

From Compliance to Partnership: Rethinking 7KAIH Implementation In Family–School Collaboration

Fauziah Rahmat

TK Bani Rahmat - Garut, Indonesia

frahmat7171@gmail.com

Abstract— This case study examines the implementation of the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children (7KAIH) program in early childhood education through the perspective of home–school partnerships. Unlike previous studies focusing primarily on schools, it explores how parents interpret and implement habituation within everyday family life and how reporting practices influence these partnerships. Data were collected from online questionnaires completed by 14 parents and 23 monthly parental reports documenting children’s habits at home, and analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings show that parents generally viewed the program positively and believed it supported children’s character development. However, positive perceptions did not consistently translate into practice because of work demands, time constraints, household responsibilities, parental fatigue, and communication with schools. Reporting functioned both as a reflective parenting tool and an instrument of institutional control, often becoming symbolic administrative compliance rather than meaningful reflection. Drawing on Heckhausen’s action regulation theory, the findings reveal a gap between parents’ motivational acceptance of the program and their volitional ability to sustain habituation practices amid competing family demands. The study further demonstrates that successful implementation depends not only on program design but also on trust-based, adaptive home–school partnerships. Transformational school leadership plays a crucial role in fostering supportive communication, redesigning reporting as reflective rather than evaluative, and recognizing parents as equal partners with diverse family realities. Although limited to a single early childhood institution, the study provides contextually grounded insights for strengthening family–school partnerships in character education. It concludes that habituation programs should be integrated realistically into existing family routines through approaches such as habit stacking, enabling gradual, sustainable character development within everyday family life while promoting humane, reflective, flexible, and context-sensitive partnership cultures.

Keywords: 7KAIH, early childhood, family-school collaboration, habituation, parental engagement

I. INTRODUCTION

The Gerakan Tujuh Kebiasaan Anak Indonesia Hebat (7KAIH), or the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children Movement, is a strategic initiative designed to strengthen character education by fostering habits such as healthy eating, religious observance, and social engagement. Conceptually, the program provides a structured framework suited to children’s developmental needs. However, its success depends not only on its normative design but also on how effectively it is integrated into the daily routines of schools and families.

In early childhood education, implementation is particularly challenging because habit formation relies on consistent parenting, active parental involvement, and alignment between school and family values. Differences in parenting styles, limited parental time due to work demands, and diverse social and cultural backgrounds frequently create gaps between policy intentions and everyday practice (Lisnasari et al., 2025; Nur et al., 2025). Consequently, the effectiveness of 7KAIH should not be understood as an issue of program compliance but rather as a process of adaptation and negotiation within everyday family life.

Previous studies have shown that the 7KAIH has significant potential in fostering independence, discipline, and socio-emotional development among young children (Ningsih et al., 2026; Zuliana & Sumanto, 2025). At the same time, its effectiveness strongly depends on parental involvement and role modeling within the family environment. Frequently reported challenges include parents' limited time due to work obligations, inconsistencies in parenting within extended families, parents' limited practical understanding of the policy's essence, and children's high exposure to digital devices in daily routines (Windari et al., 2025). These findings highlight a gap between parents' normative recognition of their important role and their actual capacity to translate 7KAIH values into everyday practices.

Although previous research consistently identifies home–school collaboration as key for successful 7KAIH implementation (Nurhayati et al., 2025; Sinulingga, 2025), most studies approach 7KAIH primarily from the school's perspective. Parents are often treated as supporting or inhibiting variables rather than as central actors responsible for habituation at home. Other studies recommend parent training and integrated school–family programs (Purwanti et al., 2025). In contrast, this study argues that understanding 7KAIH implementation requires examining parents as the primary agents of habit formation while recognizing children's developmental needs and the realities of family life.

Parental involvement is commonly facilitated through reporting systems documenting children's activities at home. Following the 7KAIH guidebook, many schools use monthly forms supported by photographs or videos of children's activities. These mechanisms are intended to sustain character habituation in the home while simultaneously providing accountability to schools and policymakers.

However, reporting practices are implemented inconsistently. At the school serving as the focus of this study, variations were observed in submission rates, irregular documentation, and evidence that some reports were completed retrospectively merely to satisfy administrative requirements. These findings raise important questions about the meaning of documentation. Rather than necessarily fostering value internalization within family life, reporting may also encourage symbolic compliance with institutional expectations. Thus, the central issue extends beyond whether the seven habits are practiced to whether they become genuinely internalized as part of children's and families' everyday lives.

Implementation is also influenced by families' socioeconomic circumstances. Most participating parents were housewives, while others managed home-based businesses or worked as employees under shift and non-shift schedules. Balancing domestic responsibilities, paid employment, and school involvement requires continuous negotiation. Accordingly, variations in parental participation should be understood within the broader realities of family life rather than interpreted simply as differences in compliance.

Against this background, the present study adopts a qualitative case study approach to examine the implementation of 7KAIH in a specific early childhood education institution. It focuses on how parents interpret and negotiate the practice of habituating the seven habits within their daily family routines and how documentation and reporting influence the quality of home–school partnerships. Within this process, the principal's leadership is considered crucial in bridging the gap between policy expectations and the practical realities faced by families.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question: How do parents experience, interpret, and negotiate the implementation of the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children Movement (7KAIH) within everyday family life, and what do these experiences reveal about the role of reporting practices, home–school partnerships, and transformational school leadership in supporting sustainable character habituation?

By examining implementation in depth, this study seeks to advance understanding of family–school partnerships in character education. Beyond contributing to family-based character education scholarship, the findings are expected to inform the development of more humane, trust-based, and contextually adaptive partnership models. Specifically, this article reports findings from in-depth observations and interviews concerning 7KAIH documentation practices and parents' adaptation processes as they integrate the program into everyday home life.

II. METHODS

II.1 Research Design

This study uses a qualitative case study design to understand how the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children Movement (7KAIH) was implemented through home-school partnership. A case study was selected because it enables researchers to examine phenomena comprehensively within real-life contexts (Grauer, 2012), particularly when social and institutional conditions shape practices. Bassey (1999) further argues that case studies are valuable for understanding the complexity of educational situations in depth. Bassey's view is important for this study because the research aims to evaluate an educational program and look at teachers' experiences with school changes. This study focused on how parents implemented the 7KAIH habits at home, interpreted the program, and experienced the reporting process designed to support collaboration with school. Even though this research was conducted in a single school, the findings can still provide analytical rather than statistical generalization for comparable educational settings.

II.2 Research Setting and Participants

This research took place at a private educational institution in Garut Regency, West Java Province, Indonesia, consisting of a Playgroup (10 children) and a Kindergarten (15 children). Each educational unit was staffed by one principal, one classroom teacher, and one assistant teacher who also served as administrative staff.

Parents were responsible for implementing and documenting children's habituation practices at home, including sleeping and waking routines, worship, healthy eating, physical exercise, learning, and social interaction. Every month, parents completed reporting forms and submitted supporting photographs or videos. Because of the school's relatively small size, close relationships between teachers and families created an appropriate context for examining home–school partnerships in character education.

Participants included all parents of children enrolled in the Playgroup and Kindergarten. Online questionnaires were distributed to all parents, yielding 14 responses after one week. In addition, 23 monthly parental reports were collected, with some parents submitting reports for one month and others for two or three consecutive months. Parents were selected because they directly implemented habituation practices and regularly used the school's reporting system.

II.3. Data Collection

Following Bassey's (1999) principles of ethics and trustworthiness, the study respected participants, maintained honesty in reporting data, and ensured that interpretations were grounded in sufficient evidence. Data were collected from two complementary sources: anonymous online questionnaires distributed through Google Forms and routine monthly parental reports.

The online questionnaire was shared through the school's regular communication channels over one week. Google Forms was selected for two reasons. First, because the researcher also served as the school principal, anonymous online questionnaires reduced the possibility that parents would feel uncomfortable or reluctant to express their views honestly in face-to-face interviews. Second, Google Forms enabled systematic collection and organization of responses.

The questionnaire consisted primarily of open-ended questions exploring parents' perceptions, experiences, and involvement in implementing 7KAIH at home. Questions addressed the meaning of the program for families, parents' experiences supporting children's habituation, habits that were easiest and most difficult to implement and why, experiences completing monthly documentation, and suggestions for making home–school partnerships more realistic and comfortable. This format allowed parents to express their experiences in their own words while enabling unexpected issues to emerge during analysis.

Representative questions included: (1) What does the 7KAIH program mean for your family?; (2) What has been your experience in supporting your child to practice these habits at home?; (3) Which habits have been the easiest and the most difficult to implement, and why?; (4) How did you experience completing and submitting the monthly documentation?; and (5) What suggestions do you have for making home–school partnerships in this program more realistic and comfortable for families?

Monthly parental reports served as the second data source. These reports documented children's habituation over one month, including waking and sleeping schedules, worship practices, physical exercise, healthy eating, learning habits, and social participation. Each section also contained reflective spaces where parents summarized children's development and described planned follow-up actions. Consequently, the reports functioned not only as behavioral records but also as instruments for parental reflection.

Compared with the one-time questionnaire, the monthly reports provided richer longitudinal evidence. School records showed that 23 of 25 parents submitted at least one report between October 2025 and February 2026, although participation ranged from one to three months. Despite these variations, the reports provided valuable insights into patterns of implementation across different family contexts.

To strengthen credibility, the study employed data triangulation by combining anonymous questionnaires with identified monthly reports. While the questionnaires captured parents' perceptions and experiences, the reports documented actual habituation practices. Comparing these sources enabled deeper analysis of parental participation, consistency, challenges, and family adaptation during program implementation.

II.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2023; Clarke & Braun, 2017), in which researchers actively construct themes through iterative interpretation. The analytical process included repeated reading of the data, initial coding, categorization of participants' demographic characteristics and children's routines, and descriptive quantitative analysis to provide contextual understanding.

Thematic coding was then conducted to identify meaningful units concerning parental support, perceptions of the program, implementation challenges, motivations, and forms of participation. These codes were grouped into broader analytical categories and subsequently developed into themes representing recurring patterns of meaning.

Monthly reports enriched the analysis by revealing recurring behavioral patterns, concrete forms of parental involvement, and variations in implementation across family contexts. To enhance trustworthiness, the study incorporated repeated data review, triangulation, direct quotations, and continuous researcher reflexivity throughout the analytical process.

Several limitations should nevertheless be acknowledged. Because questionnaire responses were anonymous, they could not be matched individually with monthly reports. The relatively small number of respondents and incomplete information in some reports also limited the scope of the findings. Accordingly, the results should be understood as descriptive, exploratory, and contextually bounded rather than broadly generalizable.

To improve methodological transparency, the study also presents an example of the analytical process in Table 1.

Table 1. Example of Coding and Theme Development

Verbatim	Source	Initial Code	Focused Code	Candidate Theme	Final Theme
"Saya setuju dengan program ini karena membantu anak lebih disiplin."	P7 (Questionnaire)	Positive evaluation of program	Positive perception of 7KAIH	Acceptance of program	Tension Between Positive Perceptions and Actual Practices: The Dynamics of Motivation and Volition
"Masih harus disuruh dan diingatkan untuk salat."	R5 (Monthly report)	Requires reminders for worship	Inconsistent habituation	Motivation–volition gap	

The table illustrates how selected data extracts were initially coded, clustered into analytical categories, developed into candidate themes, and ultimately interpreted as final themes. Rather than representing a fixed coding framework, this example demonstrates the iterative and reflexive nature of thematic analysis, in which codes and themes were continuously reviewed and refined through sustained engagement with the data, consistent with Braun & Clarke (2023) principles of reflexive thematic analysis.

II.5 Ethical Considerations and Researcher Reflexivity

The study followed general ethical principles for educational research. Participation in the online questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous. Parents were informed that participation would not influence their children's assessment or school standing, and submission of the questionnaire constituted informed consent.

The monthly reports analyzed were routine school documents originally collected for educational rather than research purposes. The research emerged retrospectively after observing variations in reporting practices during program implementation. All reports were anonymized before analysis, ensuring that no parent or child could be identified. Because neither the school nor its affiliated institution had a formal research ethics committee, no formal ethical approval was obtained. Nevertheless, confidentiality was maintained, potential risks were minimized, and findings were reported only in aggregate or anonymized form.

The researcher also served as the school principal, providing valuable contextual understanding but creating potential power imbalances and researcher bias. To minimize these risks, anonymous questionnaires replaced interviews, reducing social desirability bias and preventing participant identification. Data triangulation and repeated reflexive engagement with the data further strengthened analytical rigor. Throughout the study, the researcher remained attentive to alternative interpretations and explicitly acknowledged how researcher positionality might influence data interpretation. Importantly, the study did not aim to evaluate the success of the 7KAIH program but to critically examine parents' experiences of implementing habituation practices and the role of reporting in shaping home–school partnerships.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on these analytical procedures, the following section presents the major findings that focus on how parents perceived and implemented the 7KAIH program within family settings, the dynamics of home–school partnerships, and the broader implications for developing a more adaptive and humanistic approach to early childhood character education. The findings reveal that home–school partnerships in the 7KAIH program cannot be judged solely by parental agreement. Although parents generally accepted the program's values, implementation was shaped by varying levels of consistency, involvement, reporting, and family adaptation, showing that habituation programs operate within the realities of daily life, where educational goals constantly collide with domestic routines, work demands, and family-school relationships. Therefore, this discussion examines the tensions between perception and practice, explores the dynamics underlying parental participation, and analyzes the implications for developing more reflective and adaptive school leadership.

Tension Between Positive Perceptions and Actual Practices: The Dynamics of Motivation and Volition

The findings indicate that parents generally showed highly positive acceptance of the 7KAIH. The program was perceived as good, beneficial, and important for developing positive habits in children. This finding appeared consistently in both the questionnaires and the monthly reports. The frequent use of expressions such as “good program,” “helpful for children,” and “important for habits” indicates that parents had normatively and ideologically accepted the program as meaningful for children's character development.

However, this positive stance did not always align with actual implementation. Wide variations and inconsistencies emerged in daily routines. Some parents actively and reflectively implemented the program, whereas others did so only occasionally or as a formality. Likewise, the quality of monthly reports ranged from detailed reflections to minimal or empty forms, despite most parents submitting reports at least once. These differences reveal a clear tension between parents' positive perceptions of the program and the realities of family life.

Parents' experiences illustrate this tension. Children's changing moods and occasional resistance frequently disrupted routines, as Participant 4 explained: “Penuh tantangan, karena mood anak yang berbeda setiap harinya.” Parents also encountered structural constraints such as domestic responsibilities, work obligations, and limited time. Participant 4 noted, “Masih minim dikarenakan bentrok dengan pekerjaan rumah untuk menemani belajar,” while Participant 22 commented, “Maaf, Bu Guru, tadinya mau jalan kaki tiap pagi tapi selalu nggak keburu.” These experiences indicate that inconsistencies in habituation practices resulted primarily from competing demands within everyday family life rather than from a lack of motivation or commitment. The gap between parents' positive perceptions and consistent implementation therefore emerged through the interaction between children's developmental needs and the practical realities of family life.

The gap between what parents believe is important and what they can maintain in daily practice reflects a broader dynamic of goal-oriented human behavior and can be explained through Heckhausen's theory of action regulation (Heckhausen, 2007; Heckhausen & Heckhausen, 2018, 2025). According to Heckhausen's Rubicon Model of Action Phases, the motivational phase is distinguished from the volitional phase. The motivational phase involves recognizing the importance of a goal and developing positive intentions toward it, whereas the volitional phase involves maintaining consistent actions in daily life.

Parents in this study had clearly entered the motivational phase; they understood the program's benefits and agreed on the importance of character habituation at home. However, the main challenge appeared in the volitional phase, namely the ability to maintain commitment and consistent action within the complexity of everyday life. Work demands, the number of children, household conditions, limited time, fatigue, and the quality of communication with the school all required parents' energy and attention. Thus, the main issue faced by parents was not a lack of awareness about the importance of the program, but the challenge of sustaining consistent action over time.

Parents were simultaneously pursuing multiple goals, including employment, economic stability, caring for other children, and household management. As a result, involvement in the habituation program had to be continuously negotiated with other important goals in daily life. Under certain conditions, some parents remained in a state of goal engagement, meaning they were able to maintain energy and attention toward the habituation practices (Heckhausen & Heckhausen, 2018). On the other hand, when situational pressures increased, some parents experienced goal disengagement, causing habituation activities and reporting practices to become irregular. In these situations, reporting shifted from a reflective activity to an administrative obligation.

From the perspective of goal regulation, reduced participation should not simply be interpreted as indifference or rejection of the program. Disengagement from certain goals can be understood as an adaptive mechanism for managing psychological resources. Parents in this study were not only responsible for supporting children's habituation practices, but also for balancing work, economic pressures, parenting responsibilities, and household tasks. Consequently, participation in the program had to compete with many other important demands in family life.

These experiences may initially appear to reflect fluctuations in motivation and volition. But these were also rooted in broader structural tensions rather than merely individual factors. The reporting requirements expected regular documentation of children's habituation practices, which often conflicted with parents' digital literacy, time constraints, and the realities of working-class family life. Moreover, program expectations regarding children's independence and adherence to fixed routines frequently had to be negotiated within the collectivistic culture of Indonesian families, where maintaining family harmony—such as allowing children to spend time playing with siblings or waiting for parents to return from work—was often prioritised over strict adherence to individual routines. This tension was reflected in one parent's experience: "Mulai sering tidur telat karena anaknya mulai merasa asyik bermain bersama saudaranya" (Participant 1).

These findings are consistent with Heckhausen & Heckhausen (2025), who argue that behavior results from the interaction between individual factors and situational factors. Individually, parents possessed values, goals, and beliefs supporting children's character habituation. However, situational barriers shaped their capacity to sustain action. Situations do not affect individuals objectively, but through the subjective meaning individuals assign to them. Therefore, a program that is positively valued at the ideological level may still be experienced as tiring or burdensome in practice, especially when reporting requirements added pressure to existing family routines.

These findings are also consistent with the concept of intention–action inconsistency proposed by Kuo & Young (2008). According to this perspective, positive attitudes alone are insufficient to produce consistent behavior. Successful implementation also depends on psychological factors such as self-efficacy and action orientation. Parents who felt confident in their ability to support their children generally implemented habituation practices more consistently, produced richer reflective reports, and persisted despite challenges. In contrast, parents with lower confidence were more likely to experience hesitation, postpone activities, or perceive reporting primarily as an administrative burden. Accordingly, inconsistencies should be understood not as evidence of weak commitment but as differences in parents' capacities to regulate action under situational pressures.

Explicitly, parents may express support for the program because it aligns with educational values and social expectations about good parenting. Implicitly, however, their psychological energy may be more focused on other urgent needs in daily life. This mismatch between explicit goals and emotional-practical conditions creates tension between verbal support for the program and actual practices at home.

Reporting as a Reflective Space versus a Control Mechanism

The findings show that the reporting mechanism occupied an ambivalent position between a reflective function and an institutional control function. For some parents, reporting encouraged greater awareness of children's behavioral development and supported intentional parental involvement. Participant 12 stated, "Alhamdulillah, sangat menyenangkan, jadi orang tua ada kegiatan," suggesting that reporting provided opportunities for intentional parental involvement. Likewise, Participant 1 appreciated the program despite experiencing practical challenges: "Senang dengan adanya program tersebut, tapi sulitnya mendokumentasikan dalam video, dikarenakan anak saya tidak begitu suka dengan kamera." These experiences indicate that parents generally valued the reflective purpose of reporting even when documentation itself was difficult.

However, for others, reporting was perceived more as an administrative obligation required by the school rather than a reflective process. Difficulties in completing digital forms, uploading photographs or videos, and preparing written reflections added to the cognitive and practical demands of everyday parenting. As Participant 6 noted, "Terkadang orang tua malas mendampingi karena laporannya ribet (harus isi tabel, foto-foto, dll)." Importantly, these difficulties did not necessarily reflect a lack of commitment to children's habituation but rather the additional burden associated with the reporting process itself.

This interpretation was reinforced by the monthly reports. Although parents frequently marked worship, healthy eating, physical exercise, learning, and social participation as completed, many reports contained little or no reflective comments or follow-up plans. In these cases, documentation appeared to shift from a space for parental reflection toward an administrative exercise aimed primarily at fulfilling school requirements.

Variations also emerged in parents' confidence and willingness to document their practices. Parents with stronger confidence in supporting their children generally implemented habituation more consistently, produced richer reflections, and persisted despite challenges. In contrast, parents with lower confidence were often hesitant to document their parenting because reporting was perceived as exposing them to school evaluation. Consequently, some experienced anxiety about being judged as incapable parents. Thus, the reflective function of reporting coexisted with the perception of reporting as a burdensome administrative task.

These differences demonstrate that reporting is not merely a technical procedure, but also a social process shaped by trust, communication culture, and the quality of relationships between schools and families. When communication is experienced as evaluative and control-oriented, reporting becomes a psychological burden. Conversely, supportive and reflective communication encourages parents to perceive reporting as a collaborative opportunity to share parenting experiences.

From the perspective of Epstein & Sanders (2002), these findings suggest that home–school relationships have not yet fully evolved into authentic partnerships. Many reporting practices still resemble a transmission model in which schools determine procedures while parents act primarily as implementers. Under such conditions, parents’ attention tends to focus on administrative compliance rather than meaningful reflection.

Home–School Partnership: From Compliance to Authentic Partnership

The findings further indicate that the success of the habituation program depends not only on program design but also on the quality of partnerships between schools and families. Within an authentic partnership, parents are viewed not as passive recipients of school directives but as equal partners possessing valuable knowledge about children’s lives at home.

This perspective is essential because inconsistencies in habituation rarely reflected rejection of the program. Instead, they arose from limited time, energy, work obligations, and domestic responsibilities. Accordingly, parental involvement should be understood more broadly than physical attendance at school or administrative compliance. Meaningful participation also includes supporting learning at home, engaging in reflective conversations with children, and integrating positive habits into family routines.

Parents’ experiences illustrate the importance of supportive partnerships. Participant 4 explained that continuous school support reduced implementation difficulties: “Saat ini belum ada [kendala], karena ada grup support yang memang kita bisa bertanya tentang apapun dan kapanpun.” Similarly, Participant 7 emphasized the quality of communication with teachers: “Pihak sekolah sangat terbuka dalam hal komunikasi... Guru anak saya alhamdulillah cihuy... guru-guru anak kami adalah mamah-mamah pengganti kami di rumah.” These accounts demonstrate that parents value accessible, trusting, and supportive relationships more than formal monitoring mechanisms.

Schools therefore need to position parents as partners rather than objects of management. Family experiences and cultural practices should be recognized as educational resources, while communication should become genuinely two-way, allowing parents to contribute their perspectives equally. Using linguistically responsive communication—language that families naturally use and understand—can further reduce feelings of alienation from school bureaucracy and minimize power imbalances that characterize service provider–consumer relationships.

Authentic partnerships must also adapt to families’ diverse realities. Parents’ involvement is shaped by socioeconomic conditions, employment patterns, and family composition, making partnership experiences inherently heterogeneous (Newman et al., 2019). Therefore, asynchronous communication technology, flexible reporting formats, accessible language, and the involvement of extended family members can become important strategies for helping parents remain connected with schools despite limited time. This finding is consistent with Epstein (1992) argument that parental involvement increases when schools provide clear guidance, understandable participation mechanisms, and supportive communication.

The findings also indicate an inherent tension between institutional accountability and relational trust. Schools rely on reporting to monitor habituation practices and maintain program continuity, making documentation an important mechanism of accountability. At the same time, parents seek flexibility, recognition of family circumstances, and empathetic responses to the constraints they face.

This tension was particularly evident among parents balancing childcare with employment. One parent described the challenge of “harus pandai membagi waktu... dengan kegiatan usaha di rumah,” while another reflected on difficulties establishing consistent bedtime routines: “(anak) Tidur antara pukul 19.00 hingga 23.00. Catatan tindak lanjut dari orang tua: menetapkan jam tidur yang konsisten, membacakan cerita dan berdoa bersama, memberitahukan anak untuk tidur sendiri tanpa menunggu orang tua pulang kerja, menghindari makan berat, membatasi menonton TV atau bermain gawai menjelang waktu tidur” (Participant 19). These experiences indicate that parental participation is strongly influenced by unequal access to time and domestic resources. Habituation programs that implicitly assume parents are consistently available to supervise and document children’s activities may unintentionally privilege families with more flexible working arrangements. Recognizing these diverse circumstances is therefore essential if partnerships are to move beyond compliance toward more equitable, responsive, and context-sensitive collaboration.

These findings align with Anazia et al. (2025), who argue that significant gaps remain between the ideal of partnership and actual school practices, particularly when parents are not provided equal opportunities to contribute. In this study, that gap appeared because reporting continued to contain evaluative and controlling elements rather than functioning fully as a collaborative space. Effective home–school partnerships instead require shared responsibility, open communication, and mutual respect between teachers and parents.

Furthermore, Yulianti et al. (2022) found that parental involvement increases more effectively through active communication and direct invitations from teachers rather than through formal policies alone. This finding is important because it shows that the success of reporting and habituation practices is not determined only by administrative systems or formats, but also by the quality of interpersonal relationships between schools and parents. When school communication is supportive, open, and non-judgmental, parents are more likely to perceive reporting as a space for sharing parenting experiences. In contrast, when communication feels evaluative, reporting becomes an additional administrative pressure.

Overall, these findings show that the success of the 7KAIH depends not only on program design or reporting mechanisms, but also on the school’s ability to build partnerships based on trust, reflective communication, and sensitivity toward family life contexts. From a transformational leadership perspective, reporting should function less as an institutional control instrument and more as a dialogical space that helps schools and families understand children’s developmental processes.

Implications for Transformational School Leadership

The findings suggest four major implications for transformational school leadership: transforming partnership culture, redesigning reporting systems, strengthening adaptive communication and support, and developing realistic, contextualized habituation programs.

The first implication concerns transforming the culture of home–school partnerships. The findings show that parents generally accepted the habituation program and valued its goals. The primary challenge was not resistance but the gap between parents’ normative awareness of the program and their capacity to implement it consistently within everyday family life. Consequently, school principals need to shift from a compliance-oriented approach toward one that emphasizes family empowerment and support.

Parents' experiences with reporting illustrate this need. Although they appreciated the program, many regarded reporting as repetitive and administratively burdensome. Participant 6 suggested, "Ubah cara laporannya, buat grup WhatsApp kelas untuk berbagi cerita lucu atau progres kecil... Apresiasi dari guru di grup jauh lebih bikin semangat daripada sekadar nilai di buku jurnal." Similarly, Participant 2 commented, "Menurut saya program ini bagus, cuman untuk pengisian jurnal 7 kebiasaan itu terasa monoton karena kesimpulannya tetap saja seperti itu." These responses indicate that parents value recognition, encouragement, and supportive communication more than routine administrative reporting.

Accordingly, home-school relationships should move beyond a controlling model in which schools dominate, and parents simply comply. Principals need to foster partnerships grounded in mutual trust, respect for family realities, and shared responsibility for children's development. Parents should be recognized as strategic partners who possess valuable knowledge about children's home experiences rather than merely implementing school directives. This transformation also requires redefining parental involvement as flexible participation that accommodates differences in time, energy, and family circumstances rather than focusing solely on school attendance or administrative compliance.

The second implication involves redesigning reporting systems to function as reflective rather than administrative tools. The findings indicate that documentation frequently became symbolic compliance, with parents completing checklists because reporting felt monotonous and psychologically exhausting. As a result, its intended reflective function was weakened.

School principals should therefore encourage reporting systems that prioritize narratives of children's development rather than administrative completeness. Instead of emphasizing perfect implementation, schools should invite parents to share brief reflections on children's progress, family challenges, and small successes. Such an approach better reflects the gradual and adaptive nature of character habituation, which is shaped by diverse family situations. When schools overemphasize complete documentation, parents may perceive reporting as an evaluation of parenting quality. In contrast, valuing incremental progress and consistent effort creates a more supportive, non-judgmental reflective space.

The third implication concerns adaptive communication and support. The findings demonstrate that parental participation is strongly influenced by the quality of communication between schools and families. Evaluative or controlling communication tends to make reporting feel like administrative pressure, whereas supportive, open, and reflective communication encourages parents to share their experiences honestly.

Principals therefore need to promote dialogical rather than one-way communication. Teachers should not merely provide instructions or collect reports but also facilitate parents' understanding of children's developmental processes. For families with limited time, digital communication platforms offer flexible opportunities to remain connected with schools. However, technology should be accompanied by clear professional boundaries, including agreed communication channels and reasonable response times that respect both parents' availability and teachers' professional responsibilities.

In addition, principals need to strengthen teachers' capacity as the primary bridge between schools and families. Professional development should include reflective communication skills, understanding parents' psychological dynamics, and empathy-based approaches. Transformational leadership is therefore expressed through the principal's ability to cultivate a school culture that is supportive, reflective, and responsive to family needs.

The fourth implication concerns designing habituation programs that are realistic and contextualized. The findings show that habits already integrated into existing family routines, such as worship and study, were easier to sustain than habits requiring substantial schedule changes, including earlier bedtimes or regular exercise. These latter habits often conflicted with work schedules, household routines, and parental fatigue.

Consequently, principals should encourage schools to adopt a habit stacking approach by embedding character-building goals within routines already established at home. Rather than introducing demanding new activities, schools can focus on small, realistic, and sustainable habits that families can maintain even under conditions of limited time and energy. This approach reduces the gap between parents' intentions and actual practices by reinforcing existing routines instead of creating additional burdens.

Transformational leadership also requires abandoning the assumption that all families possess equal capacity to implement school programs. Employment conditions, family size, psychological energy, and domestic circumstances make parental participation dynamic and context-dependent. Schools should therefore establish flexible habituation targets, emphasize gradual and consistent progress over perfect compliance, and provide adaptive forms of support suited to different family situations.

Finally, principals should help shift habituation from external regulation toward children's gradual internalization of positive habits. The findings show that children still relied heavily on parental reminders and guidance. Schools should therefore support families in fostering independence through simple reflection, appreciation of children's progress, and realistic responsibilities appropriate to their developmental stages.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that transformational leadership cannot rely solely on regulations and administrative supervision. Instead, it depends on principals' ability to build school cultures characterized by empathy for family realities, reflective communication, implementation flexibility, and commitment to sustainable developmental processes. From this perspective, the success of habituation programs should be measured not by perfect reports but by the strength of partnerships that enable schools and families to collaboratively build children's character in ways that are realistic, humane, and sustainable.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study shows that the implementation of the Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children (7KAIH) program in early childhood education generally received very positive acceptance from parents because it was perceived as beneficial for developing children's habits and character. However, this normative acceptance was not always followed by consistent habituation practices in daily life. The findings reveal a tension between parents' positive perceptions of the program and their actual ability to maintain continuous involvement within the complexity of family life. Variations in parental involvement were influenced by situational factors such as work demands, household conditions, time and energy limitations, and the quality of communication with schools. Therefore, the implementation of 7KAIH should not be understood merely as compliance with school programs, but as a process of adaptation and negotiation of parenting practices within dynamic family contexts.

The study further shows that the effectiveness of habituation programs depends heavily on the quality of home-school partnerships. Although reporting mechanisms were originally intended to promote reflection and collaboration, they often shifted into administrative obligations that encouraged symbolic compliance rather than meaningful engagement. These findings suggest that schools, particularly principals as transformational leaders, need to cultivate partnership cultures grounded in

trust, flexibility, reflection, and empathy. Reporting should function not as an instrument of institutional control but as a dialogical space that enables schools and families to understand children's developmental processes and family realities. Likewise, habituation programs should be integrated into existing family routines through realistic approaches such as habit stacking, allowing character development to emerge gradually, contextually, and sustainably within everyday family life.

Based on these findings, schools are encouraged to shift the orientation of habituation programs from compliance-based practices toward authentic school–family partnerships grounded in trust, flexibility, empathy, and shared responsibility for children's character development. Parents should be positioned not merely as implementers of school instructions but as strategic partners who possess valuable knowledge about children's daily lives and family realities. Principals, as transformational leaders, need to redesign reporting systems as spaces for dialogue and reflection rather than instruments of administrative control while cultivating school cultures that are humane, reflective, and context-sensitive. Schools are also encouraged to simplify reporting formats, provide flexible forms of documentation, and appreciate small but consistent efforts made by families to reduce psychological pressure and encourage meaningful engagement. Furthermore, communication between schools and families should be adaptive, supportive, and collaborative, including the use of asynchronous digital communication that enables parents with limited time to remain engaged in the program while maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted in a single early childhood education institution; therefore, its findings are context-specific and intended to provide analytical rather than statistical generalization. Second, the analysis relied primarily on parents' self-reported questionnaires, interviews, and monthly reports, which may have been influenced by social desirability or selective reporting despite the use of triangulation. Third, the study did not include direct observations of parent–child interactions in home settings, limiting the analysis to reported experiences rather than naturally occurring family practices. Fourth, the concepts of motivation, volition, and action regulation were used as interpretive frameworks rather than psychological constructs measured directly, and children's own perspectives were not included.

Future research should investigate habituation programs across more diverse educational, cultural, and socioeconomic contexts using multiple schools, longitudinal designs, and multi-informant data, while incorporating children's perspectives. Such studies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how sustainable school–family partnerships can support long-term character habituation across different family contexts.

REFERENCES

- Anazia, I. U., Skinner, B., & Woods, C. (2025). Home-school partnerships: values and expectations of rural teachers and parents. *Educational Research*, 67(2), 170–189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2025.2492143>
- Bassey, M. (1999). *Case Study Research in Educational Settings*. Open University Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2023). Toward good practice in thematic analysis: Avoiding common problems and be(com)ing a knowing researcher. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 24(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2129597>
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(3), 297–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613>

- Epstein, J. L. (1992). *School and Family Partnerships* (Number 6). Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning.
- Epstein, J. L., & Sanders, M. G. (2002). Family, School, and Community Partnerships. In M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of Parenting* (Vol. 5, pp. 407–438). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Grauer, K. (2012). A Case for Case Study Research in Education. In S. R. Klein (Ed.), *Action Research Methods: Plain and Simple* (pp. 69–79). Palgrave Macmillan US. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137046635_4
- Heckhausen, J. (2007). The Motivation-Volition Divide and Its Resolution in Action-Phase Models of Developmental Regulation. *Research in Human Development*, 4(3–4), 163–180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15427600701662983>
- Heckhausen, J., & Heckhausen, H. (2018). Motivation and action: Introduction and overview. In J. Heckhausen & H. Heckhausen (Eds.), *Motivation and Action* (3rd ed., pp. 1–14). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65094-4_1
- Heckhausen, J., & Heckhausen, H. (2025). Motivation und Handeln: Einführung und Überblick. In J. Heckhausen & H. Heckhausen (Eds.), *Motivation und Handeln*. Springer. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-69368-1_1
- Kuo, F. Y., & Young, M. L. (2008). A study of the intention-action gap in knowledge sharing practices. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 59(8), 1224–1237. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.20816>
- Lisnasari, Srie Faizah, & Nida Wafiqah Nabila M. Solin. (2025). Sosialisasi 7 Kebiasaan Anak Indonesia Hebat. *Jurnal ADAM: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 4(1), 127–136. <https://doi.org/10.37081/adam.v4i1.2883>
- Newman, N., Northcutt, A., Farmer, A., & Black, B. (2019). Epstein's Model of Parental Involvement: Parent Perceptions in Urban Schools. *Language Teaching and Educational Research*, 2(2), 81–100. <https://doi.org/10.35207/late.559732>
- Ningsih, S., Aini, N., Sodik, M. M., Mustapa, T., Lawadjo, N. S., & Polamolo, F. (2026). 7 Kebiasaan Anak Indonesia Hebat Mendidik Karakter Anak Sejak Dini. *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Nian Tana*, 4(1), 53–62. <https://doi.org/10.59603/jpmnt.v4i1.1183>
- Nur, M., Hasanah, I., Maesaroh, M., Suryawati, E., Rohmayati, I., Suryanah, S., Indriawati, M., Nurhasanah, N., Rijkiah, D., Nunafisah, E., Masitoh, S., Mayasari, E., & Suhenah, S. (2025). Penguatan Kolaborasi Guru Dan Orang Tua Dalam Membentuk 7 Kebiasaan Anak Indonesia Hebat. *Journal of Human And Education*, 5(2), 601–607. <http://www.jahe.or.id/index.php/jahe/article/view/2350>
- Nurhayati, N., Kamila, I. N., & Tantowie, T. A. (2025). Implementasi 7 Kebiasaan Anak Indonesia Hebat Dalam Menginternalisasi Karakter Pada Anak Usia Dini Di Tk Sejahtera Kecamatan Cisaga Kabupaten Ciamis. *Hikamatzu| Journal of Multidisciplinary*, 2(2). <https://yasyahikamatzu.com/index.php/hjm/about>
- Purwanti, C. I., Sanjaya, D. B., & Suastika, I. N. (2025). Implementasi 7 Kebiasaan Anak Indonesia Hebat dalam Pembentukan Karakter Anak. *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 10(3), 336–343. <https://journal.unpas.ac.id/index.php/pendas/article/view/28880/15210>

- Sinulingga, N. N. (2025). Membangun Karakter Sehat dan Berakhlak Mulia melalui 7 Kebiasaan Anak Indonesia Hebat. *Jurnal Tarbiyatuna: Kajian Pendidikan Islam*, 9(1), 110–131. <https://ejournal.uniib.ac.id/index.php/tarbiyatuna/article/view/2941>
- Windari, S., Arif, A., & Asiyah, B. (2025). Optimalisasi Orang Tua Dalam Pelaksanaan 7 Kebiasaan Anak Indonesia Hebat Di Ra Al-Huda. *Proceedings Institut Darul Falah*, 1(1), 292–302. <https://proceeding.indaf.ac.id/index.php/procedaf/article/view/30>
- Yulianti, K., Denessen, E., Droop, M., & Veerman, G. J. (2022). School efforts to promote parental involvement: the contributions of school leaders and teachers. *Educational Studies*, 48(1), 98–113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2020.1740978>
- Zuliana, Z., & Sumanto, R. P. A. (2025). Implementasi Program Pengembangan 7 Kebiasaan Anak Indonesia Hebat dalam Membentuk Karakter Disiplin Positif Anak Usia Dini Usia 5-6 Tahun. *Cokroaminoto Journal of Primary Education*, 8(2), 860–874. <https://e-journal.my.id/cjpe>