

The Construction of Early Childhood Responsibility in Recognizing Personal Needs through Toilet Training Habits in Early Childhood Education Institutions (PAUD)

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: April 30, 2026

Revised: May 19, 2026

Accepted: May 23, 2026

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.52970/grdis.v6i3.2252>

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the development of responsibility in early childhood in recognizing their own needs through the habituation of toilet training in early childhood education institutions. The study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method conducted on 10 children aged 4–5 years at TK Negeri Pembina, Pringkuku District. Data were collected through observations and interviews with the principal, teachers, and parents. The data were analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, supported by source and technique triangulation. The results show that structured and consistent toilet training can develop children's responsibility in recognizing their own needs. Children begin to demonstrate the ability to recognize bodily signals, express their needs, and independently go to the toilet. Supporting factors include teacher consistency, a conducive environment, and collaboration with parents. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors include differences in parenting styles and a lack of consistency in habituation at home. Therefore, toilet training not only plays a role in fostering independence but also serves as an effective means of building responsibility in early childhood.

Keywords: Responsibility, Childhood, Self-Requirements, Habitual, Toilet Training.

I. Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a crucial stage in shaping children's character, independence, and sense of responsibility. At this stage, children experience rapid development that requires appropriate stimulation, particularly in their ability to recognize and fulfill their own needs. This ability does not emerge instantly but is formed through consistent habituation processes, both in the family environment and in educational institutions. One important form of habituation in early childhood is toilet training. Toilet training is the process of teaching children to control urination and defecation independently in appropriate places. This process is not only related to physical skills but also involves children's cognitive, emotional, and social development in understanding their bodily needs. Through this habituation, children learn to recognize bodily signals, make decisions, and take responsibility for personal hygiene (Diyanti, 2023). The development of responsibility in early childhood is an inseparable aspect of the learning process in ECE. The construction of responsibility refers to the process of forming children's attitudes and behaviors in understanding and carrying out obligations toward themselves and their environment. At an early age (0–6 years), responsibility



is not yet abstract but is developed through concrete experiences, habituation, and adult role modeling. According to Landi (in Hadi, 2025), the role of parents and educators in providing good examples significantly influences the development of children's character of responsibility (Fauzia, 2024).

Responsibility in early childhood includes several main aspects: responsibility toward oneself, such as maintaining personal hygiene, eating independently, and using the toilet properly; responsibility toward activities, such as tidying up toys after use; and basic social responsibility, such as waiting for one's turn and following rules. The construction of responsibility occurs gradually through habituation, where repeated activities become habits; internalization, where children begin to understand the meaning of their actions; and reinforcement through praise, support, and role modeling from teachers and parents. In the ECE context, teachers act as facilitators who create consistent learning environments so that children can develop responsibility through daily routines, including toilet training (Fadli, 2025). Children's responsibility cannot be separated from their ability to recognize their own needs. The ability to recognize personal needs refers to children's capacity to identify, understand, and fulfill their basic needs independently. These needs include physical needs such as eating, drinking, resting, urinating, and maintaining hygiene; emotional needs such as safety, affection, and recognition; and social needs such as interacting with peers, learning to share, and understanding social rules.

The ability to recognize personal needs is part of self-awareness. Children with good self-awareness tend to be more independent, confident, and able to regulate their behavior. In practice, toilet training serves as an important medium for training children to recognize bodily signals, such as the urge to urinate or defecate, and to take appropriate independent action. Thus, toilet training not only develops physical skills but also supports cognitive and emotional development. Sukmawati (in Rohaeti et al., 2025) emphasizes that parents and educators should understand that toilet training can also enhance children's social skills, such as sharing experiences and interacting with peers. To strengthen the understanding of this process, several developmental theories can be used as a foundation. According to Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory, children aged 2–7 years are in the preoperational stage, where they learn through direct and concrete experiences. This indicates that children understand the concept of responsibility not through abstract explanations but through repeated real-life practices, such as toilet training. Efendi & Afandi (2024) state that such concrete experiences enable children to internalize and understand the importance of toilet use while building their independence.

In addition, Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of the social environment and adults in child development. The concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) explains that children can perform tasks with assistance before eventually being able to do them independently. In the context of toilet training, teachers and parents provide gradual guidance until children can control and fulfill their needs independently. Furthermore, the theory of child independence is also an important foundation in this study. Independence refers to the ability of children to perform activities without relying on others, characterized by self-care skills, simple decision-making, and responsibility for their actions. Toilet training is one of the early indicators of this independence, as it teaches children to manage their needs while taking responsibility for themselves. Based on the explanation above, it can be understood that toilet training habituation plays a strategic role in shaping early childhood responsibility, particularly in recognizing personal needs. This process is influenced not only by internal factors of the child but also by consistent habituation, a supportive environment, and the active involvement of teachers and parents. Therefore, a deeper study is needed to examine how the construction of early childhood responsibility in recognizing personal needs through toilet training is implemented in ECE institutions, including the influencing factors and effective strategies for its application.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The concept of early childhood responsibility development is closely related to the process of habituation and character formation in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Responsibility in early childhood

refers to the ability of children to understand and carry out simple duties toward themselves and their environment. At this stage, responsibility is not yet abstract but is built through concrete experiences, repetition, and consistent reinforcement from adults. According to developmental perspectives, early childhood is a critical period in which foundational character traits, including responsibility, are formed through daily routines and guided experiences (Fadli, 2025). One of the most relevant practices in developing responsibility in early childhood is toilet training. Toilet training is defined as a structured process that teaches children to recognize bodily signals and use the toilet independently and appropriately. This activity involves not only physical readiness but also cognitive understanding and emotional regulation. Through toilet training, children learn self-control, discipline, and awareness of personal hygiene, which are essential components of responsibility (Diyanti, 2023). In ECE settings, toilet training is commonly integrated into daily routines to help children develop independence gradually.

The development of responsibility is strongly influenced by habituation (habituation theory), which emphasizes that repeated actions become internalized behaviors. In early childhood learning, habituation is implemented through consistent daily activities such as cleaning up toys, washing hands, and using the toilet independently. Over time, these repeated actions contribute to the formation of responsible behavior. In addition, reinforcement from teachers and parents, such as praise and encouragement, plays an important role in strengthening positive habits (Fauzia, 2024). Another important concept related to this study is children's ability to recognize their own needs. Self-awareness in early childhood refers to the ability to identify and respond to basic physical, emotional, and social needs. Toilet training serves as a practical medium for developing this awareness, as children learn to recognize bodily signals such as the urge to urinate or defecate and respond appropriately. This process supports not only physical independence but also cognitive and emotional development (Sukmawati in Rohaeti et al., 2025).

Theoretical foundations also support the importance of toilet training in responsibility development. Piaget's cognitive development theory explains that children in the preoperational stage (ages 2–7) learn best through concrete experiences. Therefore, abstract concepts such as responsibility are more effectively understood through direct practice rather than verbal explanation. Similarly, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory highlights the role of adult guidance within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where children gradually move from assisted performance to independent ability. In toilet training, teachers and parents provide structured assistance until children can perform the activity independently (Efendi & Afandi, 2024). Previous studies have shown that toilet training contributes significantly to the development of children's independence and responsibility. It has been found that children who are consistently guided through toilet training tend to demonstrate higher levels of self-regulation, discipline, and awareness of personal needs. However, the success of this process largely depends on environmental support, consistency of practice, and collaboration between teachers and parents. In conclusion, the literature indicates that toilet training is not merely a physical skill but an essential developmental process that integrates cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of early childhood growth. Through structured habituation and supportive learning environments, toilet training plays a crucial role in constructing children's responsibility in recognizing and fulfilling their personal needs within ECE institutions.

III. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative method with a case study approach. According to Heidl (2025), this method is designed to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and to identify complex and information-rich issues. The subjects of this study were 10 children aged 4–5 years (Group A) at TK Negeri Pembina Pringkuku, East Java, Indonesia. The selection of TK Negeri Pembina Pringkuku as the research site was based on several relevant considerations aligned with the focus of the study. First, the institution has a strong commitment to early childhood character development, particularly in fostering responsibility through daily habituation activities. One of the consistently implemented programs is toilet training habituation, which not only aims to develop independence but also to instill a sense of responsibility

in children toward themselves. Second, TK Negeri Pembina Pringkuku has active and responsive educators who apply habituation-based learning methods, creating a conducive environment for naturally observing the development of children's responsibility. In addition, strong support from both the school and parents contributes significantly to the success of the toilet training program. Third, the location is easily accessible, allowing the researcher to conduct intensive and continuous observations. This supports the collection of in-depth and accurate data regarding children's behavior and the development of early childhood responsibility. Thus, TK Negeri Pembina Pringkuku is considered an appropriate and representative setting for examining the construction of early childhood responsibility through habituation.

Data were collected using two techniques: observation and interviews. Observation was conducted directly to examine children's behavior during toilet training activities at school. Interviews were conducted with selected informants who were considered relevant and capable of providing in-depth data regarding the construction of children's responsibility through toilet training habituation. The main informant was the school principal of TK Negeri Pembina Pringkuku, who provided information regarding policies, programs, and objectives of implementing toilet training habituation in the institution (Rahayu, 2023). In addition, classroom teachers served as key informants because they were directly involved in implementing daily habituation activities. Teachers provided information regarding the implementation process of toilet training, strategies used, and the development of children's responsibility during the activities. This study also involved parents as supporting informants. Parents provided information regarding the continuity of toilet training habituation at home and changes in children's behavior related to independence and responsibility. The instruments used in this study were observation guidelines and interview guides for parents. The collected data were then described descriptively to illustrate the process of children's independence (Apriyansyah, 2025).

Data analysis in this study was conducted through several systematic steps. First, data reduction was carried out by selecting relevant information from interviews and observations, including children's behavior during toilet training, their responses to personal needs (urination and defecation), and the roles of teachers and parents in habituation. The data were then organized into themes such as self-awareness, independence, and responsibility. Second, data display was conducted by presenting the reduced data in structured forms, including descriptive narratives, categorization tables, and matrices of relationships among categories, supported by examples such as tables of children's responsibility development, interview excerpts from teachers and parents, and descriptions of children's behavior during toilet training. Third, conclusion drawing and verification involved interpreting the meaning of the data by identifying how children's responsibility is constructed and the supporting and inhibiting factors, which were then validated through source triangulation (teachers, parents, and children) and technique triangulation (interviews and observation). Finally, thematic analysis was conducted by coding the data (SA for self-awareness, IN for independence, and RE for responsibility), grouping the codes into major themes such as habit formation, character development, and environmental roles of teachers and parents, and interpreting the relationships among these themes.

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1. Result

a. The Process of Developing Children's Responsibility through Toilet Training Habituation

Based on observations and interviews, toilet training activities in early childhood education settings are implemented through structured habituation, such as regular toilet schedules, teacher guidance, and initial supervision. Children are taught to recognize the signs of needing to use the toilet, ask permission from teachers, and use the toilet independently. The following qualitative data analysis table is presented below:

Table 1. Coding and Data Categorization

No.	Data Source	Data Excerpt	Code	Category	Theme
1	Observation	The child goes to the toilet without being told	SA	Self-awareness	Responsibility formation
2	Teacher interview	The child can already report when needing to urinate	SA	Self-awareness	Responsibility formation
3	Observation	The child cleans themselves after defecation with help	IN	Independence	Habituation process
4	Teacher interview	The child still occasionally wets the bed at home	RE	Responsibility	Obstacles

Through consistent habituation, children gradually show behavioral changes such as being able to express their needs, going to the toilet independently, and maintaining personal hygiene after using the toilet. This indicates that habituation plays an important role in shaping children’s responsibility. Repeated and consistent habituation helps children internalize responsible behavior. These findings are in line with behaviorist theory, which states that behavior is formed through habit formation processes.

b. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Developing Children’s Responsibility

The findings show several supporting factors, including teacher consistency in guiding children, the existence of a regular toilet training schedule, a supportive school environment with adequate toilet facilities, and collaboration between teachers and parents. As stated by Nurbaiti (2024), effective toilet training requires good cooperation between teachers and parents, children’s mental readiness, appropriate age maturity, and adequate facilities to ensure successful outcomes. Meanwhile, the inhibiting factors include differences in parenting styles at home, lack of consistent habituation in the family environment, children’s fear or embarrassment when using the toilet, and variations in children’s developmental readiness. These factors indicate that the success of responsibility development is influenced not only by the school environment but also by family support and individual readiness.

c. Strategies for Developing Children’s Responsibility through Toilet Training

Based on field findings, teachers apply several strategies to develop children’s responsibility, including providing direct modeling, giving simple verbal reminders, offering praise or positive reinforcement when children succeed, and using a patient and non-coercive approach. These strategies have proven effective in helping children feel comfortable and confident in toilet training activities. A positive approach also makes it easier for children to understand and accept the habituation process. In addition, parental involvement in continuing habituation at home is an important factor in strengthening the outcomes achieved at school. With continuity between school and home environments, the development of children’s responsibility can progress optimally.

4.2. Discussion

a. The Process of Forming Children’s Responsibility through Toilet Training Habituation

The findings of this study show that the formation of early childhood responsibility through toilet training in Early Childhood Education (ECE) institutions is carried out through a structured and repeated habituation process. These activities include a regular toilet schedule, direct guidance from teachers, and initial assistance during the early stages. Children are gradually taught to recognize bodily signals indicating the need to use the toilet, ask for permission from the teacher, and perform toilet activities independently. This finding is consistent with behaviorist theory, which emphasizes that human behavior is formed through stimulus, response, and reinforcement. According to Skinner, behaviors that are consistently reinforced will develop into stable habits (Skinner in Santrock, 2018). In this context, toilet training serves as a repeated stimulus that gradually shapes the child’s response in the form of independent toilet behavior. The



observation and interview results show behavioral development in children, such as the ability to go to the toilet without being told, express their needs, and maintain personal hygiene after using the toilet. This indicates that habituation plays an important role in the internalization of responsible behavior. This finding is also supported by Bandura's social learning theory, which states that children learn through observation, imitation, and reinforcement from their environment (Bandura in Papalia & Martorell, 2021). Thus, it can be understood that the formation of responsibility through toilet training is not only a physical process but also involves cognitive and social development that is shaped through consistent habituation in the ECE environment.

b. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Formation of Children's Responsibility

The results of the study indicate several supporting factors in the success of toilet training as a means of developing children's responsibility. These include teacher consistency in guiding children, the existence of a structured toilet training schedule, a supportive school environment with adequate facilities, and strong collaboration between teachers and parents. The involvement of both parents and teachers is a key factor in the success of child habituation. Nurbaiti (2024) states that the success of toilet training is highly influenced by good cooperation between teachers and parents, children's psychological readiness, as well as the availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure. This shows that a consistent environment accelerates the internalization of responsible behavior in children. On the other hand, several inhibiting factors were also identified, such as differences in parenting styles at home, lack of consistent habituation in the family environment, children's fear or embarrassment when using the toilet, and differences in individual readiness levels. These factors indicate that the formation of responsibility is not only determined by the school environment but also by family support and individual developmental conditions. This is in line with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which states that child development is influenced by interactions between multiple environmental systems, especially family and school (Bronfenbrenner in Santrock, 2018). Inconsistency between these environments may hinder the optimal development of children's behavior.

c. Strategies for Developing Children's Responsibility through Toilet Training

Based on the findings, teachers apply several strategies to develop children's responsibility through toilet training. These strategies include providing direct modeling, giving simple verbal reminders, offering positive reinforcement such as praise, and using a patient and non-coercive approach. These strategies align with Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes that children learn behaviors through observation and imitation of models in their environment, particularly teachers and parents (Bandura in Papalia & Martorell, 2021). Positive reinforcement also plays an important role in strengthening desired behaviors, encouraging children to repeat them consistently. In addition, a non-coercive and supportive approach helps create a sense of security in children, allowing them to feel more confident in performing toilet activities independently. This is in accordance with early childhood emotional development theory, which emphasizes that a safe and supportive environment is essential for fostering independence (Morrison, 2018). Parental involvement in continuing habituation at home is also an important factor in the success of this strategy. Consistency between school and home environments strengthens the internalization process of responsibility in children. Therefore, toilet training is not merely a routine activity but an important medium for developing independence and responsibility from an early age.

V. Conclusion

Overall, toilet training habituation plays a significant role in shaping early childhood responsibility in recognizing and responding to their own needs. The success of this process is influenced by consistency in habituation, environmental support, and appropriate strategies from both educators and parents. Therefore, teachers in early childhood education institutions are expected to implement toilet training consistently and in a structured manner, while using patient and enjoyable approaches so that children can more easily

understand and develop responsibility for their personal needs. Early childhood education institutions are also expected to provide child-friendly toilet facilities and design sustainable habituation programs that support children's independence and responsibility. In addition, parents are expected to continue toilet training practices at home consistently and to maintain good collaboration with the school in order to support optimal child development.

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