

The Impact of Clean and Healthy Living Behavior Program on the Independence and Discipline of Children Aged 4-5 Years

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Article Info

Abstract

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Clean and Healthy Living Behavior (CHLB) in early childhood is crucial for supporting children's health, independence, and discipline. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the CHLB program on the independence and discipline of children aged 4–5 years. A quantitative ex post facto design was employed with a sample of 150 children from kindergartens in Banda Sakti District, selected through purposive sampling. The instruments were validated through content validity with reliability coefficients of 0.892 for independence and 0.948 for discipline. Data were analyzed using an independent sample t-test. The findings revealed significant differences in independence (Sig. 0.000 < 0.05; $t = 5.832 > t\text{-table } 1.646$) and discipline (Sig. 0.000 < 0.05; $t = 8.591 > t\text{-table } 1.646$) between schools that implemented CHLB for 10 years and 5 years. These results imply that CHLB programs can strengthen independence and discipline, and serve as a foundation for policy and early childhood education practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is the initial stage in the development process of children from birth to six years of age, which includes the strengthening of various physical and non-physical aspects. At this stage, children are provided with appropriate stimulation to support physical growth, spiritual development, motor skills, cognitive abilities, emotional regulation, and social interaction so that children can develop holistically and optimally (Dian Pertiwi et al., 2021). Early childhood education serves to encourage, guide, hone, and develop children's skills. This education is tailored to the child's development. During this crucial period, the role of parents and educators is very important in guiding and directing children to establish a strong foundation for their development and future lives.

The development of values in character education must be based on primary sources that have a strong relevance to national and state life, namely the teachings of the adopted religion, the noble values contained in Pancasila, local traditions and culture that reflect the nation's identity, as well as the main objectives outlined in the Indonesian national education system. Character education is an integral part of stimulation in early childhood, facilitating the development of a child's natural potential in understanding, shaping attitudes, and actions that become habits, so that these values are ingrained in the child's soul into adulthood (Ramadhanty et al., 2025). An individual's personality in adulthood depends on the character education received during childhood. Childhood is a critical phase that significantly shapes a person's basic personality in adulthood, as child development encompasses various factors, including physical growth, behavior, cognitive processes, emotions, morals, and attitudes, all of which are influenced by the context of family, environment, and education (Hasanah & Fajri, 2022).

Character education in early childhood has a significant impact on the development of a child's personality, especially in fostering independence, which serves as a fundamental basis for developing a sense of responsibility and self-confidence in adulthood.

Children need to be accustomed to being independent in carrying out daily activities under the guidance of adults, as a form of their readiness to face various challenges in the future (Nurjanah & Agus, 2021). The development of children's independence, including decision-making and taking independent actions without reliance on others, is a skill that must be cultivated from an early age (Hermawan, 2024). Independence allows individuals to operate autonomously, pursue their own initiatives to meet personal needs without external assistance. Indicators of independence in children aged 4-5 years include: (1) buttoning or zipping independently, (2) tying and untying shoelaces independently, (3) eating by themselves, (4) going to and from school independently (for those living near the school), (5) choosing toys independently, (6) bathing, urinating, and defecating (toilet training) with assistance, (7) completing tasks without help, (8) playing games of their own choice, (9) managing self-care with assistance, such as dressing, and (10) the ability to separate from their mother without feeling anxious or crying (Pareira & Atal, 2019). Internal and external factors influence a child's independence. Children can manage internal factors such as emotions and cognition, while external factors include the environment, social interactions, parenting styles, affection, parental education, and the parents' level of employment (Veriawan et al., 2023).

Independence is a part of character education, and it is often associated with discipline. Discipline is a characteristic that should be instilled in children from an early age. Hurlock (2005) states that children need discipline to achieve happiness by becoming balanced individuals, as discipline allows children to learn and act in accordance with social norms (Salsabila & Diana, 2021). Discipline is an important trait for achieving success in a child's endeavors, making it essential for a child's development. Discipline in childhood refers to self-regulation in the behavior of children aged 0-6 years, in accordance with the values, norms, and standards established within the context of the household or school (Nurhayati et al., 2024). Discipline includes guidance, advice, or rewards given by parents to their children or by educators to their students. Discipline is a state that enables individuals or children to develop behaviors that align with the norms established in social life. In line with (Sianturi et al., 2023) ingrained discipline will habituate children to practice positive behaviors daily, including compliance with rules and regulations both in educational settings and in the wider community.

Discipline in early childhood is not only formed through guidance and advice but also through habitual practices in daily activities. Children learn to understand rules and responsibilities through direct experiences in both school and home environments. In this process, disciplined behavior begins to emerge and can be observed through the simple actions children perform in their daily lives. (Ustman & Hanifah, 2021) identified several indicators of discipline among children aged 4-5 years. These indicators include compliance with established rules, obedience to game regulations, returning play equipment to its designated place, disposing of waste properly, patiently waiting for their turn, and stopping play activities at the designated time (Rahmi & Anggraeni, 2023). These behaviors reflect the development of self-control and the ability of children to follow routines and social norms within their environment. Thus, the development of discipline in early childhood is a gradual process that occurs through experience, habituation, and support from the surrounding environment, both family and school.

Based on observations conducted at 4 kindergarten schools in Banda Sakti District, Lhokseumawe City, Aceh Province, it was found that the level of independence in children at school has not yet developed optimally. This is evident from several behaviors that indicate children's dependence on teachers and parents, such as children who are not yet able to eat by themselves and children who cannot take off their shoes without the help of a teacher or parent. Many parents of early childhood children still do not understand how to develop independence in their children, as explained (Ustman & Hanifah, 2021). Many of them tend to take over their children's tasks, such as assisting with activities that the children should be able to do by themselves. This attitude creates a misconception that helping children means making things easier for them, whereas in reality, it causes children to become accustomed to depending on others and less independent in carrying out their activities both at school and at home. In addition, some children were still not accustomed to washing their hands after playing outside, throwing trash carelessly, or tidying up toys after using them. In line with this, (Putri & Hazizah, 2023) also found similar issues, where observations conducted in Group B of TK Telkom Padang showed that some children still demonstrated undisciplined behavior, particularly in terms of neatness. One example can be seen from the children's habit of not being able to tidy up their toys after use. This condition reflects the children's low awareness of responsibility and compliance with the rules established in the school environment.

Another issue observed was the lack of opportunities provided by both parents and teachers for children to practice independence and discipline. Parents, when dropping their children off at school, often still take over tasks that should be done by the children themselves, such as taking off their shoes and placing them on the rack. This habit makes children less accustomed to being independent in carrying out daily activities. This is consistent with the findings (Suprihatin & Rosita, 2020), who revealed that out of 23 Group B students in kindergarten, 17 children were still highly dependent on their parents or other adults. These children often asked for help with putting on and taking off their shoes, preparing and tidying up eating utensils, cleaning up toys, and even

completing their assignments. On the other hand, teachers sometimes did not provide firm encouragement or consistent routines to foster a sense of responsibility in children, such as reminding them to tidy up their toys after playing. These habits limited children's opportunities to develop independence and discipline. In line with this (Martin et al., 2022), found that the sense of responsibility among early childhood children has not yet developed optimally. Children were not accustomed to completing assigned tasks, putting items back in their proper places, or tidying up toys after use. This was due to the fact that children were often assisted in completing their tasks or cleaning up toys, which prevented them from becoming accustomed to taking responsibility for the tools and spaces they had used independently. .

From the issues observed in several schools in Banda Sakti District, Lhokseumawe City, there is a need for efforts to assess the level of independence and discipline in children. One solution that can be implemented is through the Clean and Healthy Living Behavior Program (CHLB). The implementation of Clean and Healthy Living Behavior (CHLB) has been promoted in Indonesia and is regulated under the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia Regulation Number: 2269/Menkes/PER/XI/2021 concerning Guidelines for Clean and Healthy Living Behavior. The implementation of Clean and Healthy Living Behavior (CHLB) in schools is a set of behaviors practiced by students, teachers, and the school community based on awareness as a result of learning, enabling them to independently prevent diseases, improve health, and actively contribute to creating a healthy environment (Permenkes, 2020). The implementation of CHLB can be achieved through habituation, which includes: 'Praying before and after meals, greeting others when meeting them, helping others, maintaining personal hygiene such as brushing teeth, using the restroom, and bathing. Keeping the environment clean, disposing of trash in designated places, adhering to school regulations, performing religious activities according to their beliefs, expressing gratitude when receiving something, respecting parents and elders, using polite language and having a pleasant demeanor, arriving at school on time, and cleaning eating utensils after use (Julianti Ratna et al., 2018). The implementation of the Clean and Healthy Living Behavior Program (CHLB) not only contributes to improving children's health but also supports the development of independence and discipline.

Several previous studies have discussed the implementation of the Clean and Healthy Living Behavior (CHLB) Program in relation to the development of children's character, particularly in aspects of hygiene, health, and social behavior. However, most of these studies have primarily focused on the relationship between CHLB and children's physical health, rather than examining its influence on the formation of independence and discipline in early childhood. For instance (Devi Ardiani & Fitriyani, 2021) investigated the implementation of CHLB in schools and found that children's clean and healthy living behavior remained in the moderate category due to high parental intervention. Meanwhile, (Andriani & Rahmawati, 2023) highlighted that teachers' inconsistency in habituating PHBS was a contributing factor to the lack of discipline among children at school. Similarly, (Ratnawatiningsih & Hastuti, 2022) emphasized the importance of collaboration between teachers and parents in implementing CHLB-based routines, yet their study did not specifically measure how such implementation affects two key aspects of character children's independence and discipline. Furthermore, (Siti Wahidah et al., 2024) focused on children's dependency on adults in daily activities without directly associating it with the implementation of CHLB in educational institutions. Likewise, (Martin et al., 2022) examined early childhood responsibility but did not situate their findings within the framework of a structured school health program such as CHLB. Based on these previous studies, it is evident that few have specifically explored the effectiveness of the CHLB Program that has been implemented for several years in developing independence and discipline among children aged 4–5 years. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on integrating healthy living habits with character development in early childhood through an evaluative approach to the effectiveness of CHLB implementation in early childhood education institutions. In addition, this study is unique in that it compares institutions that have implemented the CHLB Program for 10 years and 5 years, thereby providing a comprehensive overview of the program's effectiveness over different durations of implementation. This comparative perspective distinguishes the present study from previous research, which tended to be descriptive without considering the temporal dimension of CHLB application. Therefore, the findings of this study are expected to contribute new insights into the development of an evaluative model of PHBS implementation that not only emphasizes cleanliness and health but also supports the strengthening of independence and discipline as key aspects of character formation in early childhood.

This study aims to explore the implementation of the Clean and Healthy Living Behavior Program (CHLB) in helping children develop independence and discipline. Considering the various issues and facts mentioned above, research on the effectiveness of the PHBS Program becomes crucial to determine the extent to which the program, which has been running for 5 to 10 years, has successfully achieved its goals in enhancing children's independence and discipline. This study is expected to provide a comprehensive overview and serve as material for evaluation and improvement of educational policies in the Banda Sakti area and other regions facing similar issues.

2. METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach with an ex-post facto method. The ex-post facto method is used to analyze cause-and-effect relationships between variables based on events that have already occurred,

without any manipulation of the independent variable. This approach was chosen because the Clean and Healthy Living Behavior (CHLB) Program had already been implemented in several early childhood education institutions for years, making it impossible for the researcher to manipulate the independent variable. Through this approach, the researcher aims to objectively examine the effect of the CHLB Program on children's independence and discipline aged 4–5 years based on existing conditions in the field. The data collected in this research are quantitative, obtained from questionnaires filled out by kindergarten teachers in Banda Sakti District, Lhokseumawe City. The data consist of two main variables: (1) children's independence and (2) children's discipline. These variables were measured using standardized instruments developed according to early childhood developmental characteristics. The research instruments used in this study were closed-ended questionnaires consisting of statements related to children's independence and discipline. Each item was rated on a four-point Likert scale, with response options: strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). The questionnaires were constructed based on aspects relevant to the observed variables and were tested for validity and reliability before data collection.

The instruments used in this study were developed based on theoretical and empirical foundations relevant to early childhood development, specifically focusing on children's independence and discipline. The instrument for measuring independence was adapted from the theoretical framework proposed by Steinberg (2002), which emphasizes autonomy as a developmental task in early childhood, and was further modified by (Suhaini, 2023). This instrument consisted of indicators reflecting essential dimensions of independence, including the ability to perform daily activities without assistance, the ability to make simple decisions independently, the ability to engage in social interaction, and the ability to regulate emotions appropriately. These indicators were formulated to comprehensively capture the behavioral and emotional aspects of independence that emerge in children aged 4–5 years. Meanwhile, the discipline instrument was developed by referring to the theory of moral and behavioral discipline proposed by Hurlock (2005), and further adapted from the research of (Purba & Farida, 2023) who operationalized discipline in early childhood into observable behavioral indicators. The instrument included indicators that represented key aspects of discipline, such as punctuality in completing activities, neatness in both appearance and behavior, obedience to classroom and school rules, and orderliness in using tools and facilities. These indicators were selected because they reflect observable behaviors that are fundamental to the development of self-regulation and social responsibility in early childhood.

The data analysis technique used in this study was inferential statistical analysis through an independent sample t-test. This analysis was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in independence and discipline between children in institutions that had implemented the CHLB Program for 10 years and those that had implemented it for 5 years. The data analysis technique used in this research is inferential statistical analysis through an independent samples t-test. This analysis was conducted to determine whether there are significant differences in independence and discipline between children in institutions that have implemented the CHLB Program for 10 years and those that have implemented it for 5 years. The data analysis process was carried out systematically with the following steps: (1) Data preparation, which includes checking data completeness, coding questionnaire responses, and calculating total scores for each variable (independence and discipline) based on the Likert scale; (2) Assumption testing, including normality testing using the Shapiro-Wilk test to ensure normal data distribution ($p > 0.05$), homogeneity of variance testing using Levene's test to ensure equal variances between the two groups ($p > 0.05$), and outlier checking using boxplots to avoid extreme data that could affect the results; (3) Execution of the independent t-test, where data from the 5-year CHLB group and the 10-year CHLB group are compared for each variable, with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$; (4) Interpretation of results, which involves evaluating the t-value, degrees of freedom (df), and p-value (Sig. 2-tailed) to determine the significance of the difference, as well as calculating the effect size using Cohen's d to measure the practical magnitude of the difference between groups. This analysis was performed using SPSS statistical software version 25, with outputs including t-test result tables, means, and standard deviations for each group. The research design of this study was developed based on the ex post facto approach. For a clearer understanding, Figure 1 presents the steps followed in this study.

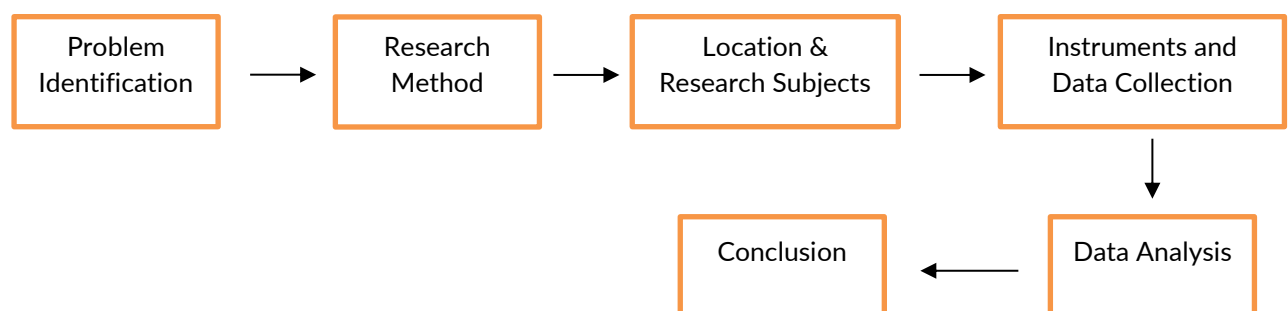


Figure 1. Research Design

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research is titled “The Impact of Clean and Healthy Living Behavior Program on the Independence and Discipline of Children Aged 4-5 Years”. This study was conducted in 8 kindergartens that have implemented the Clean and Healthy Living Behavior Program (CHLB) for 5 to 10 years. The subjects of this study are children aged 4-5 years, totaling 150 children, both boys and girls.

Differences in Independence of 4-5-Year-Olds: 5 vs 10 Years of CHLB Implementation

The results of the data analysis indicate a significant difference in the level of independence among children aged 4-5 years between schools that have implemented the Clean and Healthy Living Behavior Program (CHLB) for 5 years and those that have done so for 10 years. For a clearer understanding, Table 1 presents the results of the Independent T-Test for the independence variable.

Table 1. Independent T-Test (Independence)						
Independent Samples Test						
t-test for Equality of Means						
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Independence Results	Equal variances assumed	5.832	148	.000	5.35470	.91823
	Equal variances not assumed	5.875	146.412	.000	5.35470	.91147

As shown in Table 1, the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.000 (< 0.05), and the t-value is greater than the t-table value (5.832 > 1.646). This indicates a significant difference, showing that the longer the CHLB program is implemented, the higher the level of children’s independence. Statistically, this difference reflects the real effect of prolonged exposure to clean and healthy living habits on children’s ability to carry out daily activities independently.

This study was conducted in 8 kindergartens that have implemented CHLB for 5 to 10 years, but not all TK have uniform implementation standards. For example, some TK may have a school character more focused on holistic education with support from infrastructure such as automatic handwashing facilities and clean play areas, while others rely on limited resources. In addition, the quality of implementation varies between schools; some teachers may be more skilled in providing consistent positive reinforcement, while others may be less trained, thus affecting program effectiveness. The hygiene culture in the surrounding school environment also plays a role, where TK in urban areas with high community awareness of health may strengthen the impact of CHLB, compared to TK in rural areas. Without strict control over these variables, the difference in independence results cannot be fully attributed solely to program duration, but also to the complex interaction between duration, implementation quality, and socio-cultural context.

Theoretically, these findings support Skinner’s behaviorist theory, which states that behavior is shaped through repeated positive reinforcement (Shahbana et al., 2020). The psychological mechanism behind it involves the operant conditioning process, where children who consistently receive praise, appreciation, or support each time they display clean and independent behavior—such as dressing themselves or cleaning toys—experience an increase in the frequency of that behavior through positive reinforcement. In an educational context, this process occurs gradually during CHLB implementation, where daily routines such as washing hands before meals or tidying beds become stimuli reinforced by a supportive school environment. Thus, the causal relationship between the duration of CHLB implementation and the increase in independence can be explained through habituation mechanisms reinforced by a supportive learning environment.

This finding is consistent with (Desita et al., 2024) and (Nasution, 2024) who found that a school environment that consistently promotes cleanliness and order significantly contributes to the development of independence in early childhood. In contrast, (Tanesib, 2022) found that implementing a hygiene program without active teacher reinforcement did not significantly affect children’s independence. These results emphasize the importance of teachers’ roles in providing positive reinforcement within the CHLB context. Considering the high t-value and significant mean difference, it can be interpreted that the effect of CHLB implementation duration is more dominant than other factors such as age or gender, although interaction with contextual variables such as teacher quality needs to be considered further in future research.

Differences in Discipline of 4-5-Year-Olds: 5 vs 10 Years of CHLB Implementation

Based on the results of the independent t-test analysis, there is a significant difference in discipline scores between children in schools that have implemented the Clean and Healthy Living Behavior Program (CHLB) for 5 years and those that have implemented it for 10 years. For clarity, Table 2 displays the results of the Independent T-Test for the discipline variable.

Table 2. Independent T-Test (Discipline)
Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means				
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Discipline Results	Equal variances assumed	8.591	148	.000	9.44017	1.09882
	Equal variances not assumed	8.448	119.332	.000	9.44017	1.11742

As presented in Table 2, the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.000 (< 0.05), and the t -value is higher than the t -table value ($8.591 > 1.646$). The average discipline score in the 5-year CHLB group is 46.11, while in the 10-year CHLB group it is 55.55. This shows an increase in disciplined behavior with the longer implementation of the CHLB program, indicating the success of routine-based self-regulation development in children. As with the independence variable, variations in CHLB implementation standards across the 8 TK—for example, some schools may have stricter and more consistent rules, while others depend on individual teacher initiatives—can influence the results. Teacher quality, such as their ability to model disciplined behavior, also plays a role; more experienced teachers may be more effective in integrating CHLB into daily activities. In addition, the hygiene culture in the school environment, such as support from parents or the community, can strengthen the program's impact, where children in schools with a strong collective culture may more easily adopt disciplined behavior. Without additional data on implementation homogeneity, these results may be influenced by external factors such as socio-economic differences between schools, which need to be controlled in future research to ensure the validity of attribution to program duration.

According to Bandura's social learning theory (1986), children learn through observation and imitation of others' behaviors, especially those they perceive as models. The psychological mechanism here involves the vicarious learning process, where children observe teachers and peers as positive models demonstrating disciplined behaviors, such as disposing of trash properly or maintaining personal hygiene. In an educational context, this imitation is reinforced by social reinforcement, such as group praise or symbolic rewards, which shape behavioral patterns through the internalization of social values. With prolonged exposure over 10 years, this process becomes stronger, transforming temporary behavior into stable habits, allowing children to regulate themselves according to social norms.

These findings are supported by (Lailatul Ellyn, 2020) (Pratiwi et al., 2025) who reported that habituation through school cleanliness routines enhances children's compliance and discipline. Similarly, (Mulia & Kurniati, 2023) highlighted that teacher involvement and rule consistency are key factors in successfully developing discipline, with educational mechanisms involving scaffolding—that is, gradual support from teachers to build self-regulation. Thus, the relationship between statistical results and Bandura's theory becomes evident: the longer children are exposed to positive behavioral modeling, the higher the level of discipline they develop, although contextual variations need to be acknowledged.

Integrative Analysis, Limitations, and Practical Implications

Integratively, the significance value (Sig. 0.000) and large mean differences not only demonstrate statistical variation but also reinforce the theoretical understanding that behavior is shaped by the interaction between stimulus (CHLB habituation), response (clean and orderly behavior), and reinforcement (teacher appreciation or modeling). The two variables—independence and discipline—show an interdependent relationship; for example, children who are more independent in hygiene routines (such as washing hands themselves) tend to be more disciplined in following daily schedules, as both develop together as a result of consistent CHLB habits. A simple correlation analysis (although not presented here) could confirm that increased independence correlates positively with discipline, reflecting the synergy between Skinner's theory (reinforcement for independence) and Bandura's theory (modeling for discipline).

However, this study has several limitations that need to be balanced for more accurate interpretation. First, the research design does not control for contextual variables such as differences in CHLB implementation

standards across TK, teacher quality, or hygiene culture in the environment, which may cause a confounding effect—that is, the difference results are not entirely caused by program duration. Second, the sample size (150 children from 8 TK) may not be sufficiently representative for national generalization, especially due to regional variations. Third, variable measurement relies on subjective instruments such as teacher observations, which are prone to bias. Fourth, this study does not explore long-term impacts beyond the age of 4-5 years, so the effectiveness of CHLB in older children's development is unknown. These limitations suggest the need for further research with stricter experimental designs, such as randomized controlled trials, to isolate the effects of program duration.

Practically, these findings carry important implications for early childhood education (ECE). Teachers can implement habit-based learning strategies by reinforcing positive behaviors through praise, modeling, and the creation of classroom environments that support daily hygiene routines, while considering contextual variations such as teacher training for implementation standardization. For example, teachers can encourage children to wash their hands independently, prepare their eating utensils, and follow daily schedules with discipline. These strategies not only improve children's health but also cultivate independence and responsibility.

Furthermore, the results of this study can serve as a reference for ECE institutions in designing CHLB-based curricula integrated with character education, with an emphasis on periodic evaluations to ensure consistency across schools. Such programs can evolve into holistic educational models that foster independence, discipline, and social responsibility in early childhood, while addressing limitations through collaboration with stakeholders such as parents and communities.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the CHLB Program significantly improves independence and discipline in children aged 4-5 years, with greater effectiveness observed in schools implementing it for 10 years compared to those with shorter durations. This highlights the importance of sustained program implementation in shaping positive habits and behaviors in young children. Recommendations include expanding CHLB to more early childhood education institutions with regular monitoring and evaluation, and conducting further research on its long-term impact on children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Parental involvement through training is also crucial to maintain consistency between school and home. Educational policies should prioritize habit-based programs like PHBS for stronger character building in children.

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