

## **BUILDING DISCIPLINE IN STUDENTS OF HIGH SCHOOLS IN SURAKARTA REGENCY, INDONESIA: A CHILD-RIGHT PERSPECTIVE**

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This article aims at exploring the teachers perspectives on the approach to building discipline in students at schools in Surakarta, how they understand the concept of positive discipline, how disciplines are built at their school viewed from child right perspective, and types of punishment imposed by the schools. The participants were 22 teachers and 5 students from 15 schools in Surakarta. The data were collected through questionnaires and interview and were analyzed inductively. The findings show that all teachers perceive that to build discipline in students, teachers and school should have a clear school rules with some punishment. For the students who break the rules, there should be punishment which should 1) shape their good character, 2) make students responsible, 3) not be in the form of physical punishment, 4) be proportional, 5) be aimed to give them sanction/consequences of their fault, 6) make students learn from the mistakes, and 7) give deferrant effect. According to them, the positive discipline: 1) shapes good character of students, 2, gives reward and punishment, 3) gives positive effect, and 4) gives punitive effect. To build disciplines, their schools impose school rules for students including the sanctions for those disobeying the rules. For teachers and schools, the discipline building is for the sake of students to be better, however, the emphasis is on the importance of its punitive effect not on the communication to build awareness about the consequences of their misbehavior.

*Key words: positive discipline, child rights*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Building discipline in students of high school should regard their rights as children, as building discipline is closely related to punishment which often involves punishment for the students. As punishment may be harmful for the children, teacher awareness of child rights is important.

Child rights cover three big aspects, namely, provision, protection, and participation. Child right to provision means children have rights to get resources, skills, and contributions necessary for the survival and full development of the child. Child

rights to protection means children have the rights to get protection from all forms of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and cruelty, while child rights to participation means that children have the freedom to express opinions and be heard, the right to information, and freedom of association.

Related to building discipline, the issue of protection needs to be reflected in the rules being imposed. Corporal punishment should be avoided since it degrades children and human rights in general. As stated in General Comment no. 8 (2006), children have the the right to protection from corporal

punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment (arts. 19; 28, para. 2; and 37). Corporal or physical punishment is any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light, for examples, hitting, smacking, slapping, spanking children. But it can also involve, for example, kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding or forced ingestion. These include, for example, punishment which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child.

At schools, students are trained to be responsible for their behaviour. This is done through several ways depending on the school rules designed by the school management. However, positive discipline is viewed as the best way to build discipline in students. Positive discipline (Nelsen, 1997) is a discipline model used by schools which focuses on the positive points of behaviour, based on the idea that there are no bad children, just good and bad behaviours. Bonesheski and Runge (2004) state that by psychology research, positive discipline uses the full range of reinforcement and punishment options which include positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, positive punishment and negative punishment. Positive reinforcement is giving reward, for example by complimenting a good effort made by the students. Negative reinforcement for example by ignoring students unnecessary request. Positive punishment is giving punishment as a consequence of what the students did, for example to give students more tasks as a consequence of being absent in several meetings. Negative punishment is suspending students for a certain period because of his/her poor behavior at school. Different from negative discipline, the positive discipline is given in a kind and encouraging manner.

In other words, positive discipline is done using a clear communication of

expectation, rules and limits. This will create a respectful connection between teachers and the students. Purkey and Strahan (2002) defined the goal of positive discipline as "to invite students to see themselves as capable of tackling tough challenges, overcoming obstacles, accomplishing great things, and behave accordingly" (2002: 4). Jones and Jones (2001) have summarized a recurring set of practices that engage students in addressing their disruptive behaviors in ways that promote self-discipline. By asking students to reflect on their decisions, plan and carry out corrections, make commitments, and discuss what they have learned, teachers simultaneously hold students accountable and reinforce positive relationships.

The difference between punishment and positive discipline is mainly that punishment is a process which focuses on what a child has done wrong, while positive discipline assumes that children want to behave well but need help in understanding how to do so. Punishment is based on the idea that you have to make children suffer to encourage them to understand what they have done and discourage them from doing it again. Positive discipline on the other hand, works on the principle that children learn more through co-operation and rewards than through conflict and punishment. It also builds on the idea that when children feel good, they tend to behave well and when they feel bad they are likely to behave badly..

There are basically four kinds of punishment (Neyep, 2009), namely, 1) physical punishment such as slapping, spanking, switching, paddling, and using a belt or hair brush, 2) verbal punishment such as shaming, ridiculing, using cruel words, 3) withholding rewards and 4) penalties

Based on research, physical punishment usually doesn't work for several reasons (Sharma, 2009). First, it makes the child hate himself and others. Physical punishment makes the child think that there must be something awfully wrong with him to be treated so badly. If children think they are "bad," then they will act "bad." A vicious cycle is formed. The child who has been

treated harshly has no reason to be good. Or he may be good just to keep from being punished and not learn to be good because he thinks it is the right thing to do. Children who have been spanked feel that they have paid for their misbehavior and are free to misbehave again. In other words, spanking frees the child from feelings of remorse which are needed to prevent future misbehavior.

By 2015, research on physical punishment had expanded beyond its effect on child aggression (Durrant and Ensom, 2017). Studies were showing associations between physical punishment and mental health, physical injury, parent-child relationships and family violence in adulthood. One of the first such studies linked slapping and spanking in childhood with psychiatric disorders in adulthood in a large Canadian sample, and its findings have since been supported by an ever-growing number of studies. Physical punishment is associated with a range of mental health problems in children, youth and adults, including depression, unhappiness, anxiety, feelings of hopelessness, use of drugs and alcohol, and general psychological.

Nelsen (2015) proposed five criteria for Effective discipline: 1) Helps children feel a sense of connection. (Belonging and significance) 2) Is mutually respectful and encouraging. (Kind and firm at the same time.) 3) Is effective long - term. (Considers what the child is thinking, feeling, learning, and deciding about himself and his world – and what to do in the future to survive or to thrive.) 4) Teaches important social and life skills . (Respect, concern for others, problem solving, and cooperation as well as the skills to contribute to the home, school or larger community.) 5) Invites children to discover how capable they are. (Encourages the constructive use of personal power and autonomy.)

Furthermore Nelsen (2015) suggested tools and concepts of Positive Discipline which included: 1) Mutual respect. Adults

model firmness by respecting themselves and the needs of the situation, and kindness by respecting the needs of the child. 2) Identifying the belief behind the behavior. Effective discipline recognizes the reasons kids do what they do and works to change those beliefs, rather than merely attempting to change behavior. 3) Effective communication and problem solving skills. 4) Discipline that teaches (and is neither permissive nor punitive). 5) Focusing on solutions instead of punishment and 6) Encouragement (instead of praise). Encouragement notices effort and improvement, not just success, and builds long-term self-esteem and empowerment. Discipline that is consistent with children's rights would respect the dignity and rights-bearing status of the child and promote the healthy physical and psychological development of the child. Since teaching the child is the primary purpose of discipline, the focus here is on reducing unwanted behaviors by taking proactive measures.

Another tool to build discipline is by using consequences as a form of discipline. Gutierrez (2012) stated that logical consequences can be used to give children understanding about consequences of their misbehavior. He also proposed some steps to use logical consequences, namely, identify reasons, decide whose problem it is, offer choices, stand firm, talk to children about a positive way, let children know when she or he has done something good, if possible, let the child help decide the consequence.

Sometimes there is a thin line between logical consequences and punishment. The tone of voice, friendly attitude, and willingness to accept the child's decision are essential characteristics of logical consequences. No matter how logical an action may seem to you, if your words are threatening, the message conveyed to the child will be one of punishment. Then, your child will be resentful and angry at you for imposing the consequence, instead of taking responsibility for his or her actions and

learning from the consequence.

Research indicates that punishment and exclusion are ineffective when used without a proactive support system (Gottfredson, Karweit, & Gottfredson, 1989; Mayer, 1995; Tolan & Guerra, 1994). The current research investigated how teachers perceive positive discipline and how schools in Surakarta regency, Indonesia, build discipline in the students.

## RESEARCH METHODS

By using accidental sampling, the researcher took 22 teachers as participants from 15 schools in Surakarta Regency. The data were collected through questionnaires and interview and were analyzed inductively through data reduction, data display and data conclusion.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the questionnaire and interview, teachers perceived that building discipline in students can be done through several ways. They thought that building discipline and giving punishment are things which are closely related one to another. Students who break the rules should be punished. Related to punishment, there are some values that arise from the data collection.

### 1. Punishment

Teachers thought that punishment should meet the following requirements:

- a. shape their good character,
- b. make students responsible,
- c. not physical punishment,
- d. proportional,
- e. be aimed to give them sanction/consequences of their fault,
- f. make students learn from the mistakes, and
- g. give deferrant effect.

Viewed from the child rights perspectives and the characteristics of positive discipline teachers' perspectives about the criteria for the punishment can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Teacher's perspectives about punishment viewed from positive discipline and child rights

Punishment	Positive discipline issue	Child rights perspective
shape their good character	Encouragement notices effort and improvement, not just success, and builds long-term self-esteem and empowerment	Teachers provide good lesson for the students (Child rights to provision)
make students responsible,	Encouragement notices effort and improvement, not just success, and builds long-term self-esteem and empowerment	Teachers provide good lesson for the students (Child rights to provision)
not physical punishment	Mutual respect	Child rights to protection, avoiding harm for children
proportional,	Mutual respect	Child rights to protection, avoiding harm for children
be aimed to give them sanction/consequences of their fault,	Effective communication and problem solving skills.	Child rights to protection
make students learn from the mistakes, and	Discipline that teaches	Child rights to protection
give punitive effect.	Discipline that teaches	Child rights to protection

The findings above show that in giving punishment, basically teachers want the students to have good character and better behavior which are in line with the characteristics of positive discipline and in

some ways fulfills the children right, to get protection and to get skills and knowledge to make them better in the future. An example of punishment given, for students who came late is students have to clean the toilet as the punishment for being late. Although this punishment was meant to make students not do the same mistakes again, it was not positive discipline since the communication process was skipped. Positive discipline should open the communication space and mutual respect between teacher and student.

## 2. Positive discipline.

Related to positive discipline, teachers perceived that positive discipline is discipline which:

### a. shapes good character of students

Teachers think that positive discipline is the effort to overcome misbehavior or disruption to shape good character of students.

### b. gives reward and punishment,

Reward is given to students as an appreciation of certain achievement or conducting good behavior. The rewards can be in form of verbal praise or in some cases for students achievement, certificates.

### c. gives positive effect,

Positive discipline gives positive effect to students. By imposing punishment to make students better.

### d. gives punitive effect.

When students conduct misbehavior, positive discipline gives them punishment that makes them deterrent of doing the same misbehavior again. Teachers' perspectives about positive discipline are emphasizing the effect of positive discipline. However, they emphasize the importance of punitive effect of punishment which is not a positive discipline (Nelsen, 2015). They disregard its difference from negative discipline which gives punitive effect. Teachers emphasize the importance of punishment to build discipline and believe that it will make students better without emphasizing how teachers should

give punishment. Teachers do not think about the importance of communication to build responsibility in students.

## 3. How schools build discipline in students

To build disciplines, their schools impose school rules for students including the sanctions for those disobeying the rules, the school has defined some sanctions which consist of: verbal or written warning, scorsing/suspending students, other sanctions defined by school principal, submitted to the police for crimes, and return the students to their parents.

The followings are the kinds of indiscipline behaviour taking place at school based on the interview:

Table 2. Disruptive behavior and its sanction

Kinds of disruptive behaviour	Sanction/punishment
Bullying friends	Teacher asks the student to apologize for bullying their friends
Playing truant	Teachers Invite the parents to come to school and ask the students not to play truant anymore.
not doing the homework	Teachers give additional work to the students so that they should do more work.
Chatting in the class room	verbal warning
Coming late	The students and their parents
Being noisy in the classroom	Oral warning
using and playing cell phone while teacher is delivering	Cellphone is taken, students can get the phone after writing a letter signed by their parents

lessons	
Smoking in the school area	Verbal warning
Sleeping while teacher is delivering lessons	Verbal warning
Not bringing textbooks	Verbal warning
The Quarelling with friends	Depending of the level of the fight

The table above shows some cases of disruptive behavior has been taken place at schools being investigated. The sanctions are varied depending on the disruptive behavior conducted. However, students who conducted disruptive behaviour categorized as crime such as stealing, forging, drugs abusing, can be punished without any warning. Viewed from positive discipline and child rights perspectives, the sanctions having been given are without emphasizing the steps of positive discipline as suggested by Nielsen (2015). The punishment given should not be meant to give punitive effect. It should be given to fulfill the child rights to provision which is providing skills for survival in social life by conducting good behavior. This implies that teachers should be trained to apply positive discipline as to distinguish it from negative discipline which emphasizes on punitive effect. Verbal warning can be used effectively if it is not in form of verbal punishment, but use it as effective communication that gives logical consequences to make students understand and encourage them to obey the rule.

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The findings show that teacher perceive that building discipline cannot be separated from giving punishment. The school has formulated rules to maintain the students disciplines including sanctions for those who break the rules. Teachers view that positive discipline in building discipline with punishment which make students have better character and attitude so that they do not

make another mistake anymore. However, the findings imply that it is important to train teachers to apply positive discipline. Viewed from child right perspective, the effort of building discipline in students are in line with the child rights to provision and protection is some cases. However, the students' voice to be heard should also be concerns so that teachers can maintain connectedness with the students to build effective communication that raise awareness of the students to conduct good behavior.

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