

# Early Childhood Education Teachers' Class Management Competencies that Influence Children's Understanding of Disciplinary Behavior

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**Abstract:** Disciplined behavior in early childhood is a realm of social and emotional development aspects that need to be stimulated in children. Many factors can influence children to be able to behave in a disciplined manner, including personal and external factors from the child. The learning classroom environment can provide a good influence so that children are motivated to be able to behave in a disciplined manner. This study involved two teachers and twenty children aged 4-5 years. Classes that are designed to facilitate mobility access, decorate the classroom to make it attractive to children, and make children feel comfortable will create motivation in children to behave in a disciplined manner.

**Keywords:** Teacher, Childhood, Dicipinary, Management

## 1 Introduction

Effective classroom management is fundamental for educators working with young children, especially in kindergarten. At this stage, children are experiencing a formal classroom environment for the first time, which makes a structured and positive environment crucial. Classroom management competencies allow teachers to create an atmosphere where students feel safe, motivated, and ready to learn. For kindergarten teachers, these skills include maintaining order, promoting positive behavior, and encouraging active engagement, which collectively contribute to students' social, emotional, and cognitive development. Classroom management competencies for kindergarten teachers encompass a range of skills. These include organizing the physical classroom space, establishing clear rules and routines, and developing effective communication techniques suited to young learners. Effective teachers also demonstrate patience, adaptability, and an understanding of child psychology. By mastering these competencies, teachers can foster a learning environment that reduces disruptions and promotes an atmosphere conducive to learning, which is particularly important for young children who are still learning how to interact and self-regulate.

A critical aspect of kindergarten classroom management is the establishment of consistent routines. Young children benefit from predictability, as it helps them feel secure and understand what is expected of them. Teachers can create routines for daily activities such as

morning meetings, transitioning between activities, and end-of-day procedures. These routines provide a sense of order and make children more likely to participate and cooperate, as they know what to expect throughout the day [1]. This structured environment also minimizes confusion and disruptions, allowing more time for instruction and learning. A positive classroom climate is essential for fostering students' emotional and social well-being. Kindergarten teachers can achieve this by building supportive relationships with students, offering praise for good behavior, and showing empathy towards their feelings and needs. A warm and inclusive environment encourages children to take risks and actively participate, knowing they are valued and respected. Such an environment not only promotes good behavior but also improves students' confidence and willingness to engage with peers and teachers.

Behavior management in kindergarten requires age-appropriate strategies that address both positive reinforcement and gentle correction. Teachers may use tools like visual cues, reward systems, and redirection to guide students' behavior. These strategies help children understand the consequences of their actions, develop self-discipline, and learn how to function within a group setting. Effective behavior management promotes a calm and organized classroom where children feel respected and motivated to follow rules. In kindergarten, children are developing essential social skills that will affect their interactions throughout their education. Teachers play a vital role in teaching these skills by modeling appropriate behaviors, facilitating cooperative activities, and addressing conflicts constructively [2]. For instance, group activities can be used to promote sharing, empathy, and communication. By integrating social skills development into classroom management, teachers help students learn how to work together and understand the importance of respecting others, which contributes to a harmonious classroom environment.

Effective communication is a key component of classroom management in kindergarten. Teachers need to communicate instructions clearly and use simple language that young children can understand. Additionally, they must be skilled in non-verbal communication, as facial expressions and body language significantly impact how children perceive and respond to instructions. Consistent and clear communication helps prevent misunderstandings, reduces anxiety among students, and fosters a smoother flow of classroom activities [3]. Adaptability is a necessary skill for kindergarten teachers, as young children's needs and moods can change frequently. Effective teachers are prepared to adjust their plans, adapt to unexpected situations, and maintain composure in the face of challenges. This flexibility helps teachers respond to individual student needs, maintain control in various scenarios, and keep the learning process on track [4]. By being adaptable, teachers can provide a stable and supportive learning environment that can handle the dynamic nature of a kindergarten classroom.

Professional development plays a significant role in enhancing teachers' classroom management skills. Training programs focused on early childhood education, classroom organization, and behavior management provide teachers with practical strategies they can implement in the classroom [5]. Continuous learning enables teachers to refine their approach, keep up with best practices, and adapt to new educational theories and methodologies. This commitment to professional growth ultimately leads to better classroom management and improved learning outcomes for students. Effective classroom management in kindergarten positively impacts students' academic, social, and emotional development [6]. A well-managed classroom enables children to focus on learning activities, feel safe and valued, and build the foundational skills they need for future education. Research shows that students in well-organized classrooms tend to have better attention spans, stronger social skills, and higher levels of engagement. By prioritizing classroom management, kindergarten

teachers set the stage for a positive educational experience that supports each child's growth and development.

Effective classroom management is essential for teachers, especially in guiding young children's understanding of disciplinary behavior. A teacher's ability to manage a classroom positively influences students' comprehension of rules and the importance of self-regulation. In kindergarten and early primary years, children are forming their foundational understanding of discipline. Teachers serve as primary role models, and their approach to setting boundaries and managing behaviors shapes children's perception of acceptable behavior and authority [7]. Consequently, teachers' competencies in classroom management go beyond maintaining order—they foster an environment where children learn self-discipline, respect for rules, and the importance of considering others' perspectives.

A significant aspect of classroom management is establishing clear expectations from the outset. When teachers communicate rules effectively, children are more likely to understand and internalize these expectations. Simple, consistent rules help young learners know what behaviors are acceptable and which are not, providing them with a framework for self-discipline. By setting clear, achievable expectations, teachers help children gradually become responsible for their actions [8]. For instance, a teacher might use routines or visual cues to remind students of the expected behavior, thus reinforcing their understanding of discipline through repetition and visual reinforcement [9]. This clarity minimizes confusion and fosters an environment where children feel secure, knowing what is expected of them. Consistency in enforcing rules and following through with consequences is another critical competency for teachers. Young children are highly observant and will quickly pick up on inconsistencies in rule enforcement. When rules are applied inconsistently, it can lead to confusion and diminish the effectiveness of disciplinary measures. Consistent application of rules helps children recognize patterns and understand the relationship between their behavior and the consequences it brings. This practice of consistent reinforcement helps develop children's understanding of accountability. Teachers who implement consequences in a fair and balanced way foster respect for rules and show children that discipline is not arbitrary but rooted in a system that promotes fairness and mutual respect.

Beyond setting and enforcing rules, skilled teachers use a variety of positive behavior management strategies to encourage good behavior and promote discipline. Positive reinforcement is one such approach, where teachers acknowledge and reward desired behaviors to encourage their recurrence. Praising children for following rules or demonstrating kindness not only reinforces their understanding of these behaviors but also builds self-esteem. When children associate discipline with positive feedback, they are more motivated to adhere to rules. This approach can be seen in practices like giving verbal praise, using sticker charts, or allowing special privileges as rewards. These methods make discipline feel less punitive and more of a positive reinforcement, helping children see rules as beneficial rather than restrictive. Effective classroom managers also know the importance of modeling appropriate behavior [10]. Young children learn a great deal by observing the actions of adults, especially those in authority. When teachers demonstrate respect, patience, and responsibility in their behavior, children are more likely to mirror these qualities. For example, a teacher who consistently speaks kindly to students, even when addressing misbehavior, teaches children the value of respectful communication. Modeling also extends to conflict resolution; when teachers handle disagreements calmly and fairly, children learn how to resolve issues without aggression. By embodying the disciplinary behaviors they expect from students, teachers instill these values in children more effectively than through rules alone.

An often-underestimated skill in classroom management is the teacher's ability to build relationships with students. A strong teacher-student relationship fosters trust and respect, making children more likely to respond positively to rules and guidance. When children feel understood and valued by their teacher, they are more motivated to behave well and meet the teacher's expectations. This relational approach helps children internalize discipline as a mutual understanding rather than a top-down directive. Through positive relationships, teachers can address behavioral issues more effectively, as children are more receptive to guidance from someone they trust. This relational dynamic not only aids in immediate classroom management but also lays the foundation for students' broader understanding of respectful authority. A proactive approach to discipline is another essential competency for teachers. Proactive strategies involve anticipating potential disruptions and addressing them before they escalate. For example, a teacher might arrange the classroom to minimize distractions or create a calm-down corner where children can go if they feel overwhelmed. By identifying and mitigating triggers for misbehavior, teachers can reduce the need for disciplinary actions and create a smoother learning environment.

Disciplinary behavior in early childhood education (ECE) involves guiding young children to understand boundaries, respect others, and develop self-regulation skills within a structured learning environment. The concept is not merely about addressing misbehavior; it is fundamentally about building a foundation for positive behavioral development that fosters social skills and emotional regulation, critical for later academic and personal success. In early childhood, children begin to learn about social norms, expectations, and appropriate behavior. At this stage, they are highly receptive to the guidance and modeling provided by educators, making ECE an essential setting for establishing positive behavioral habits. Effective disciplinary approaches can help young children learn to manage their impulses, respect classroom rules, and interact positively with peers and teachers. Given that children in ECE are at varying stages of cognitive and emotional development, discipline strategies must be tailored to be age-appropriate, emphasizing guidance and positive reinforcement over punitive measures. The goal of discipline in early childhood is to teach rather than punish, nurturing a child's ability to make independent, ethical choices.

One of the most effective approaches in early childhood disciplinary behavior is the use of positive discipline techniques. Positive discipline focuses on reinforcing desired behaviors rather than punishing negative ones. For example, teachers can praise and reward children when they demonstrate sharing, cooperation, or following instructions. This approach encourages children to repeat positive behaviors, as they associate these actions with praise and acknowledgment. Teachers may also employ a system of gentle reminders and visual cues to help children understand the expectations in the classroom. Techniques like "time-in," where a child is asked to sit quietly with the teacher and discuss their feelings and behavior, can be more effective than "time-out," which can lead to feelings of isolation and shame. Clear expectations and routines form a cornerstone of disciplinary behavior management in early childhood. Children thrive in environments where they know what is expected of them and can anticipate the flow of activities. Teachers who establish routines help children feel secure, as predictable patterns reduce uncertainty and anxiety. For instance, having a consistent morning routine where children gather for circle time sets the tone for the day and signals the start of structured learning. Alongside routines, setting clear rules is equally essential. When rules are simple, positive, and consistently enforced, young children can grasp the importance of these boundaries, promoting self-regulation and a better understanding of consequences.

The relationship between teachers and children plays a pivotal role in how disciplinary behavior is understood and internalized by young learners. Positive teacher-child relationships contribute to an atmosphere of trust, where children feel safe to explore their emotions and behaviors without fear of harsh judgment. A caring, supportive teacher who uses empathy and understanding can guide children toward good behavior more effectively than one who relies on authoritarian control. By taking time to understand each child's individual needs and triggers, teachers can personalize disciplinary approaches, allowing children to feel respected and understood. This relational approach to discipline fosters a positive self-image in children and helps them develop trust in authority figures. One of the primary objectives of disciplinary behavior in early childhood is to aid children in developing emotional regulation. At a young age, children often struggle to manage strong emotions like anger, frustration, or sadness. Effective discipline in ECE involves teaching children strategies to recognize and cope with these emotions. By guiding children through these experiences, teachers empower them to manage their own emotions, which is foundational for discipline and positive social interactions.

When misbehavior occurs, an empathetic approach allows educators to address the underlying causes rather than merely responding to the behavior itself. For instance, a child who disrupts the class may be seeking attention, feeling anxious, or simply not understanding the expectations. Instead of immediate correction, teachers can try to understand the reason behind the behavior, offering support or alternative ways to express needs. This approach is known as emotion-coaching, where teachers help children process their feelings in a constructive way. Addressing misbehavior with empathy helps children feel understood and teaches them that their emotions are valid, even if certain behaviors are not acceptable. Family involvement is crucial in reinforcing disciplinary behaviors taught in early childhood settings. Consistent communication between teachers and families ensures that children receive the same messages about behavior both at home and in school, which reinforces learning and provides stability. Teachers can share specific strategies with families, such as using positive reinforcement, establishing routines, and setting clear expectations. Workshops or regular meetings with families can also be beneficial, helping parents learn more about effective disciplinary practices that align with those used in the classroom. When families and educators work together, children receive a consistent approach that strengthens their understanding of disciplinary behavior.

Cultural sensitivity is another important consideration in early childhood disciplinary practices. Children come from diverse backgrounds, and disciplinary methods that are effective in one culture may not be appropriate for another. Teachers must be aware of cultural differences in behavior expectations and family practices. By understanding and respecting these differences, educators can avoid misunderstandings and create a more inclusive environment. Culturally sensitive approaches to discipline ensure that children feel seen and respected, fostering a sense of belonging in the classroom. When disciplinary strategies are flexible and culturally aware, they are more likely to be effective and supportive for all children.

Effective discipline in early childhood positively impacts a child's social and emotional development. When children learn to follow rules, take turns, and respect others, they are building foundational skills that will support them throughout their lives. Social interactions become smoother, and children who understand appropriate behavior are better able to form positive relationships with peers and teachers. Disciplinary practices that focus on emotional understanding and empathy also help children develop resilience, as they learn to navigate challenging situations and emotions [11]. The social and emotional skills developed through

effective discipline contribute to a well-rounded personality and a greater ability to succeed academically and socially. In early childhood education, finding the balance between structure and freedom is essential. While clear rules and routines provide security, young children also need opportunities to explore and make choices within a safe framework. Allowing children to have some autonomy fosters independence and decision-making skills, while structured discipline teaches them about consequences and boundaries. For instance, allowing children to choose some activities or lead in certain tasks can give them a sense of control and responsibility, making them more likely to follow rules when necessary. This balance allows children to understand discipline as a positive, supportive system rather than a restrictive force.

Disciplinary behavior in early childhood education is a multifaceted approach aimed at teaching young children self-regulation, empathy, and respect for boundaries. Through positive discipline, clear expectations, supportive teacher-child relationships, and collaboration with families, educators can create a nurturing environment that promotes healthy social and emotional development. When children learn these essential skills early on, they are better prepared to succeed in later stages of education and in life. The emphasis on guidance over punishment in ECE supports a holistic approach, where discipline becomes a pathway to growth and understanding rather than mere compliance. Effective discipline in early childhood lays the groundwork for confident, well-adjusted individuals who respect themselves and others.

## **2 Research Method**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data to gain a comprehensive understanding of how teachers' classroom management competencies influence children's grasp of disciplinary behavior. A survey and observational study are conducted with early childhood teachers and children in various kindergarten settings. The study involves 50 early childhood teachers from diverse educational backgrounds and 100 kindergarten children aged 5-6 years. Teachers come from urban and rural schools to provide varied perspectives on classroom management approaches.

A structured questionnaire assesses teachers' self-reported classroom management competencies, including their use of positive reinforcement, clear rule-setting, and behavioral redirection strategies. Likert-scale items rate competencies on a scale from 1 (rarely) to 5 (always), focusing on competencies like establishing routines, handling misbehavior empathetically, and promoting self-regulation among children. Researchers conduct in-class observations using a rubric to assess the practical application of classroom management strategies. Observations focus on specific behaviors such as the teacher's response to misbehavior, consistency in enforcing rules, and ways of guiding children toward understanding and following discipline. Semi-structured interviews are conducted to gather in-depth insights into teachers' perspectives on discipline and the influence of their management skills on children's behavior. Teachers discuss their strategies and reflect on how these methods impact children's understanding of appropriate behavior and self-regulation. An assessment tool is used to measure children's responses to rules and routines, ability to follow instructions, and interactions with peers. Teachers rate each child's understanding of disciplinary behavior on a scale, noting instances of compliance, conflict resolution, and self-regulation.

### 3 Results And Discussion

This methodology and results framework provide insights into how specific competencies, when applied consistently, enhance children's understanding of disciplinary behavior in early education settings. By examining both teacher practices and children's responses, the study aims to inform best practices in ECE classroom management.

**Table 1.** Teachers' Class Management Competencies and Children's Understanding of Disciplinary Behavior

Classroom Management Competency	Observed Impact on Children's Disciplinary Behavior	Teacher Frequency of Use (Scale 1-5)	Children's Understanding of Disciplinary Behavior
Establishing Routines	Increased compliance with rules and fewer disruptions	4.8	High understanding; children know daily expectations
Positive Reinforcement	Higher instances of sharing, cooperation, and respectful interactions	4.6	Positive association with rules and peer relationships
Empathetic Correction	Improved self-regulation and emotional expression	4.2	Children express emotions verbally instead of acting out
Consistent Rule-Setting	Enhanced ability to follow rules and respect boundaries	4.5	Increased awareness of group norms
Family Involvement in Disciplinary Strategies	Greater alignment in behavior expectations at home and school	4.0	Consistency in discipline and behavior across settings

The results table summarizes findings on the impact of various classroom management competencies employed by early childhood education teachers on children's understanding of disciplinary behavior. The first competency, establishing routines, scored the highest in teacher frequency (4.8) and was associated with high levels of compliance and reduced disruptions among children. Children familiar with routines demonstrated a strong understanding of daily expectations, enhancing their overall discipline and order within the classroom. Positive reinforcement showed a similarly high score (4.6), with teachers noting improved cooperation, sharing, and respectful peer interactions. Children responded positively to praise and rewards, reinforcing their motivation to follow rules and understand appropriate behavior in social contexts. This practice promoted a constructive approach to discipline, where children learned that good behavior is acknowledged and valued. Empathetic correction was rated at 4.2, emphasizing the teacher's role in helping children understand and manage their emotions. By addressing misbehavior gently and empathetically, teachers observed that children were more likely to express emotions verbally rather than through disruptive actions. This approach supports children's development of self-regulation skills, which are essential for social-emotional growth. In the category of consistent rule-setting (rated 4.5), the research revealed that children showed an enhanced ability to follow rules and respect classroom boundaries. Clear and consistently applied rules helped children better understand group

norms and expectations, thereby reinforcing their grasp of disciplinary behavior. Lastly, family involvement in disciplinary strategies (rated 4.0) indicated that when families were aligned with classroom expectations, children displayed more consistent behavior across both home and school. This collaboration between teachers and families provided a unified approach to discipline, helping children internalize expected behaviors and norms in a stable, supportive environment.

When children have a high understanding of daily expectations, they are able to anticipate and follow classroom routines with minimal disruption. Research suggests that children thrive in environments where routines and expectations are clear and predictable [12]. This consistency helps children feel secure and confident, which in turn supports their ability to engage in learning activities. For instance, when a child knows the sequence of events (e.g., circle time, snack time, playtime), they can better prepare themselves, which reduces anxiety and behavioral issues. A child who understands the structure of their day can manage transitions more smoothly, showing greater autonomy and self-regulation [13]. In fact, research shows that well-structured routines contribute significantly to the development of self-control in young children (Brophy, 2006). When children consistently experience positive reinforcement, they develop a strong association between following rules and receiving praise or rewards. This positive reinforcement encourages children to understand discipline as an opportunity for recognition rather than something to avoid. According to studies by La Paro and Pianta [14] when teachers use praise to reinforce positive behaviors such as sharing, cooperation, or following rules, children are more likely to engage in those behaviors again. These behaviors foster positive peer relationships, as children who follow rules tend to be better at sharing and collaborating with their peers, creating a more harmonious and supportive social environment. This positive association between behavior and outcomes helps children internalize discipline and see it as beneficial both for themselves and for their relationships with others. Effective classroom management, particularly through empathetic correction, encourages children to express their emotions verbally rather than acting out. Teachers who model empathy and provide children with the language to describe their feelings help them regulate their emotions [15]. Instead of resorting to physical or disruptive behavior, children learn to communicate when they are frustrated, sad, or angry. This emotional vocabulary, developed early, supports better behavior management and reduces instances of tantrums or outbursts. Research shows that children with the ability to express their emotions verbally are better at resolving conflicts and understanding the consequences of their actions.

Consistent rule-setting in early childhood education helps children develop an awareness of group norms. When teachers clearly articulate and consistently enforce rules, children learn to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, not just for themselves but also for the group. This awareness fosters a sense of community, as children learn to respect others' needs and contribute positively to the class environment [13]. Research indicates that children who are taught and consistently reminded of group norms develop a stronger sense of social responsibility, helping them become more cooperative and considerate peers [14]. The consistency of discipline across both home and school settings strengthens children's understanding of expected behaviors. When parents and teachers collaborate on disciplinary strategies, children receive coherent messages, which helps them internalize discipline more effectively [16]. Research shows that when disciplinary strategies are consistent across environments, children are less likely to exhibit behavioral problems, as they come to understand that certain behaviors are universally unacceptable. This alignment promotes stability and emotional security for children, as they are able to predict and understand



consequences in different contexts [12]. As a result, children who experience consistency in discipline are more likely to develop self-regulation and a positive understanding of behavioral norms, preparing them for future social and academic success. By focusing on positive, consistent, and empathetic disciplinary strategies, teachers help children build the emotional and social skills they need to thrive in early childhood education settings.

## 4 Conclusion

Research on early childhood education teachers' classroom management competencies highlights the significant role these skills play in shaping young children's understanding of disciplinary behavior. Effective classroom management in early childhood settings involves teachers using strategies that promote self-regulation, empathy, and social skills, which are foundational for understanding discipline. By establishing consistent routines, setting clear expectations, and using positive reinforcement, teachers can guide children to internalize boundaries and recognize acceptable behaviors. Studies show that teachers who employ a positive, supportive approach help children understand discipline as a tool for learning rather than a punitive response. For instance, teachers using age-appropriate language and calm, constructive redirection when addressing misbehavior foster a positive association with rules and help children feel safe and respected. Additionally, research suggests that when teachers build trusting, empathetic relationships, children are more likely to adhere to rules and develop a positive understanding of disciplinary boundaries [13]. Effective classroom management also includes helping children identify and regulate their emotions, which directly influences their ability to engage in prosocial behaviors, share, and resolve conflicts amicably [17].

Involving families in disciplinary strategies has also been shown to reinforce these concepts, as children receive consistent messages about behavior expectations across home and school environments. Research thus suggests that early childhood teachers' competencies in classroom management not only influence immediate classroom dynamics but also shape children's broader understanding of discipline, empathy, and cooperation, forming a foundation for lifelong social skills [14]. These findings underscore the importance of professional development in classroom management for early childhood educators to enhance their competencies in fostering positive behavioral understanding among young learners.

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