

# Positive Discipline Impact on Students' Self-Esteem in EFL Class in Tertiary Level

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## ABSTRACT

This research investigates the impact of positive discipline on students' self-esteem and how it is implemented. A pre-experimental study followed by observation was applied in this research. This research was carried out at an English department of an Islamic University in Salatiga, Indonesia. An English class consisting of 33 students was chosen through cluster random sampling, and an English teacher was the sampler of this research. The pre-post-test was given to 33 students and adapted from Sorensen's Self-Esteem Questionnaire. The observation was also employed to gather further information on how the teacher implemented positive discipline in the class. Positive Discipline practices in the class are reflected in how the teacher motivates students, praises students' work, helps students' problems, and involves students in arranging learning. Further, the mean score of students' self-esteem questionnaire is decreasing, which means their self-esteem is increasing. Although they are classified in similar levels from 18.42 (severely low self-esteem) to 17.12 (severely low self-esteem), they have improved their self-esteem score. On the other hand, the result of the paired sample T-test represents the less significant positive discipline effect on self-esteem. The paired sample T-test value is 0.092, which is higher than 0.05. Thus, implementing positive discipline over extended periods in EFL learning might significantly affect students' self-esteem.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Every teacher wants his class to run well as planned without any obstacles. On the other hand, many things happen in class due to many factors. For example, no one in the class is willing to raise their hand when the teachers ask them to come forward; students feel they get nothing after learning a series of materials during a semester, or students often make similar mistakes although they are punished before. Those examples are conditions that happen not only in English class but also in most classes. Those problems occur because there is no chance for students to get engaged, making them passive in the class [1]. Furthermore, external rewards, which are frequently practiced in the class to motivate students, have led students to the rewards rather than the learning activeness [2]. The low students' self-esteem might cause those conditions due to teachers' high expectancy [3].

An individual's self-esteem is a psychological and social occurrence that involves assessing their competence and self-worth based on specific values [4]. This evaluation can lead to various emotional states and is subject to change depending on personal circumstances, but typically remains stable throughout development. As it happens to students, this psychological occurrence has significantly affected their academic performance [5], [6], [7]. Furthermore, self-esteem is considered important as an affective factor in learning four language skills [8] particularly oral production performance [9] and language achievements [10]. As an instruction designer, a teacher has a crucial role in forming students' self-esteem [11] and can identify its problem [12].

Positive discipline is assumed to build students' self-esteem as it directs them to be responsible for their choices [13]. Classroom encouragement and confidence in positive discipline classrooms might be alleged to help students enhance their self-esteem [14]. When they are encouraged and loved, children will learn best [15]. Besides, positive discipline also benefits students in the following matters: showing more respect to teachers, students more engaging on task, needing fewer disciplinary measures, fewer suspensions and expulsions, seeing rules as fair matters, and improving attendance [16].

Positive discipline is an approach to teaching that supports children's development, gives them the information they need to learn, and ensures their right to healthy development and

protection from violence [17]. It was developed by Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs and spread by Lynn Lot and John Nelson in the 1980s [18]. It significantly plays a role in classroom activity, especially in activating students to be problem solvers, responsible, and engaged in classroom activities [19].

Several strategies are applied during the teaching-learning process to reach what positive discipline has offered. Durran [17] Proposed five strategies to implement this approach: identifying learning goals, providing warmth and structure, understanding child development, identifying individual differences, and problem-solving and responding with positive discipline. Furthermore, Aken [16] Proposed 13 activities to promote positive discipline: (1) setting the classroom rules at the beginning of the class, (2) Having consistent expectations, (3) setting the goals at the beginning of the class, (4) reinforcing appropriate behavior, (5) remaining neutral during the conflict, (6) searing for the root cause of the misbehavior, (7) emphasizing student dignity matter, (8) creating individual planning for students, (9) using praise, (10) modeling appropriate behavior, (11) providing students with different choices, (12) removing a distracting object in the environment, (13) listen to students. Those 13 activities are expected to enhance students' self-esteem in the language class.

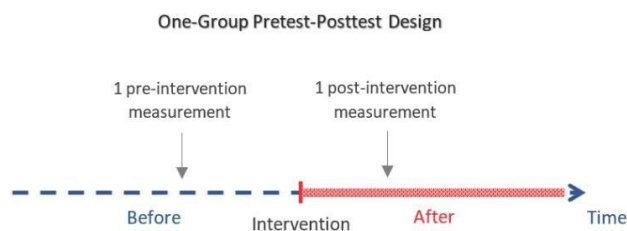
In EFL classrooms, positive discipline could be implemented through the following strategies: (1) arranging language learning objectives, (2) creating warmth and structure conditions and avoiding a threatening atmosphere in EFL classroom, (3) identifying and diagnosing students' language development, (4) respecting students' different character, (5) solving problems referring to positive discipline principles.

Several studies have been carried out on positive classroom discipline implementation. Positive discipline had been applied at the pre and elementary levels [20], [21], [22], [23], as well as at adult school levels [19], [24], [25] [26]. Those studies reveal how positive discipline could enhance effective classroom management [19], [20], [22], [25], improving adolescents' self-esteem [24], parents-pre-school children relation, attitudes, and problem-solving skills [21], and student's well-being and academic achievement[23]. However, there are fewer studies investigating adult students' self-esteem in EFL classes at the tertiary level, as

[24] They inquired about their studies at the senior high level. As university students are more mature than senior high-level students, this study is trying to fill the research gap by investigating the effectiveness of positive discipline in enhancing students' self-esteem in the tertiary EFL class. Thus, this study is carried out to answer the following questions: to what extent does positive discipline affect students' self-esteem? How does an EFL teacher implement positive discipline in her EFL classroom?

## 2. METHOD

This research aimed to see the broader picture of how positive discipline was applied in EFL classrooms. It also investigated the effect of positive discipline on students' self-esteem. As these two objectives require different approaches to probe, this study implemented a qualitative and quantitative approach concurrently. Qualitative research was applied to investigate how EFL teachers implemented positive discipline to enhance students' self-esteem in the EFL classroom, while a quantitative study in the form of a pre-experimental design was applied to probe the students' self-esteem difference before and after positive discipline was implemented in the classroom. The following is the design of the research.



**Figure 1. One Group Pretest-Posttest Design**

This research was conducted in an English class majoring in the English education department of a university in Salatiga, Indonesia. The first-year students were chosen as the population of this research as they were beginners at the tertiary level, and it is assumed that they still have low self-esteem and need to improve. A class was chosen randomly using a lottery, and the result was that class A, the sample of this research, consisted of 33 students. The English teacher who taught English 1 in that class was also involved

in this study. The following is the demography of students who were involved in this research.

**Table 1. The demography of the research sample**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Number</b>
Female	25
Male	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>

A questionnaire adapted from Sorensen [27] Positive discipline was applied to examine students' self-esteem before and after treatment. This questionnaire consists of 50 statements that students should checklist based on their actual condition. As this questionnaire confirms students' low self-esteem, the fewer statements they make, the higher their self-esteem. The following is the measurement of self-esteem score based on the Sorensen self-esteem test:

**Table 2. Sorensen Self-Esteem Scoring Level**

<b>Number of Statements Checked</b>	<b>Self-Esteem Level</b>
0 - 4 statements	Fairly good self-esteem
5 - 10 statements	Mild-low self-esteem
11 - 18 statements	Moderately low self-esteem
19 - 50 statements	Severely low self-esteem

Since the data were analyzed inferentially, the expert consulted the instruments to reach their construct validity, and it was tried out to get their validity and reliability. The validity test resulted in its validity as all items t<sub>obtained</sub> are proven to have a lower value than table (1.73). Furthermore, the reliability test yielded 0.68, higher than the minimum reliability standard (0.60), which means this instrument is reliable. As this instrument has reached its validity and reliability, it is eligible for use as a research instrument. An observation checklist was also prepared, which was arranged and adapted from the strategies for implementing positive discipline in the classroom [14], [16], [17].

The questionnaire was distributed before and after students were treated using positive discipline in their EFL classroom. She

was observed and recorded while the teacher taught in an English classroom. The observation checklist was employed to check what positive discipline strategies existed in EFL classrooms.

The pre-test and post-test data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially, preceded by the normality test to measure whether the data were normally distributed or not as the consideration to decide which parametric or non-parametric test to assess the effectiveness of positive discipline on students' self-esteem. As the study was an inferential quantitative study to check the pre-assumption, the writer set the hypothesis of this research that there is a significant difference in the student's self-esteem before and after positive discipline was implemented. If the sig. (2-tailed) < 0,05, the Ho is rejected, and the Ha is accepted, While the t-test the sig. (2-tailed) > 0,05, the Ho is accepted, and the Ha is rejected. The observation checklist supported by the recording and other notes was analyzed using qualitative data analysis proposed by O'Connor & Gibson [28].

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Positive Discipline Effectiveness to Students' Self-Esteem

Positive discipline effects on students' self-esteem were tested through a self-esteem questionnaire that was spread before and after the treatment. Below is the result of the questionnaire score in the pre-test and the post-test.

**Table 3. The results of descriptive statistics analysis**

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-Test	33	6	30	18.42	5.362
Post-Test	33	10	27	17.12	4.601
Valid N (listwise)	33				

The above table shows that all chosen samples participated in the classroom before or after the treatment. That data also shows the decreasing mean score from the pre-test to the post-test, which means there is an improvement in students' self-esteem. In the pre-test, students received a 6 for the minimum

score and 30 for the highest score in the pretest. The minimum score in the post-test increases to 10, and the maximum score decreases to 27. The decreasing score of students' self-esteem questionnaire indicates positively that the lower the score of students' Sorensen questionnaire results, the higher their self-esteem level is. Although there is a decreasing score of questionnaires, the mean scores of students' levels of both tests are stagnant in moderately low self-esteem. Further, the data are analyzed in its normality. This analysis applied Kolmogorov Smirnov to reach the normality of data assisted with SPSS 25. The following are the results of the normality test.

**Table 4. Normality test result**

	Kelas	Statistic	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>		Shapiro-Wilk		
			df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Self-Esteem	Pre-Test	.106	33	.200*	.974	33	.591
	Post-Test	.090	33	.200*	.965	33	.350

The significance value of Kolmogorov Smirnov (Sig. 2-tailed row) is 0.200 for both the pre-test and post-test, which is higher than 0.05. This indicates that the data is in a normal distribution, and the paired sample t-test could be proceeded with. Then, the data are analyzed parametrically using a paired sample t-test. The table below presents the results of the Paired Sample T-test analyzed using SPSS 25.

**Table 4. Paired Sample T-Test Result**

		Paired Samples Test				
Paired Differences		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
Upper		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Pair 1	Pre-Test - Post-test	2.829	1.739	32	.092	

Based on the data above, it is seen that the Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.092. It is higher than the level of sig. 2, tailed 0.05. It means that the  $H_0$  is accepted and the  $H_a$  is rejected. This result reflects no significant differences in students' self-esteem before and after implementing positive discipline. This result is contradicted by the improvement of mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test, although minimal. The result of the paired sample T-test above reflects the researcher's assumption that positive discipline can be significantly effective when implemented over a more extended period, as this study was conducted in a short period of meetings. The researcher has not achieved a significant result since the treatment using positive discipline in EFL class is only in fewer meetings. In addition, the teachers' challenges in implementing positive discipline are assumed to be less significant in this test.

The above findings reveal new empirical evidence on the effectiveness of positive discipline. This study shows that positive discipline is ineffective in boosting students' self-esteem in EFL classes. This aligns with a survey established by Zondo et al. [29], which found that negative discipline is more effective in making students more disciplined than positive discipline. It is an ironic case as negative discipline pours violence and violent behaviors in educational institutions, and it does not support students' academic performance and tends to treat students' dignity, weaken students' self-esteem, cause pain, and cause distress [30]. Thus, the positive discipline implementation needs to be revisited to see the cause of its ineffectiveness, as this study was only conducted in a short period, which might influence its fruitful results. Furthermore, teachers' lack of knowledge and experience might cause the ineffectiveness of positive discipline in managing students' behavior in the classroom [31].

This study presents the similarity of students before and after treatment in paired sample t-test analysis, although the mean score shows an improvement. Positive discipline might help students improve their self-esteem, as proven by Jesenia and Vega [22]. Positive discipline assists students in enhancing their behavior and attitudes. As it strengthens students' dignity and self-esteem, positive discipline might theoretically help students improve their self-esteem [14].

### *3.2. Teacher's Implementation of Positive Discipline in EFL Class*



Observation checklists and field notes have become resources for identifying how English teachers implement positive discipline in their EFL classrooms. The researcher assistant recorded and observed how the teacher taught English using positive discipline. The following results are from the teacher's observation checklist in meetings one and two.

**Table 5. observation checklist results**

<b>Positive Discipline Strategy</b>	<b>Meeting 1</b>	<b>Meeting 2</b>	<b>Notes</b>
The class has classroom rules and learning objectives.	√		The classroom rules were set in the first meeting in the form of a learning contract (students' dos and don'ts)
Teacher motivates students	√	√	Teachers motivate students to be more active and diligent at the end of the classroom.
The teacher and students agree to decide something (group, classroom rules, learning activity, test, etc.).	√	√	A group task, due date, and media to present the task are decided together (teacher & students)
The teacher provides choices when deciding a thing	√	√	The teacher offers a way to decide the group task member
The teacher identifies students' character and background (by asking about their address, school background, English competence, etc.).	√		The teacher asked students to introduce themselves and have 1-2 questions (detail address, hobby, etc.)

Teacher tries to engage with students (make interaction)	√	√	The teacher went around the class and asked the group problem, probing some questions related to materials prior knowledge.
Teacher gives praise and sequences rather than reward and punishment	√	√	The teacher said, "Good job," "Great," and "Give applause" for students' correct responses or presentations.
Teacher praises students in every condition	√	√	The teacher praised students not only for the task but also when students came on time to keep the classroom clean & tidy.
Teacher responds to students' questions wisely	√	√	The teacher answered questions as detailed and transparently as possible, although the meetings did not raise complex questions.
Teacher respects students' criticism and idea	√	√	The teacher tried to respect students with contradictory ideas and asked them questions related to their ideas, such as why

			it was so and what the reasons were.
The teacher listens to students' problem	√	√	The teacher asked students if there was a problem, and then he paid attention to the students' problem
The teacher gives special attention to students who face the problem	√	√	The teacher guides students who face problems in doing the tasks.
The teacher is neutral when there is a conflict among students			
The teacher identifies the cause of the problem			
Teacher becomes a good behavior model	√	√	The teacher tried to perform well in costume, politely speaking, praising students, saying thanks, and listening carefully to students' speaking

The above table presents the positive discipline strategies that are reflected in the EFL classroom as a way to strengthen students' self-esteem. Of fifteen strategies to implement positive discipline, two did not appear in both meetings: "Teacher is neutral when there is a conflict among students" and "Teacher identifies the cause of the problem." As the study was conducted in the first and second meetings in the semester, those cases have not yet appeared in the classroom. The other two strategies, "Class has classroom rules and learning objectives" and the Teacher identifying students' character and background (asking address, school background, English competence, etc.), were only spotted in meeting 1. This case happened because the teacher and students made and set their

classroom agreement (learning contract) in the first meeting eligible for the whole meeting and made students introduce themselves in the first meeting.

The above observation reflects that the teacher tried to motivate and involve students in the class by deciding the media, due date, and group members. Moreover, interaction between students and teachers [32], involving students in the class and having an experience with the teacher, has been proven to boost students' self-esteem [33]. Furthermore, the teacher attempted to enhance students' self-esteem through praising and respecting their comments and ideas. When praised for what they have done and responded to and respected for their participation and comments, they feel loved, which affects their self-esteem improvement [34]. Paying attention to students' problems and helping them solve them is also reflected in the teaching-learning process as the teachers attempt to boost students' self-esteem. Teachers' strategies to increase students' self-esteem include helping to break adolescents' challenges [35]. Being a good model is the final way teachers could support students' self-esteem by being a good model for them to be optimistic. A study by Kashan et al. [36] proves that teachers' attitudes in teaching-learning have increased students' self-esteem. Being a role model, mentor, or supporter is crucial things in boosting students' self-esteem [35].

In conclusion, strategies to implement positive discipline developed from several theories [14], [16], [31] These are seen to be implemented in the teaching-learning process, although two strategies have not been reflected in the classroom. According to several previous studies, The strategies implemented have been proven to support students' self-esteem.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This study tried to answer the questions raised: the effectiveness of positive discipline in boosting students' self-esteem and how teachers implement positive discipline to boost students' self-esteem. After analyzing the students' pretest and posttest of self-esteem, it was found that students' self-esteem scores are increasing, although the t-test score is still ineffective. Furthermore, most strategies to boost students' self-esteem through positive discipline are implemented in the classroom, which might help increase students' self-esteem.

However, this study still needs further investigation, particularly on implementing this approach in the longer meetings in EFL classrooms. Teacher-students perceptions are also attractive to investigate in the future to support the existing findings. This study is expected to be a reference for other researchers interested in investigating positive discipline studies to boost students' self-esteem.

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