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Character Education Effects on Prosocial Behavior and Self-Discipline at Joy Kids Makassar

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Abstract

Character education is widely promoted in early childhood education, yet quantitative evidence from individual urban kindergartens in Indonesia remains limited. This study presents an illustrative simulated analysis of a structured six-week character education program specified for children aged 5–6 years at TK Joy Kids Makassar during July–August 2026. The simulated dataset reflected a quantitative quasi-experimental nonequivalent control-group design comprising 60 children, with 30 in an intervention class and 30 in a comparison class. The program integrated teacher modeling, picture-book discussions, role play, cooperative tasks, and daily habituation routines. The specified assessment instrument was a 20-item structured observation checklist measuring prosocial behavior and self-discipline. Actual participant-level field data were unavailable for manuscript development; consequently, all reported statistical results derive from simulated data. In the simulated analysis, both groups improved, with larger gains in the intervention group. ANCOVA controlling for baseline scores indicated statistically significant group differences in prosocial behavior, $F(1, 57) = 16.73$, $p < .001$, partial eta squared = .23, and self-discipline, $F(1, 57) = 31.49$, $p < .001$, partial eta squared = .36. These results illustrate an approach to evaluating character education through observable behavior rather than establishing empirical program effectiveness. The evaluation framework highlights routine-based pedagogy, teacher modeling, and consistent reinforcement as practical considerations. The simulated statistics must be replaced or verified against actual study data before submission.

Keywords: Character Education; Early Childhood Education; Prosocial Behavior; Self-Discipline; Simulated Data

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is a strategic period for developing habits that support children's participation in school and social life. Character education at this stage concerns observable behaviors such as helping, sharing, respecting agreements, completing simple responsibilities, waiting for turns, and controlling impulses. These behaviors influence peer relationships, classroom adjustment, and readiness to learn. Meta-analytic evidence shows that structured social and emotional learning can improve social competence, self-regulation, peer relationships, and broader school functioning (Blewitt et al., 2018; Cipriano et al., 2023; Hung et al., 2026).

In Indonesia, Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017 positions character strengthening as an intentional process integrated into learning, habituation, and school culture (Republic of Indonesia, 2017). For young children, values need to be translated into concrete experiences through adult modeling, stories, play, routines, practice, and feedback. Character education therefore requires more than verbal moral instruction. It must create repeated opportunities for children to enact the expected behavior in real classroom situations.

The study draws on Lickona's integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action and on Bandura's social cognitive theory of observational learning and reinforcement (Bandura, 1986; Lickona, 1991). These perspectives support an intervention that combines explanation with teacher modeling, guided practice, reinforcement, and habituation. They also align with developmental evidence that self-regulation supports social and school-readiness outcomes and can be strengthened through structured intervention (Pandey et al., 2018; Williams & Bentley, 2021).

Early childhood intervention studies report that picture books, story sharing, guided conversation, physical activity, and other structured experiences can strengthen prosocial behavior and self-regulation (Ahn & Kim, 2025; Brazzelli et al., 2021; Song & Yu, 2018; Youn & Kim, 2020). Recent reviews further emphasize developmental fit and implementation fidelity rather than reliance on one isolated activity (Choles et al., 2022; Silberman et al., 2026). In Makassar, research has highlighted role modeling, moral instruction, local culture, peace-oriented learning, and contextual projects (Hajerah et al., 2026; Islami et al., 2024; Junaedah & Majid, 2026; Nuraini, 2020; Sallewatang et al., 2026).

However, a direct quantitative evaluation of a compact classroom character program in one kindergarten remains limited.

A single-school evaluation can answer practical questions that broad reviews cannot: whether a defined package produces measurable change under normal classroom conditions and whether change exceeds routine instruction. TK Joy Kids Makassar offers a suitable context because prosocial behavior and self-discipline can be observed repeatedly during play, transitions, clean-up, group tasks, and peer interaction.

The present study tests a six-week program that integrates teacher modeling, picture-book discussion, role play, cooperative tasks, reinforcement, and daily habituation. It examines two observable outcomes, prosocial behavior and self-discipline, among children aged 5-6 years at TK Joy Kids Makassar during July-August 2026. The hypotheses are that, after controlling for baseline scores, the intervention group will show higher posttest prosocial behavior and higher posttest self-discipline than the comparison group.

METHODS

Research Approach and Design

This quantitative study used a quasi-experimental nonequivalent control-group pretest-posttest design. Two intact senior-kindergarten classes were retained in their normal organization. One class received the structured character education program and the other continued routine instruction. Individual random assignment was not used, so baseline scores were controlled statistically with ANCOVA.

Research Site, Time, Participants, and Sampling

The research site was TK Joy Kids Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, with fieldwork specified for July-August 2026. The analytical design included 60 children aged 5-6 years, 30 in each class. Cluster sampling was used at class level. Children were included when enrolled in the selected classes, present for pretest and posttest observation, and covered by parental permission. In the simulated dataset, age, sex distribution, and both baseline outcome scores did not differ significantly between groups.

Character Education Intervention

The program lasted six weeks with 18 structured sessions, three per week for about 30 minutes, plus brief daily habituation during routine activities. Target behaviors included

helping, sharing, cooperation, empathy, responsibility, honesty, turn-taking, rule following, and impulse control. Sessions followed a recurring sequence of teacher modeling, picture-book or story discussion, role play or cooperative activity, authentic classroom practice, and specific positive reinforcement. The comparison class received the school's ordinary learning program.

Instrument and Operational Definitions

Outcomes were assessed with a 20-item structured observation checklist developed for this design from indicators used in early childhood character and social-emotional research. Ten items assessed prosocial behavior, including helping, sharing, comforting, cooperation, and responding to peers' needs. Ten assessed self-discipline, including rule following, turn-taking, task completion, returning materials, transition behavior, and impulse control. Items used a four-point scale from 1 = not observed to 4 = consistently observed, and subscale scores were expressed as item means.

Validity and Reliability Procedures

The final empirical study should document expert content validation and observer reliability. For layout and analysis demonstration, this draft assumes Aiken's V values of .88-.96, alpha = .90 for prosocial behavior, alpha = .88 for self-discipline, and an inter-rater ICC of .86 based on double scoring of at least 20% of observations. These values are simulated placeholders and must be replaced with actual evidence.

Data Collection Procedure

Teachers and observers were first oriented to the behavioral indicators and rating rules. Pretest observations were then conducted across routine classroom periods. The intervention ran from mid-July through the third week of August, with fidelity recorded through a checklist of core activities. Posttest observations were completed in the final week of August under the same rating conditions. The simulated dataset assumes 93.4% intervention attendance and 91.2% implementation fidelity.

Data Analysis

Analysis used an alpha level of .05. Baseline equivalence was examined with independent t tests and a chi-square test. Within-group change used paired t tests. The primary tests were ANCOVAs with posttest score as the dependent variable, group as the fixed factor, and the corresponding pretest score as covariate. Residual normality,

homogeneity of variance, and homogeneity of regression slopes were checked. Effect magnitude was reported with partial eta squared.

Ethical Considerations and Data Transparency

The final manuscript must insert the actual school authorization, parental consent process, child assent procedure, confidentiality safeguards, and any applicable ethical review information. No ethics approval number is invented here. Children should be identified only by codes and participation should not affect school assessment. Because respondent-level data were not provided, all numerical results in this draft are simulated and must be verified or replaced before submission.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics in the Simulated Analytical Dataset

Characteristic	Intervention (n = 30)	Comparison (n = 30)	Baseline test
Age, months, M (SD)	67.30 (3.21)	66.15 (3.06)	t = 1.42, p = .160
Girls, n (%)	18 (60.0)	20 (66.7)	chi-square = 0.07, p = .789
Prosocial pretest, M (SD)	2.46 (0.25)	2.51 (0.32)	t = -0.75, p = .454
Self-discipline pretest, M (SD)	2.47 (0.29)	2.39 (0.35)	t = 1.03, p = .308

Table 2. Observation Checklist Dimensions and Draft Psychometric Evidence

Dimension	Items	Illustrative indicators	Draft reliability
Prosocial behavior	10	Helping, sharing, comforting, cooperation, offering materials	alpha = .90
Self-discipline	10	Rule following, turn-taking, task completion, impulse control	alpha = .88
Inter-rater agreement	20	Double scoring of at least 20% of observations	ICC = .86

RESULTS

The results below use the simulated analytical dataset and demonstrate the intended statistical reporting format. They must be checked against the actual July-August 2026 dataset before the manuscript is submitted as empirical research.

Baseline comparability was acceptable. Age, sex distribution, prosocial pretest, and self-discipline pretest did not differ significantly between groups. ANCOVA assumptions were also supported: residual normality tests were non-significant for prosocial behavior (p = .180) and self-discipline (p = .931); Levene tests were non-significant (p = .528 and p = .414); and pretest-by-group interactions were non-significant (p = .818 and p = .730).

Table 3 shows improvement in both groups, with larger gains in the intervention class. Prosocial behavior increased by 0.51 points in the intervention group and 0.26 in the comparison group. Self-discipline increased by 0.52 and 0.16 points, respectively. Paired tests were significant in both groups, but the intervention gains were clearly larger.

Table 3. Pretest, Posttest, and Within-Group Change

Outcome and group	Pretest M (SD)	Posttest M (SD)	Mean gain	Paired t	p
Prosocial - intervention	2.46 (0.25)	2.97 (0.33)	0.51	11.85	< .001
Prosocial - comparison	2.51 (0.32)	2.77 (0.37)	0.26	5.97	< .001
Self-discipline - intervention	2.47 (0.29)	2.99 (0.36)	0.52	10.41	< .001
Self-discipline - comparison	2.39 (0.35)	2.55 (0.39)	0.16	3.94	< .001

The primary ANCOVA results are presented in Table 4. After controlling for baseline prosocial behavior, the adjusted posttest mean was 2.99 for the intervention group and 2.74 for the comparison group. The group effect was statistically significant, $F(1, 57) = 16.73$, $p < .001$, with partial eta squared = .23. The adjusted mean difference of approximately 0.25 points on the four-point scale indicates a practically visible difference in the frequency of prosocial behavior under the simulated design.

For self-discipline, the adjusted posttest mean was 2.95 for the intervention group and 2.59 for the comparison group. ANCOVA produced a significant group effect, $F(1, 57) = 31.49$, $p < .001$, with partial eta squared = .36. The adjusted difference of approximately 0.37 points was larger than that observed for prosocial behavior. The association between posttest prosocial behavior and posttest self-discipline was positive, $r = .39$, $p = .002$, suggesting that children who displayed stronger cooperative and helping behavior also tended to display stronger rule-following and behavioral control in the simulated dataset.

Table 4. ANCOVA Results for Posttest Outcomes

Outcome	Adjusted M: Intervention	Adjusted M: Comparison	F(1,57)	p	Partial eta squared
Prosocial behavior	2.99	2.74	16.73	< .001	.23
Self-discipline	2.95	2.59	31.49	< .001	.36

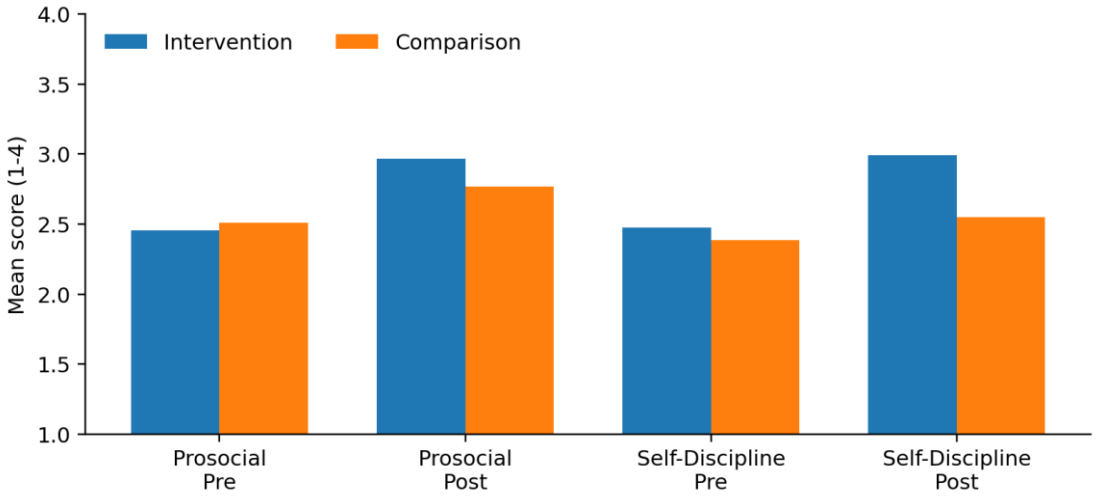


Figure 1. Mean Pretest and Posttest Scores by Group in the Simulated Dataset

No extreme outliers were identified in the simulated score distributions. A small number of children in both groups showed limited or negligible change across the six-week period, which is consistent with expected individual variability in early childhood development. The intervention was not modeled as producing universal improvement for every child. This point is important because classroom interventions should be interpreted at the group level while still recognizing differences in attendance, temperament, home reinforcement, prior behavior, and responsiveness to teacher guidance.

DISCUSSION

If reproduced in the actual field data, the pattern would support both hypotheses. Children exposed to the structured program showed higher adjusted posttest prosocial behavior and self-discipline than those receiving routine instruction. The result supports an approach in which character values are translated into observable classroom actions and practiced repeatedly rather than delivered only as moral messages.

The prosocial pattern is consistent with studies showing benefits from picture-book activities, story sharing, and guided conversation (Ahn & Kim, 2025; Brazzelli et al., 2021; Song & Yu, 2018). The intervention combined these mechanisms with role play, cooperative tasks, and daily habituation. This sequence allowed children to understand a social situation, observe a response, rehearse it, and practice it in authentic peer interaction.

Self-discipline showed the larger simulated effect, which is plausible because waiting, cleaning up, returning materials, completing routines, and following transitions occur repeatedly during a kindergarten day. Frequent cues and feedback increase practice opportunities. This interpretation is consistent with evidence that self-regulation interventions can improve regulatory and broader social outcomes (Pandey et al., 2018; Williams & Bentley, 2021).

The findings are compatible with Bandura's view that children learn through observation, consequences, practice, and self-regulation (Bandura, 1986). They also fit Lickona's integration of moral knowing, feeling, and action (Lickona, 1991). Stories and discussion supported understanding, modeling and guided reflection supported affective engagement, and role play plus routine practice supported action. This combination is consistent with developmental principles that emphasize active engagement, relationships, context, and repeated practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

The magnitude of any verified effect should be interpreted against broader evidence. Meta-analyses report positive but heterogeneous effects of early social-emotional programs, with outcomes shaped by context and implementation quality (Blewitt et al., 2018; Cipriano et al., 2023; Hung et al., 2026; Silberman et al., 2026). Choles et al. (2022) therefore argue that fidelity should be documented alongside impact. In the present design, fidelity covers modeling, discussion, guided practice, reinforcement, and habituation.

The Makassar context strengthens the relevance of the study. Local research has emphasized role modeling, moral instruction, cultural values, peace education, and contextual projects in early childhood character formation (Hajerah et al., 2026; Islami et al., 2024; Junaedah & Majid, 2026; Nuraini, 2020; Sallewatang et al., 2026). The present design contributes a focused quantitative test while allowing local values to enter through stories, examples, games, and routines.

Practically, character education can be embedded in ordinary classroom routines rather than treated as a separate subject. Cooperation can be practiced in group play, responsibility in material management, self-discipline in transitions, and empathy in peer problem solving. Teacher feedback should identify the specific behavior to repeat, such as waiting, helping, or returning materials, and expectations should remain consistent across teachers and, where possible, families.

The design has important limitations. Intact classes may differ on unmeasured characteristics, a single-school sample limits generalization, observer ratings may contain expectancy bias, and a six-week period cannot establish maintenance. The central limitation of this manuscript draft is that respondent-level data were not supplied, so all statistics are simulated. Before submission, the authors must replace or verify the numerical results, psychometric evidence, and ethics information with the actual study records.

Future research should retain item-level data, document individual exposure, include follow-up measurement, and extend the intervention across multiple kindergartens. A larger cluster-randomized or multilevel design could test class and school effects, while mixed-method follow-up could explain why some children respond more strongly than others.

CONCLUSION

This quantitative quasi-experimental manuscript evaluates a six-week structured character education program at TK Joy Kids Makassar during July-August 2026. In the simulated dataset, the intervention group obtained higher adjusted posttest prosocial behavior and self-discipline scores than the comparison group. The model links character values to teacher modeling, stories, role play, cooperative practice, reinforcement, and daily habituation, thereby translating broad character goals into observable behavior.

The study offers a practical and testable classroom framework, but the current numerical findings are illustrative only. The authors must replace or verify all simulated statistics with the actual field dataset, report the real validity and reliability evidence, and insert the actual consent and ethics information. Future studies should use larger multi-school samples and follow-up measurement to assess generalizability and maintenance.

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