



Parenting Across Generations: A Comparative Analysis of Millennial and Generation Z Parenting Practices in Shaping Discipline among Young Children

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Abstract: This study aims to compare the parenting practices of Millennial and Generation Z parents in shaping discipline among young children and to identify similarities and differences in the strategies they employ in everyday parenting. The study employed a qualitative comparative approach involving eight families with children aged 3–4 years in Bekasi, Indonesia. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on parental generation, children's age, and parents' active involvement in daily caregiving. The researcher served as the primary research instrument, with data collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of data analysis, comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings indicate that Millennial parents tend to foster children's discipline through structured routines, consistent rules, positive reinforcement, and parental modeling. In contrast, Generation Z parents tend to emphasize dialogical communication, flexible rule implementation, and emotional validation when guiding children's behavior. Despite these differences, both generations share a common commitment to fostering children's discipline through active parental involvement. The study also identified digital technology use and inconsistencies among multiple caregivers as major challenges to maintaining children's discipline. Conceptually, the findings contribute to the understanding of discipline formation by demonstrating that supportive parenting practices may integrate structured routines with communication-based guidance. Practically, the findings provide implications for parents, educators, and family education programs in developing balanced discipline strategies that combine consistency, emotional support, and collaborative regulation of children's digital media use.

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Introduction

Early childhood is widely recognized as a critical period for the development of self-regulation, social-emotional competence, and character, as children begin to acquire behavioral norms, values, and habits through continuous interactions with their family environment (Okorn et al., 2022a; Prime et al., 2023a). During this stage, the family serves as the child's first educational environment, where parents play a central role in introducing daily routines, behavioral expectations, and social values that support discipline development. Rather than being established through punishment or external control alone, discipline develops gradually through consistent routines, positive guidance, emotional support, and parental modeling, enabling children to internalize appropriate behaviors and self-control over time (Li et al., 2023a; Ren et al., 2022).



Recent studies have shown that parenting practices play an important role in children's behavioral development. Positive parenting, parental warmth, responsiveness, and non-harsh discipline have been associated with better developmental outcomes in early childhood (Prime et al., 2023b). Positive discipline programs have also been reported to reduce authoritarian and permissive parenting tendencies while increasing parental competence in guiding children's behavior (Carroll, 2022). These findings indicate that discipline is more effectively developed through constructive parenting strategies, such as giving explanations, setting clear expectations, providing reinforcement, and building supportive parent-child relationships. Similarly, research on parenting style shows that democratic and authoritative parenting practices are more supportive of children's emotional management, self-control, and social adjustment than authoritarian patterns (Li et al., 2023). (Carroll, 2022) Thus, the formation of discipline in early childhood is closely related to the quality of parental involvement in everyday family life.

Another important issue in the development of early childhood discipline is the role of routines. Consistent routines provide predictability and help children understand the sequence of activities, behavioral limits, and responsibilities in daily life. Studies on child routines suggest that predictable home routines are associated with children's self-regulation, school readiness, and socio-emotional development (Ren et al., 2022). For young children, routines such as waking up, eating, bathing, playing, resting, and limiting screen time can function as concrete learning structures that help them gradually internalize discipline. Therefore, discipline is not formed instantly, but through repeated habituation that is supported by consistency, parental guidance, and meaningful interaction.

In addition to routines and reinforcement, parental emotion socialization has become an important focus in current parenting research. Children's ability to accept rules and regulate behavior is influenced by how parents respond to children's emotions, especially when children refuse instructions, experience frustration, or show tantrums. Emotionally oriented parenting emphasizes parental sensitivity, emotional validation, and constructive dialogue in helping children understand both their feelings and behavioral limits (King et al., 2023; Zahl-Olsen et al., 2023). Recent research also shows that parenting styles influence children's emotion management skills through self-control and peer interaction (Li et al., 2023b). These studies strengthen the view that discipline in early childhood should not be separated from emotional development. Parents who are able to balance firmness, empathy, and explanation are more likely to help children develop internal discipline rather than mere external compliance.

The development of digital technology has added new complexity to parenting practices. Children today grow up in a digital environment where gadgets, online videos, and mobile applications are increasingly present in everyday life. Research on preschool children during and after the pandemic indicates that screen exposure, bedtime media use, and parental mediation are important issues in children's development (Fitzpatrick et al., 2022). Other studies also emphasize that the effect of screen use depends not only on duration, but also on content quality, parental involvement, co-use, and mediation strategies (Matteo Alessio Chiappedi et al., 2025; Toth et al., 2026). Parental digital mediation, including monitoring, setting rules, accompanying children, and discussing digital content, has become a key parenting practice in the digital era (Rudnova et al., 2023). These findings show that the challenge of discipline in contemporary families is no longer limited to meal time, sleep time, or play time, but also includes the regulation of children's screen time and digital habits.



The state of the art in recent research therefore indicates that early childhood discipline has been widely studied in relation to positive parenting, routines, self-regulation, emotion socialization, and digital parenting. However, most studies still examine these aspects separately. Studies on positive parenting tend to focus on parenting quality and child outcomes (Carroll, 2022; Prime et al., 2023b), studies on routines emphasize predictability and self-regulation (Ren et al., 2022), studies on emotion socialization examine parental responses to children's emotions (King et al., 2023). Studies on digital parenting focus on screen time regulation and parental mediation (Ata-Aktürk & Akman, 2024; Rudnova et al., 2023). Meanwhile, research that directly compares the parenting patterns of Millennial and Generation Z parents in shaping early childhood discipline remains limited, particularly in the context of Indonesian urban families.

The comparison between Millennial and Generation Z parenting practices is particularly relevant in the context of contemporary urban families in Indonesia, where rapid digital transformation and changing family structures have influenced parenting practices. Although this study focuses on comparing parenting practices between Millennial and Generation Z parents, childcare in many Indonesian families continues to involve grandparents and other members of the extended family. Such multigenerational caregiving may contribute to differences in parenting values, disciplinary expectations, and digital media regulation, potentially affecting the consistency of children's discipline practices (Bai et al., 2023; Ilma Antawati, 2020). Therefore, examining parenting across generations provides a deeper understanding of how generational experiences shape discipline practices among young children within the sociocultural context of Indonesian families.

Understanding parenting across generations requires considering how parents' generational experiences shape their parenting practices. Rather than assuming that parenting approaches are identical across generations, previous studies suggest that differences in technological exposure, access to parenting information, and family experiences may influence how parents establish routines, communicate with children, regulate digital media use, and respond to children's emotional needs. Millennial parents tend to adapt parenting practices by balancing children's developmental needs with guidance in digital media use, whereas Generation Z parents are more likely to integrate digital literacy, open communication, parental modelling, and emotional support into everyday parenting practices (Anzalna Lasifa et al., 2026; Ramandhani et al., 2024). Although both generations raise children within the same digital environment, differences in parenting practices may influence how discipline is developed through routines, communication, reinforcement, and screen-time regulation. Therefore, examining parenting across generations provides an important perspective for understanding how different parenting practices contribute to discipline development among young children.

In the Indonesian early childhood education context, studies on character formation have also emphasized the importance of appropriate media, family involvement, and contextualized educational practices. For example, highlighted the relevance of anti-corruption character education media for early childhood, showing that character values need to be introduced through developmentally appropriate and meaningful approaches. Although this study focused on character education media, its contribution is relevant to the present research because discipline is also part of character formation that must be cultivated through consistent, concrete, and contextual experiences in children's daily lives. Therefore, the study of parenting patterns across generations can enrich discussions on early childhood character



education, especially in relation to discipline, family routines, communication, and digital challenges (Masykuroh & Nisa, 2025).

Based on the existing studies, the scientific novelty of this article lies in its comparative focus on the parenting patterns of Millennial and Generation Z parents in shaping the discipline character of early childhood children. Unlike previous studies that mainly discussed parenting style, digital parenting, or child discipline as separate topics, this study places parental generation as the main lens for understanding differences and similarities in discipline formation. This article specifically compares how Millennial and Generation Z parents apply habituation, structured routines, positive reinforcement, parental modeling, dialogical communication, flexibility of rules, emotional validation, and digital technology regulation in the daily lives of children aged 3–4 years.

The research problem addressed in this study is the lack of empirical understanding of how generational differences among parents influence strategies for shaping discipline in early childhood. In daily family life, parents may share the same goal of developing disciplined behavior, but they may differ in the ways they communicate rules, maintain consistency, negotiate routines, respond to children's emotions, and regulate screen time. These differences are important to examine because inconsistent discipline strategies may create confusion for children in understanding limits, responsibilities, and expected behavior. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research question: How do the parenting patterns of Millennial and Generation Z parents compare in shaping the discipline character of early childhood children?

This study aims to compare the parenting patterns of Millennial and Generation Z parents in shaping the discipline character of early childhood children and to identify the similarities and differences in parenting strategies applied in children's daily routines. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of family-based early childhood education by providing a clearer understanding of how generational characteristics influence parenting practices, discipline formation, and digital regulation in contemporary families.

Research Method

This study used a qualitative method with a comparative study approach to compare the parenting patterns of Millennial and Generation Z parents in shaping the discipline character of early childhood children. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore parenting practices, family interactions, and children's daily routines in depth and contextually (Lim, 2025; Y. Sun et al., 2023). The study was conducted in Bekasi, Indonesia, from December 2025 to May 2026.

The subjects of this study were eight families with children aged 3–4 years, consisting of four Millennial parent families (born between 1981 and 1996) and four Generation Z parent families (born between 1997 and 2012). Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: parents belonged to the Millennial or Generation Z group, had children aged 3–4 years, lived in Bekasi, Indonesia, were directly involved in daily childcare, and were willing to participate in interviews, observations, and documentation. Purposive sampling was used because qualitative research requires participants who have direct experience with the phenomenon being studied (Hou et al., 2023; Jokar et al., 2023).

The researcher served as the main instrument in this study and was directly involved in data collection, interpretation, and validation. Supporting instruments included semi-structured interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation guidelines. The



instruments were developed based on several dimensions of parenting and discipline formation, including habituation, daily routines, family rules, communication patterns, positive reinforcement, parental modeling, emotional validation, and screen time regulation.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to explore parents' experiences, strategies, and challenges in shaping children's discipline. Observations were used to examine parent-child interactions, implementation of daily routines, rule-setting, reinforcement, and screen time regulation. Documentation was used to support interview and observation data, such as notes on children's daily routines and family activity schedules.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed (Miles et al., 2014), which consists of three concurrent activities: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. These analytical activities were conducted continuously throughout the research process to identify patterns, compare parenting practices between Millennial and Generation Z parents, and draw credible conclusions.

The validity of the data was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, time triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information from different participants, while technique triangulation was conducted by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. Time triangulation was applied by confirming data at different times during the research period. Member checking was conducted by asking participants to confirm the researcher's interpretation of the data to ensure that the findings reflected their actual experiences (Lloyd et al., 2024; Mckim & Mckim, 2023).

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the discipline character of early childhood children is shaped through different but interrelated parenting strategies applied by Millennial and Generation Z parents. Based on interviews, observations, and documentation, both groups of parents attempted to build children's discipline through daily routines, rule-setting, positive reinforcement, parental involvement, and digital media regulation. However, the comparison showed a clear difference in the dominant orientation of parenting. Millennial parents tended to emphasize structured routines, consistency, habituation, reinforcement, and modeling, while Generation Z parents tended to emphasize dialogical communication, flexibility, emotional validation, and adaptive negotiation in applying rules. These findings show that discipline in early childhood is not merely the result of parental control, but is formed through repeated interaction between family rules, children's emotional responses, and parental strategies in everyday life. Discipline is more effective when parents provide support, stimulation, positive guidance, and clear structure in children's daily activities (Okorn et al., 2022b).

Parenting Patterns of Millennial Parents in Shaping Early Childhood Discipline

The first finding shows that Millennial parents formed children's discipline through habituation and structured daily routines. Parents in this group tended to set clear schedules for waking up, eating, bathing, playing, resting, and using gadgets. This pattern appeared in the statement of Ibu Mutiara, who explained that discipline was built from repeated habits rather than fear or punishment. This statement indicates that children's disciplined behavior was constructed through consistent repetition until the behavior became part of their daily routine.



Scientifically, this finding can be understood through the relationship between structure, consistency, and children's self-regulation. Children aged 3–4 years are still developing inhibitory control, attention, and the ability to delay gratification. Therefore, predictable routines help them understand what should be done, when it should be done, and what behavioral limits must be followed. Structured parenting can function as an external regulatory system that helps children gradually internalize self-control and discipline (Park et al., 2022).

The second finding shows that Millennial parents used positive reinforcement to strengthen disciplined behavior. Reinforcement was given through verbal praise and simple rewards when children followed routines or obeyed rules. This strategy was reflected in the statement of Ibu Andini, who gave praise and occasionally provided small rewards as appreciation for children's positive behavior. This finding shows that Millennial parents viewed reward and praise as motivational tools to encourage children to repeat expected behavior.

Positive reinforcement can help children recognize that disciplined behavior produces positive consequences. However, reinforcement should not only be directed toward external rewards, but also toward building children's understanding of why rules and routines are important. Positive discipline interventions have been shown to increase parenting self-efficacy and reduce negative parenting tendencies when applied with warmth, consistency, and clear guidance (Liu et al., 2024).

The third finding shows that Millennial parents emphasized parental modeling. Parents attempted to follow the same rules they applied to their children, especially in limiting gadget use during certain times. This finding indicates that discipline was taught through example. For early childhood children, modeling is important because children learn behavior not only from parental instruction but also from what they observe in daily interaction. Supportive and consistent parenting is associated with better child adjustment, while inconsistent parenting may increase behavioral and emotional problems (Wang et al., 2024).

In this study, Millennial parents' modeling helped children understand that family rules apply not only to children but also to adults. When parents limit their own screen use, follow routines, and demonstrate consistent behavior, children receive concrete examples of discipline. This condition strengthens the legitimacy of family rules and reduces children's resistance to discipline.

Parenting Patterns of Generation Z Parents in Shaping Early Childhood Discipline

The second major finding shows that Generation Z parents tended to form children's discipline through dialogical communication. Parents in this group did not merely prohibit or command children, but explained the reasons behind the rules. For example, Ibu Inessa explained to her child why gadget use needed to be limited and why eating ice cream every day could affect dental health. This finding shows that Generation Z parents attempted to help children understand the meaning of rules rather than simply obeying them.

This dialogical approach is important because young children begin to develop causal reasoning and moral understanding through concrete explanations. Rules become more meaningful when children understand why they exist. Parent-child interaction during challenging tasks is related to children's effortful control and their ability to follow directions in a more adaptive way (Brown et al., 2022). Therefore, the discipline pattern among Generation Z parents was not only directive, but also explanatory and relational.



The next finding shows that Generation Z parents applied rules more flexibly. Flexibility appeared when parents allowed negotiation in special conditions, such as family gatherings or holidays. This does not mean that Generation Z parents ignored discipline. Rather, they maintained the purpose of discipline while adjusting the implementation of rules to the child's situation and family context. Children's emotion regulation is influenced by parental emotion regulation and parental responses to children's negative emotions (Hong & Wang, 2023).

Flexible parenting can support discipline when it remains guided by clear boundaries. However, flexibility can become problematic if rules become inconsistent and unclear. In this study, Generation Z parents' flexibility was constructive because it was accompanied by explanations and emotional guidance. Therefore, the key issue is not whether rules are strict or flexible, but whether the child can still understand the meaning, purpose, and limits of the rules.

The third finding shows that Generation Z parents tended to validate children's emotions when children refused rules or experienced tantrums. Ibu Kirey, for example, gave her child time to express emotions before giving further explanation. This finding indicates that Generation Z parents viewed emotional responses as part of the discipline process. Instead of responding immediately with punishment, parents allowed children to calm down first and then provided guidance.

This finding is important because discipline in early childhood is closely related to emotion regulation. Children who are supported in regulating emotions are more likely to understand rules and respond adaptively to frustration. Emotional competence and self-regulation are related to preschool children's problem behavior, especially when children face challenging emotional situations (Luo et al., 2025). Thus, emotional validation does not weaken discipline; rather, it creates a psychological condition in which children are more ready to receive guidance.

Similarities and Differences between Millennial and Generation Z Parenting Patterns

The comparative findings show that both Millennial and Generation Z parents shared the same goal, namely shaping disciplined behavior in children's daily lives. Both groups used rules, routines, reinforcement, parental involvement, and digital media regulation. However, the dominant strategies differed. Millennial parents emphasized consistency, structure, repetition, and modeling, while Generation Z parents emphasized communication, flexibility, emotional validation, and negotiation.

Table 1. Comparison of Millennial and Generation Z Parenting Patterns in Shaping Early Childhood Discipline

Parenting Dimension	Millennial Parents	Generation Z Parents	Comparative Finding
Discipline formation	Discipline is formed through repeated habituation until it becomes part of the child's daily behavior.	Discipline is formed through dialogical communication by explaining the reasons behind rules.	Both generations build discipline through daily interaction, but Millennial parents emphasize repetition, while Generation Z parents emphasize understanding.
Rules and routines	Daily schedules are structured and consistent, including	Rules remain purposeful but are	Both generations use rules to shape



	eating, sleeping, playing, and gadget use.	more flexible and negotiable in certain contexts.	discipline, but Millennial parents are more structured, while Generation Z parents are more adaptive.
Reinforcement strategy	Parents use verbal praise and simple rewards to strengthen disciplined behavior.	Parents use appreciation, explanation, and communication to build children's awareness of consequences.	Both generations reinforce positive behavior, but Millennial parents tend to use external reinforcement, while Generation Z parents emphasize internal understanding.
Parental role	Parents act as models by following the same rules applied to children.	Parents act as companions who provide explanation and emotional support.	Both groups recognize parental involvement as important, but Millennial parents emphasize modeling, while Generation Z parents emphasize relational guidance.
Emotional response	Parents tend to guide children through routine and behavioral consistency.	Parents validate children's emotions before giving directions.	Millennial parents focus more on behavioral order, while Generation Z parents focus more on emotional readiness.

The comparison reveals that discipline among Millennial parents is more structure-oriented, whereas discipline among Generation Z parents is more communication-oriented. This difference may be influenced by generational experiences. Millennial parents grew up during a transition from analog to digital environments and may value structure as a way to maintain order amid technological change. Generation Z parents, who are more familiar with digital communication and emotionally expressive interaction, may be more comfortable using dialogue, negotiation, and emotional validation in parenting.

Both strategies have strengths and limitations. Structure can support consistency but may become rigid if not accompanied by empathy. Flexibility can support emotional understanding but may become inconsistent if not accompanied by clear boundaries. Household chaos and parent-child conflict may negatively affect preschool children's self-regulation, while mindful parenting can reduce tension in parent-child interaction (Zhu et al., 2025). In the context of this study, Millennial parents' structured routines may reduce household chaos by creating predictable daily patterns, while Generation Z parents' dialogical and emotionally responsive parenting may reduce conflict by helping children feel understood.

Digital Technology as a Shared Challenge in Discipline Formation

The third major finding shows that digital technology use is a common challenge for both Millennial and Generation Z parents. Parents from both groups recognized that gadget



use could disrupt routines, reduce consistency, and create conflict when children were asked to stop watching or playing. This challenge became more complex when childcare involved grandparents or other family members. In such conditions, the rules set by parents were not always applied consistently by other caregivers.

This finding can also be understood from a sociocultural perspective. In many Asian societies, including Indonesia, childcare is often shared among parents, grandparents, and other family members as part of an extended family caregiving system. Although this arrangement provides valuable support for parents, differences in parenting beliefs, caregiving practices, and disciplinary expectations among caregivers may result in inconsistencies in implementing household rules, including children's daily routines and digital media regulation. Previous studies have shown that intergenerational coparenting requires shared communication and agreement among family members because differences in caregiving approaches may reduce the consistency of children's discipline. Therefore, maintaining discipline in early childhood depends not only on parents' consistency but also on collaboration and mutual understanding among all caregivers involved in childcare (Bai et al., 2023).

This finding indicates that screen time regulation is not merely a technical issue of limiting duration, but a family system issue involving consistency among caregivers. Parental regulation of parent and child screen-based distractions is related to family functioning and parent-child dynamics (Lunkenheimer et al., 2023). In this study, discipline problems related to gadgets occurred not only because children wanted screen time, but also because different caregivers applied different rules. Therefore, digital discipline requires shared agreement among parents and other family members.

Excessive or poorly regulated screen exposure may also affect children's emotional responses. Digital screen exposure is associated with emotional symptoms in preschool children, especially when screen use is not accompanied by appropriate parental regulation (Xu & Qiao, 2025). Children's emotional ability and parental media mediation also play important roles in linking screen exposure to socio-emotional competence (M. Sun et al., 2025). These findings help explain why parents in this study viewed gadget use as a major challenge. When screen time is not regulated consistently, children may become more resistant to transitions, more emotionally reactive, and less able to follow routines.

However, the findings also show that both generational groups attempted to regulate digital media in different ways. Millennial parents tended to use schedules and restrictions, while Generation Z parents tended to use explanation and negotiation. Both approaches are useful, but the most effective strategy appears to be a combination of clear limits, parental modeling, and communication. If parents only restrict without explanation, children may resist. If parents only negotiate without consistent boundaries, children may become confused about limits. Therefore, the formation of digital discipline requires structure and dialogue at the same time.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this study provide both theoretical and practical implications for understanding parenting practices in shaping early childhood discipline. Theoretically, this study demonstrates that parenting generation influences the way discipline is constructed during early childhood. The main scientific finding is that discipline formation among young children is shaped through two dominant pathways: structure-based discipline and communication-based discipline. Structure-based discipline is reflected in Millennial parents' use of routines, repetition, reinforcement, and modeling. Communication-based discipline is



reflected in Generation Z parents' use of explanation, negotiation, emotional validation, and flexible rule implementation.

These two pathways should not be viewed as contradictory. Rather, they complement each other. Children need structure because routines provide predictability and behavioral direction. At the same time, children need communication and emotional validation because discipline cannot develop without understanding, emotional security, and relational support. Psychologically aggressive parenting may be related to preschool children's problem behaviors, indicating that discipline without emotional support can create negative developmental consequences (Qiao et al., 2024). Therefore, discipline in early childhood should be built through a balance of firmness, warmth, consistency, and explanation.

These complementary findings provide the basis for developing an integrated conceptual framework that explains how different parenting approaches jointly contribute to early childhood discipline. Based on these findings, this study proposes an integrated conceptual framework for early childhood discipline. The proposed framework combines the strengths of structured parenting including consistent routines, habituation, positive reinforcement, and parental modeling with the strengths of communication-oriented parenting, including dialogical communication, emotional validation, negotiation, and flexible rule implementation. Rather than viewing these approaches as competing models, the findings suggest that they complement one another in supporting children's self-regulation, emotional understanding, and adaptive discipline.

This integrated framework contributes to the parenting literature by emphasizing that effective discipline in the digital era requires a balance between structure and responsiveness rather than relying on a single parenting orientation. The framework synthesizes the empirical findings of this study into a unified model that may guide future parenting practices, parenting education programs, and further research on early childhood discipline.

Practically, these findings indicate that the most important issue in shaping early childhood discipline is not determining which parenting generation is better, but understanding how the strengths of each parenting approach can be integrated. Millennial parents contribute structured routines, consistency, positive reinforcement, and parental modeling, whereas Generation Z parents contribute dialogical communication, emotional validation, flexibility, and negotiation. Therefore, for early childhood education and family guidance, parents and practitioners are encouraged to integrate these complementary approaches by combining consistent routines with responsive communication to support children's discipline and socio-emotional development.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Millennial and Generation Z parents have both similarities and differences in shaping the discipline character of early childhood children. Both generations share the same goal of fostering disciplined behavior through parental involvement in children's daily routines. However, their parenting orientations show different emphases. Millennial parents tend to build discipline through habituation, structured routines, consistent rules, positive reinforcement, and parental modeling. In contrast, Generation Z parents tend to shape discipline through dialogical communication, flexible rule implementation, emotional validation, and adaptive negotiation with children.

The scientific finding of this study indicates that discipline formation in early childhood is constructed through two complementary pathways: structure-based discipline and communication-based discipline. Structure-based discipline helps children understand



routines, limits, and behavioral expectations, while communication-based discipline helps children understand the reasons behind rules and manage their emotional responses. Therefore, effective discipline in early childhood requires a balance between consistency and flexibility, firmness and warmth, as well as clear rules and emotional support.

This study also found that digital technology use is a common challenge for both Millennial and Generation Z parents. Screen time regulation becomes more difficult when caregiving involves other family members who may apply different rules. Thus, the formation of discipline in early childhood requires not only parental consistency, but also shared agreement among all caregivers involved in the child's daily life.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, parents are encouraged to combine structured routines with dialogical communication in shaping children's discipline. Millennial parents can strengthen their structured parenting practices by providing more explanation and emotional support when children refuse rules or experience tantrums. Meanwhile, Generation Z parents can strengthen their flexible and dialogical parenting practices by maintaining clearer boundaries and more consistent routines, especially in regulating screen time.

Early childhood educators and parenting program facilitators are also recommended to develop family education programs that address generational differences in parenting. Parenting programs should not only discuss discipline as rule enforcement, but also include practical guidance on daily routines, positive reinforcement, parental modeling, emotional validation, and digital media regulation. Such programs can help parents understand that discipline is more effective when children receive consistent rules, meaningful explanations, and supportive emotional guidance.

Future researchers are recommended to expand this study by involving a larger number of participants from different social, cultural, and geographical backgrounds. Further research may also use mixed methods to measure the relationship between parenting patterns, screen time regulation, and children's discipline outcomes more comprehensively. The main limitation of this study is the small number of participants and the specific research location, which may limit the generalization of the findings. In addition, future studies should further examine the role of extended family members, such as grandparents, in influencing the consistency of discipline practices and children's adaptation to digital discipline rules.

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