S3	1
Total	63

Table 3. Distribution of the participants on the basis of ethnic background

Ethnic Background	Percent of Participant
Sunda	34%
Jawa	28%
Indonesia	14%
Batak	5%
Tionghua	5%
Minang	3%
Bali	1.5%
Betawi	1.5%
Bugis	1.5%
Flores	1.5%
Mandar	1.5%
Medan	1.5%
Pontianak	1.5%
Total	100%

### 3.3 Measures

Dimension of Discipline Inventory, form P (DDI-form P) by Straus and Fauchier (2013) were translated into Indonesian context of questionnaire, referred to 4 stages of adaptation (Purwono, 2010). With this measurement, researchers have discovered about participants' responsibility in disciplining their children, behaviour by children that parents

perceived as undesirable behaviour and needed to be changed, both minor and serious, and 9 discipline methods used by parents in disciplining their children.

Some modifications were done on how participants fill in the questionnaire. Participants completed the 26 items questionnaire about discipline behaviour which they used, with the following answer choices: 0 = never, 1 = not in that year, but in another year, 2 = 1–2 times in that year, 3 = 3–5 times in that year, 4 = 3–6 times in that year, 5 = monthly (10 to 14 times in that year), 6 = a few times a month (2–3 times a month), 7 = weekly (1–2 times a week), 8 = several times a week (3–4 times), 9 = daily (5 or more times a week), and 10 = two or more times a day.

### 3.4 Result

In order to discipline their children, most parent shared responsibility equally with child's other parent (46%). Somehow, from 8 fathers who answered this question, 4 of them (50%) had more responsibility to discipline their children than child's other parent.

Children have shown misbehaviour in many ways and sometimes what parents perceived as misbehaviour may differ from one another. Some of children's misbehaviours that parent perceived as minor of their child around age 3-6 years old are some behaviour when eating and taking a bath, hard to get up, did not organize their toys after playing with it, easily to get angry. Misbehaviour that parents perceived as serious are hitting, throwing something, and disobeying.

Table 4. Data of 4 factors of higher order for each parental figure and 9 method scales

Factor	Mean (SD)	Method	Mean (SD)	Mean (Child)	
				Male (n=32)	Female (n=32)
Positive Discipline	5.91 (10.58)	Explain/teach	7.43 (3.96)	6.61	7.25
		Reward	6.15 (5.32)	5.93	6.38
		Diversion	4.04 (4.36)	3.97	4.12
Supervision	4.91 (7.24)	Monitoring	5.48 (5.58)	5.64	5.33
		Ignore misbehavior	4.33 (4.48)	4.72	3.94
Penalty	3.24 (10.60)	Penalty task and restorative behaviour	4.17 (6.93)	3.98	4.36
		Deprivation of privileges	2.54 (5.99)	2.58	2.51
Aggressive Discipline	1.61 (9.70)	Psychological Aggression	2.60 (7.15)	2.77	2.44
		Corporal punishment	0.63 (3.55)	0.69	0.56

To explore parent practices in disciplining their children, the results were shown in table 4 above. Mostly parent used positive discipline ( $\mu=5.91$ ,  $SD=10.58$ ), followed by supervision ( $\mu=4.91$ ,  $SD=7.24$ ), penalty ( $\mu=3.24$ ,  $SD=10.60$ ), and aggressive discipline ( $\mu=1.61$ ,  $SD=9.70$ ). A method parent often use to direct misbehaviour is by explaining/teaching their child as we can see by the mean score (7.43,  $SD=3.96$ ) in the table of the usage of 9 methods. We also found how parent discipline their child by distinguish the child's gender. The usage of explain/teach ( $\mu=7.25$ ) mostly done to their daughter, same as reward ( $\mu=6.38$ ), diversion ( $\mu=4.12$ ), and penalty task and restorative behaviour ( $\mu=4.36$ ). In the other hand, parent mostly use corporal punishment ( $\mu=0.69$ ) and psychological aggression ( $\mu=2.77$ ) to their son, and also monitoring ( $\mu=5.64$ ), ignore misbehaviour ( $\mu=4.72$ ), and deprivation of privileges ( $\mu=2.58$ ).

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

Our findings showed the usage of each discipline methods. Parent often used positive discipline to direct child's behaviour, followed by supervision, penalty, and the last was aggressive discipline. Even though the number of aggressive discipline was low, but there were some parents who still used this kind of methods to discipline their children. Regarding to negative impact of these methods, a concern that parents should minimize these methods is needed.

For further studies, it is important to investigate more the antecedent that affecting parents to keep using aggressive discipline (both corporal punishment and psychological aggression), which means the misbehaviour itself or others factors that come not only from the child (behaviour, intensity, frequency, etc.), but also external factors (principle, culture, belief, etc.).

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