


A Comparative Study of Teaching Styles and Student Learning Responses in Two Malaysian Kindergartens

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*Ananda Putri Siswanto Gea, Mavianti^{ab} 

¹²Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam, Universitas Muhammdiyah Sumatera Utara

Corresponding Author: anndaptrisg20@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the dynamics of teachers' teaching styles and students' learning responses in two preschools in Malaysia that implement different learning approaches. Kindergarten A adopts an authoritative-assertive teaching style emphasizing structure, discipline, and consistent classroom routines, while Tadika B applies a permissive-creative style that promotes freedom of expression and play-based learning. The study employs a qualitative case study approach involving four preschool teachers (two from each kindergarten) and observations of a total of 48 students (24 students in each kindergarten). Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with teachers, and documentation analysis. The findings show that the authoritative-assertive approach in Kindergarten A fosters disciplined, organized, and instruction-responsive students who demonstrate higher levels of independence. In contrast, the permissive-creative style in Tadika B stimulates creativity, confidence, and self-expression but presents challenges in classroom management, particularly in maintaining discipline, lining up, and turn-taking. The study concludes that teaching style differences directly shape students' learning responses, behavioral patterns, and socio-emotional development. These results highlight the need for a balanced approach that integrates both assertiveness and flexibility to create an optimal preschool learning environment. The findings offer practical implications for teachers, preschool administrators, and policymakers in designing developmentally appropriate instructional and classroom management strategies for early childhood education.

Keywords: *Teacher Teaching Style, Learning Response, Education, Preschool Education, Discipline.*

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INTRODUCTION

Education in the early stages is an important foundation in the formation of students' character, attitudes, and learning abilities. In Malaysia, pre-school educational institutions such as kindergartens have a strategic role in preparing students to enter the formal education level. Teachers' teaching styles are one of the main factors that affect the quality of learning and learning responses of students. The teaching style applied by teachers not only affects the understanding of the material, but also shapes the attitude of discipline, independence, and social ability of students in the learning environment. In the context of the two kindergartens in Malaysia that are the object of this study, there are striking differences in the teaching styles applied.

In the two Malaysian kindergartens examined in this study, there are striking contrasts in the teaching approaches used. Kindergarten A adopts a strict, structured, and disciplined teaching style that emphasizes independence. This approach helps children clearly distinguish study time from playtime, follow classroom rules, line up in an orderly manner, and understand turn-taking. In contrast, Kindergarten B implements a more flexible and creative teaching style that allows children to act according to their developmental stage and individual characteristics. However, this permissive-creative approach poses challenges in classroom management, particularly related to discipline, lining up, and respecting turns. This

approach makes students able to understand the difference between playtime and study time, and able to follow rules such as marching in an orderly manner and understanding turns. In contrast, Kindergarten B uses a more flexible and creative teaching style, which allows learners to act according to their age and character. However, this style poses challenges in classroom management, especially when it comes to discipline such as marching and respecting turns.

These differences are important to study because they reflect the dynamic relationship between teaching styles and children's learning responses. Theoretically, teaching styles in early childhood education can be understood through Baumrind's framework, which classifies adult (including teacher) interaction styles into authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Authoritative styles balance structure and warmth, authoritarian styles emphasize high control and discipline, while permissive styles prioritize freedom with minimal control. In early childhood pedagogy, effective teaching requires responsiveness, structured routines, and scaffolding, as suggested by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory—where teachers play a central role in guiding children's cognitive and social development through supportive interactions.

This phenomenon is interesting to study because it shows the dynamics of interaction between teachers' teaching styles and different learners' learning responses. This study aims to delve deeper into how different teaching styles affect the behavior and learning ability of students in the two kindergartens. This research is also expected to contribute to the development of effective learning methods that are in accordance with the characteristics of students in the early stages of education. Learning in kindergarten that is integrated with social-emotional value-based activities such as *Morning Circle*, expressive games, morally charged stories, and teaching materials that are in accordance with the curriculum have been proven to be able to stimulate empathy, emotion regulation, and the ability to build children's social relationships (Jf et al., 2025). Children with good social-emotional skills also show higher academic performance and more consistent positive behavior tendencies (Alfiyah & Mavianti, 2025). In addition, Vygotsky's theory in Warmansyah asserts that children's cognitive and social development is greatly influenced by social interactions, including interactions with teachers as support providers (*scaffolding*) (Alfiyah & Mavianti, 2025).

However, the implementation of social-emotional learning in kindergarten still faces a number of challenges. Obstacles such as teachers' limited understanding of social-emotional content, lack of practical training, lack of administrative support, and lack of contextual curriculum are important issues that need to be considered. These findings suggest that social-emotional learning cannot stand as a separate program, but needs to be integrated into daily activities such as morning greetings, role-playing, and expressive arts to build emotional intelligence, confidence, and peacefully conflict resolution skills. A teaching style that is consistent and in accordance with the needs of students can increase learning motivation and active involvement in the learning process (Cents-boonstra et al., 2022). Meanwhile, (Turan et al, 2022) emphasizing the importance of a balance between discipline and flexibility (time, place, speed of learning) in creating a conducive learning environment. Therefore, this research is particularly relevant to understand how the application of different teaching styles can result in varied learning responses and how this can be optimised in the context of pre-school education in Malaysia.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a comparative multiple-case study design. The qualitative approach is appropriate because the study aims to explore in depth the phenomenon of teachers' teaching styles and students' learning responses in real classroom contexts in two Malaysian kindergartens. Qualitative methods allow researchers to examine experiences, perceptions, and social interactions holistically and contextually. The comparative multiple-case study design was chosen because it enables systematic comparison between two cases in this context, two kindergartens that apply distinctly different teaching styles (Crowe et al., 2011). state, case studies allow for an in-depth examination of one or more

bounded cases within a specific setting and timeframe. By comparing two cases, this design provides a richer and more comprehensive understanding of how teaching styles influence students' learning responses. The data sources in this study are divided into two main categories, namely primary and secondary data sources. The primary data source was obtained directly from the actors and research objects, namely teachers and students in both kindergartens (Pulford, 2023).

Teachers are chosen because they are the main actors in the learning process and classroom management, while students are the subjects who respond to the teaching style applied. (Arianto, 2024) Emphasizing the use of various data sources in qualitative research is important to obtain rich and valid data through triangulation techniques. Thus, the data obtained can provide an accurate and comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being studied. The data collection techniques in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation is carried out in a participatory and non-participatory manner to directly observe the learning process, teachers' teaching styles, and learning responses of students in both kindergartens. This technique is important for capturing naturally occurring behaviors and interactions (Ibero-americana, 2018).

Interviews, Semi-structured interviews are conducted with teachers and kindergarten managers to explore the views, experiences, and strategies used in managing the classroom and applying teaching styles. (Sarib and Rasak, 2022) Affirms that semi-structured interviews provide flexibility in digging into in-depth information while maintaining focus on the research topic. This documentation assists researchers in understanding the learning context and verifying data obtained from other sources (Fadli, 2021). In Analysis of Teacher Teaching Style Dynamics and Student Learning Response: A Case Study in Two Malaysian Kindergartens, the validity of the data is critical to ensure that the results of the research are trustworthy. Data Triangulation Data triangulation is a method that combines information from various sources, methods or theories to improve the validity and rehabilitation of research (Arianto, 2024).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Teaching Style Teachers in Kindergarten A And Kindergarten B In Malaysia

Teaching Style in Kindergarten A

Observations indicate that teachers in Kindergarten A employ an authoritative-assertive teaching style characterized by assertiveness, clear structure, and strong classroom control. Some field evidence supporting these findings includes:

Teacher Behavior:

Teachers provide direct instructions before activities begin, such as explaining the steps of an activity and demonstrating them first.

"Let me repeat the steps first, so everyone follows along," one teacher said before the fine motor activity began.

Classroom rules are consistently enforced:

Children are asked to line up neatly, sit in their seats, and wait their turn. When a child steps out of line, the teacher immediately provides verbal reinforcement.

"Good job, Aisyah is standing straight. The others will follow, Aisyah."

Positive reinforcement:

Every disciplinary action, such as tidying up toys or completing assignments on time, is given direct praise.

For example, a child who finishes tidying up the table receives praise, "Very clever, you tidied up by yourself."

Student independence:

Children are accustomed to preparing their own learning materials without being asked. In one session, the children immediately grabbed pencils and books when the teacher gave initial instructions without hesitation.

Teachers in Kindergarten B employ a permissive-creative teaching style, emphasizing freedom of expression, exploration, and play-based activities.

Teaching Style in Kindergarten B

Use of creative activities:

Teachers frequently use songs, role-playing, and exploratory activities.

In one session, the teacher began a science lesson with a song about the weather, prompting the children to enthusiastically imitate the movements.

Warm and responsive interactions:

The teacher often sits at the children's level, hugs crying children, and uses gentle language.

"It's okay, try again. Teacher, wait here," the teacher says when a child fails to stack blocks.

Freedom to choose activities:

During art activities, children are allowed to choose colors, shapes, and tools based on their creativity.

Classroom management challenges:

Children often move around, cut in line, or have difficulty following instructions. The teacher has to repeat directions several times, saying,

"Okay, listen first, then we'll play," but some children continue with their activities.

The results of the study show that the teaching style in Kindergarten A is characterized by firmness, clear structure, and focus on the formation of student behavior discipline. Teachers apply consistent classroom rules, using a *direct instruction*, emphasizing independence, providing reinforcement of positive behavior, and maintaining strong classroom control. This pattern forms a directed, neat, and conducive learning atmosphere for students in the early stages of education. These findings are in line with and at the same time enrich the results of previous research on children's teaching styles and learning responses. First, the findings of this study are consistent with the research (Haslin et al., 2024) which emphasizes that a firm and disciplined teaching style is able to create a stable learning environment and increase student compliance. Teachers in Kindergarten A ensure that class rules such as marching, respecting turns, maintaining cleanliness, and waiting for instructions are understood and practiced consistently by students.

This creates a clear routine and becomes the basis for the acquisition of behavioral discipline. Findings (Haslin et al., 2024) It also mentions that flexible teaching styles can increase creativity but make classroom management difficult. In the context of this study, Kindergarten A emphasizes a more assertive style, so that classroom management challenges can be minimized, and students show strong regularity in the learning process. Furthermore, the use of the direct instruction approach by the teacher through clear explanations and demonstrations before the child imitates is relevant to the research (Singhal and Goel, 2025) which shows that a structured teaching style can increase learner engagement and focus.

Although the study emphasizes that creative teaching styles increase learning motivation, this study found that learning engagement in the context of Kindergarten A is formed through clarity of direction and consistency of teaching methods. Children become easier to understand the steps of the activity and can follow the learning flow without confusion. Thus, the assertiveness and structure that teachers apply contribute to stable learning engagement, even if expressive creativity is not the main focus. Self-reliance habits such as setting up self-study tools, cleaning up games, and completing tasks without much help are also in line with research findings (Oktrisa et al, 2025).

The study emphasizes that a firm but communicative teaching style has a significant effect on students' learning motivation. In this study, the teacher not only gives orders, but also guides students communicatively until they are able to complete the task independently. This emphasis on independence encourages intrinsic motivation because children feel responsible and able to manage themselves in a learning environment. The practice of reinforcing positive behaviors, such as giving explicit praise for disciplined behavior and well-completed tasks, has a strong correlation with research (Parveen et al, 2023) Affirms that reinforcement strategies such as verbal praise, gestural support, and individualized attention improve children's cognitive and social development. In the context of Kindergarten A, teachers actively use positive reinforcement to form appropriate behaviors.

This implementation not only fosters children's awareness of limits and rules, but also strengthens positive relationships between teachers and students, so that the learning atmosphere runs more harmoniously. In addition, strong classroom control and the teacher's ability to anticipate distractions show that classroom management in Kindergarten A is at an effective level. This again corroborates the findings (Haslin et al., 2024) which states that classroom management is an important component of successful learning at the preschool level. An orderly class allows students to concentrate for a longer time, so that learning takes place more optimally. Overall, based on a comparison with previous research, it can be concluded that the teaching style in Kindergarten A tends to be strictly authoritative, that is, combining strict discipline with support for independence. Previous research findings also confirm that a structured yet responsive authoritative style is an effective approach to early childhood education.

This approach not only improves behavioral discipline, but also facilitates motivation, learning focus, and social development of children. Thus, the teaching style applied in Kindergarten A is not only effective in the local context, but also in line with pedagogical trends supported by empirical evidence at the national and international levels. The results of the study in two kindergartens showed significant differences in teaching styles, classroom management, and students' responses to the learning patterns applied. In Kindergarten A, teachers use an authoritative-assertive teaching style, with a strong emphasis on rules, structure, and routine. This approach creates an orderly, focused, and relatively controllable classroom atmosphere. Meanwhile, Kindergarten B applies a permissive-creative teaching style, which centers on freedom of expression, creativity, and play activities as the core of learning. Although this approach encourages children's courage and creativity, teachers face challenges in terms of discipline and consistency of children's behavior. The findings of this study are in line with the research (Haslin et al., 2024) which affirms that a firm and disciplined teaching style contributes to the formation of a structured and conducive learning environment.

The clarity of rules and routines in Kindergarten A was proven to create orderly and minimal disruption classes, as was also found in schools that applied a similar approach in the study (Haslin et al., 2024). In contrast, flexible teaching styles such as those in Kindergarten B increase children's self-expression and creativity, but pose challenges in classroom management, especially in terms of lineup, turns, and instructional adherence. This is consistent with the conclusion of Haslin et al. that creativity without strong classroom management can have an impact on the disorder of learners' behavior.

Research (Singhal and Goel, 2025) Finding that creative and varied teaching styles increase children's engagement and motivation to learn. This is very evident in the practice in Kindergarten B, where the use of songs, role plays, and exploratory activities makes children more active, dare to ask questions, and enthusiastically participate in learning. However, (Singhal and Goel, 2025) It also emphasizes that a teaching style that is too permissive can reduce discipline and learning effectiveness if it is not balanced with proper classroom management.

These findings are fully reflected in the context of Kindergarten B, where teachers need to repeat instruction and use additional strategies to address children's spontaneous behavior. In contrast, authoritative-assertive styles such as those in Kindergarten A favor learning engagement in the form of compliance, focus, and clarity of roles, although the child's creativity may not develop as intensively as in Kindergarten B. Singhal & Goel emphasize the importance of balance, so these two contexts point to two poles of approach that each has its advantages. (Oktrisa et al, 2025) found that a firm yet communicative teaching style increases students' motivation to learn. These findings are relevant to practice in Kindergarten A, where teachers' assertiveness is balanced by clear instruction and direct praise (*direct praise*) when the child shows positive behavior. This positive reinforcement helps strengthen children's motivation to follow the rules and complete tasks independently.

The emphasis on independence in Kindergarten A is also in line with Oktrisa's finding that students tend to be more motivated when teachers give direction while still giving space

for children to complete tasks on their own. Studies (Parveen et al, 2023) emphasizing the importance of responsive and adaptive child teacher interaction in improving social and cognitive development. This is especially evident in Kindergarten B, where teachers build warm, gentle, and nurturing relationships. The teacher positions himself or herself as a "guiding friend," allowing the child to feel safe, comfortable, and easily express ideas. However, as stated (Parveen et al, 2023) Responsive interaction must be balanced with effective classroom management so that learning continues to run optimally. These findings were again reflected in Kindergarten B, where warm interactions resulted in comfort, but a lack of structure led to disciplinary challenges. Meanwhile, Kindergarten A shows more instructional and rule-oriented interactions, but still pays attention to the needs of children through giving praise and opportunities to be independent. This reflects a more structure-oriented form of adaptive interaction, in accordance with the recommendations (Parveen et al, 2023) about the importance of a balance between warmth and control.

Students' Learning Response to the Teaching Style Applied in Kindergarten A and Kindergarten B in Malaysia

Learning Response in Kindergarten A

Children demonstrate a structured, rule-abiding, focused, and independent learning response pattern.

Field evidence:

Children follow the teacher's instructions sequentially without asking questions. During the shape-sticking activity, children work quietly and focused for about 10–15 minutes without significant interruptions. When the teacher signals to clean up, all children immediately pick up their toy boxes and arrange them on the shelves.

The teacher states:

"They already know the morning routine, so I don't need to repeat it many times."

Learning Response in Kindergarten B

Children demonstrate enthusiastic, expressive, spontaneous, and creative learning responses, but are accompanied by disciplinary instability.

Field evidence:

Children are very active in asking questions during role-play activities. Some even develop their own stories beyond the teacher's instructions. During singing activities, almost all children stand up and dance freely without direction. However, when the teacher asks the children to sit down, some continue playing until the teacher calls their names one by one.

The teacher stated:

"They are creative, but they quickly lose focus if they are not given a cue or a song."

Students in Kindergarten A show a learning response characterized by order, obedience, focus, and independence. This is formed because teachers apply consistent rules, routines, and instructions. Children are able to follow the flow of activities without confusion because each step of learning is explained, demonstrated, and clearly guided through a *direct instruction approach*. This stable learning response corroborates the results of the research (Haslin et al., 2024) which affirms that a firm and disciplined teaching style creates a consistent learning environment and minimizes disruptive behavior. In the context of Kindergarten A, this is reflected in the child's obedience to turns, queues, and the ability to maintain class order.

Learning involvement in Kindergarten A also appears in the form of independence. Children can prepare study tools, clean up games, and complete assignments without relying on the help of teachers. These findings are consistent with (Oktrisa et al, 2025) which emphasizes that teachers' assertiveness accompanied by clear communication can increase the intrinsic motivation of students. Children's learning responses are also influenced by the use of positive reinforcement, such as verbal praise when children exhibit disciplined behavior. This strategy has been proven to strengthen children's emotional connection with teachers, while increasing their focus and learning efforts. The alignment of these findings with the research (Parveen et al, 2023) It shows that responsive interactions in structured contexts can improve children's social and cognitive development. Thus, the learning response of students

in Kindergarten A tends to show a focused, obedient, and stable pattern, in accordance with a firm and structured learning environment.

Students in Kindergarten B provide learning responses characterized by enthusiasm, spontaneity, creativity, and courage to participate. This is closely related to the teacher's teaching style that is flexible, warm, and centered on play and exploration. Children feel comfortable asking questions, trying, and expressing ideas because teachers give them a wide space of freedom. This creative learning response is in line with the findings (Singhal and Goel, 2025) which confirms that creative, varied, and activity-based teaching styles can significantly increase children's motivation and engagement. This is evident in Kindergarten B through the use of songs, role plays, and motor activities that make children more active in the learning process. However, this positive learning response in terms of creativity is also accompanied by challenges in the form of disciplinary instability and behavioral inconsistency.

Teachers often need to repeat instructions, provide additional restrictions, or calm an overactive child. This condition is in line with the warning (Singhal and Goel, 2025) that the permissive-creative style has the potential to reduce the effectiveness of learning when not supported by adequate classroom management. In addition, the warm and empathetic interaction shown by the Kindergarten B teacher also increases the emotional comfort of students. These findings are consistent with (Parveen et al, 2023) which states that a responsive teacher-child relationship can promote social development. However, without sufficient structure, warm interactions are less likely to be able to create the behavioral consistency necessary for learning optimization. Thus, the learning response of students in Kindergarten B shows high creativity but low discipline, reflecting a flexible and expressive learning environment.

Differences in Students' Behaviors and Attitudes That Arise Due to Differences in Teaching Styles in Kindergarten A and Kindergarten B in Malaysia

Kindergarten A (Authoritative-Assertive)

Emerging Characteristics:

Disciplined and obedient to rules. Able to wait their turn. high independence, stable learning focus

Field example:

When playing a relay game, the children waited their turn quietly while paying attention to the previous participant.

The teacher commented:

"The children here have been used to taking turns since the beginning of the semester."

Kindergarten B (Permissive-Creative)

Emerging characteristics:

Expressive and creative, bold in speaking and conveying ideas, high in spontaneity, low in consistency in discipline

Field example:

During the drawing activity, the children developed their own stories and the results were very varied. However, during the food distribution session, the line became chaotic and the teacher had to rearrange them.

The results of the study show that the difference in teaching styles in Kindergarten A and Kindergarten B directly shapes the variation in behavior, learning attitudes, and social-emotional abilities of students. These differences can be understood more deeply through the perspective of developmental theory, social interaction, and learning motivation. Students aged 4–7 years are in the preoperational stage, where they rely heavily on concrete experiences, social interactions, and direction from teachers to understand rules and routines (Shabnam, Lone, and Sidiq, 2025). Thus, the teaching style applied by teachers in both kindergartens is a key factor that influences the formation of behavior.

The authoritative-strict teaching style applied in Kindergarten A results in students who are more disciplined, obedient, and able to follow class routines consistently. The teacher's assertiveness in providing regular instruction and classroom structure makes it easier

for children to understand basic concepts such as turns, social rules, and the flow of activities that are very important in the preoperational stage (Shabnam, Lone, and Sidiq, 2025). In addition, a clear class structure provides *scaffolding* which corresponds to the concept of the Proximal Development Zone (ZPD) of (Pekka et al, 2025) where the teacher's direction and guidance help children achieve more controlled and directed behavior.

This is in accordance with the findings (Haslin et al., 2024) which confirms that teachers' assertiveness can minimize classroom disruption and improve behavioral stability. In Kindergarten A, students show independence in completing tasks such as preparing tools or tidying up equipment. An authoritative-assertive but still communicative teaching style gives the child a sense of competence, a basic psychological need that greatly influences internal motivation (Mustikaati et al, 2025). Consistent positive reinforcement from teachers also strengthens children's motivation and responsibility in completing activities. This kind of support is a form of *scaffolding* appropriate and allows the child to achieve behavioral development above his or her initial level of ability, as described in the theory of ZPD (Pekka et al, 2025). These findings are in line with (Oktrisa et al, 2025) which states that a firm but communicative teaching style is able to increase students' motivation to learn and independence. On the other hand, the permissive-creative teaching style in Kindergarten B gives rise to more spontaneous, expressive, and creative behavior. Teachers provide ample space for children to explore ideas, ask questions, and experiment through singing, role-playing, and environmental exploration.

This approach is particularly relevant to the preoperational stage, where children need the opportunity to develop symbolic skills and intuitive thinking through meaningful activities (Shabnam, Lone, and Sidiq, 2025). In addition, a warm and responsive classroom atmosphere strengthens social connectedness, one of the basic needs that plays a major role in learning motivation (Mustikaati et al, 2025). This kind of creative teaching style is also in line with research (Shabnam, Lone, and Sidiq, 2025) which confirms that teachers' creativity can increase children's courage, confidence, and emotional involvement in learning.

Although the students at Kindergarten B are more creative and expressive, the lack of structure and boundaries leads to some disciplinary challenges. Children often have trouble lining up, are inconsistent in waiting for their turns, and require repetition of instructions. This suggests that although permissive teaching styles encourage creativity, preoperative children still need a basic structure to understand rules (Shabnam, Lone, and Sidiq, 2025). Deficiency *scaffolding* At the right time it can also make the dynamics of the class less stable, as warned by (Pekka et al, 2025) that teacher support is needed to direct children's development. Findings (Haslin et al., 2024) supports this, that flexibility without adequate classroom management can trigger behavioral disorders.

Challenges Faced by Teachers in Managing Classrooms Based on Teaching Styles Applied to Kindergarten A and Kindergarten B in Malaysia

Challenges in Kindergarten A

Maintaining a balance between firmness and emotional warmth.

The teacher admitted:

"Sometimes I need to be gentler so the children don't get too tense."

Strict structures hinder children's creativity. Consistency of rules requires high energy to maintain consistent rules.

Challenges in Kindergarten B

Discipline is difficult to maintain when children have too much freedom. Observations show that teachers have to repeat instructions more than three times. Children quickly lose focus during play activities. Setting boundaries without stifling creativity is a major dilemma. The teacher said:

"If I have too much freedom, the class becomes noisy. But if I'm strict, the children become less expressive."

The teaching style applied in Kindergarten A is characterized by firmness, discipline, and a clear structure. Teachers apply consistent classroom rules, a direct instruction approach,

and strong classroom controls. This approach has succeeded in creating orderly learning with minimal distractions, but there are still challenges faced by teachers. Although assertiveness is effective in creating a structured classroom, teachers face challenges in maintaining a balance between control and sensitivity to the emotional needs of children.

Research findings (Pekka et al, 2025) emphasizing the importance of responsive and adaptive interactions. In the context of Kindergarten A, teachers must ensure that assertiveness does not reduce the child's sense of security and comfort. A highly structured approach can limit children's space for exploration and creativity. This is in line with the explanation (Singhal and Goel, 2025) that teaching styles that focus too much on structure can make creativity not develop optimally. Teachers face the challenge of keeping the classroom orderly while providing limited space for creativity. Strict rules-based classroom management requires teachers to be consistent over time. Failure to maintain consistency has the potential to confuse children and reduce the effectiveness of discipline. This is in accordance with the findings (Haslin et al., 2024) regarding the importance of consistency in the formation of children's behavior. Although independence is trained, a child's motivation for learning can lean more toward obedience than intrinsic curiosity. Teachers should work harder to create an atmosphere that allows children to feel engaged not only for following instructions, but also for being interested. In contrast to Kindergarten A, Kindergarten B implements a teaching style that is more flexible, creative, and gives a large space for self-expression.

Children are invited to learn through games, exploration, songs, and creative activities. This style increases courage and motivation to learn, but presents a major challenge in classroom management. Freedom of expression without a strong structure makes it difficult for teachers to maintain discipline, especially in lineups, turns, and following instructions. These findings are in line with (Haslin et al., 2024) that flexibility without strong classroom management has the potential to create a child's behavioral disorder. Teachers often have to repeat instructions because children are easily distracted when doing play activities. This is in line with the findings (Singhal and Goel, 2025) that creative styles require effective classroom control so as not to reduce the focus of learning. Game-based activities make children quickly switch attention. Teachers should use additional strategies such as songs, creative cues, or positive distractions to restore focus, thus requiring extra energy and creativity. Teachers in Kindergarten B face a dilemma in setting boundaries without compromising the expressive and fun atmosphere. As the findings (Pekka et al, 2025) Warm interactions must be balanced with adequate controls to keep learning effective.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study show that the teaching styles applied in Kindergarten A and Kindergarten B have fundamentally different characteristics, and these differences directly influence students' behavior, motivation, and learning engagement. Kindergarten A implements a strict, structured, and discipline-oriented teaching style. Clear classroom rules, consistent routines, and the use of direct instruction contribute to the creation of an orderly, focused, and predictable learning environment. Through habitual independence and continuous positive reinforcement, children develop responsibility, understand behavioral boundaries, and are able to follow learning activities without confusion. Teaching practices in Kindergarten A can therefore be categorized as an authoritative strict style, which proves effective in building early discipline, learning focus, and self-control. In contrast, Kindergarten B adopts a more flexible, creative, and child-centered approach. Play-based learning, exploratory activities, and warm teacher-child interactions successfully foster students' creativity, confidence, and expressive abilities. However, high levels of flexibility also create challenges in maintaining discipline, particularly in activities requiring turn-taking, queuing, or following instructions. This indicates that a permissive-creative style, when not accompanied by effective classroom control, may reduce order and limit overall learning effectiveness.

Theoretically, this study contributes to early childhood education literature by demonstrating how contrasting teaching styles—authoritative versus permissive shape different patterns of student behavior, motivation, and engagement in real classroom settings. The findings reinforce and extend existing theories on the relationship between teacher control, emotional climate, and children's socio-behavioral development. Practically, the study provides guidance for kindergarten teachers and school administrators by highlighting the importance of balancing structure with creativity. Teachers may benefit from integrating structured routines with developmentally appropriate exploratory activities to simultaneously support discipline, focus, creativity, and socio-emotional growth. The study also offers insights for professional development programs, especially in designing training that helps teachers strengthen classroom management while maintaining warm, child-centered interactions.

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