

Building Student Responsibility Through Classroom Cleanliness Routines

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ABSTRACT

This study frames classroom cleanliness not as a minor technical issue but as an educational site for building student responsibility through routine-based classroom management in primary school. It examines how classroom cleanliness can be improved when Grade 6 students display low awareness and self-discipline, and how teachers respond through routines, guidance, and classroom management strategies. The study used a qualitative case study design in one Grade 6 classroom at Cendekia Harapan Primary School, Bali. The auditable data archive consisted of three structured observation sessions focused on the end-of-day cleaning routine, each lasting approximately ten minutes, supported by descriptive field notes. Thematic analysis generated four themes: low student awareness of cleanliness, dependence on teacher supervision, limited effectiveness of teacher strategies due to inconsistent reinforcement, and weak habit formation and student ownership. The findings indicate that the central problem was not a lack of tools or time, but the absence of durable collective responsibility. The study contributes by showing that classroom cleanliness routines can serve as a practical mechanism for responsibility formation when they are enacted consistently, participatively, and in ways that support student ownership rather than short-term compliance.

Keywords : *classroom management, classroom cleanliness, student responsibility, routines, primary education*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini memosisikan kebersihan kelas bukan sekadar urusan teknis, melainkan sebagai arena pendidikan untuk membentuk tanggung jawab siswa melalui routine-based classroom management di sekolah dasar. Studi ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana kebersihan kelas dapat ditingkatkan ketika siswa kelas 6 menunjukkan kesadaran dan disiplin diri yang rendah, serta bagaimana guru merespons masalah tersebut melalui rutinitas, arahan, dan strategi manajemen kelas. Penelitian menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif di satu kelas 6 Cendekia Harapan Primary School, Bali. Arsip data yang dapat diaudit terdiri atas tiga sesi observasi terstruktur yang berfokus pada rutinitas bersih-bersih akhir hari, masing-masing sekitar 10 menit, dilengkapi field notes deskriptif. Analisis tematik menghasilkan empat tema: rendahnya kesadaran kebersihan siswa, ketergantungan pada supervisi guru, terbatasnya efektivitas strategi guru yang belum konsisten diperkuat, serta lemahnya pembentukan kebiasaan dan kepemilikan siswa. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa masalah utama bukan kekurangan alat atau waktu, melainkan belum terbentuknya tanggung jawab kolektif. Studi ini berkontribusi dengan menegaskan bahwa rutinitas kebersihan kelas dapat berfungsi sebagai sarana pembentukan karakter tanggung jawab bila dikelola secara konsisten, partisipatif, dan mendukung kepemilikan siswa.

Kata kunci : *manajemen kelas, kebersihan kelas, tanggung jawab siswa, rutinitas, pendidikan dasar*

INTRODUCTION

In primary education, classroom cleanliness is more than a housekeeping concern. It is part of the daily moral and pedagogical environment through which students learn what it means to care for shared space, respond to expectations, and act responsibly without constant adult control. Recent classroom management and educational psychology research shows that productive classrooms depend not only on rules and monitoring, but also on structures that support student engagement, autonomy, self-regulation, and shared responsibility (Karasova & Nehyba, 2023; Kersna et al., 2025; König et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2022). In that sense, routine classroom practices such as tidying learning materials, restoring seating arrangements, and cleaning the room before

dismissal are educational moments in which responsibility is either built or deferred.

The present study emerged from a recurring problem in one Grade 6 classroom at Cendekia Harapan Primary School, Bali. At the end of the school day, students were given approximately ten minutes to clean the classroom, yet scraps of paper, plastic waste, and disordered classroom areas often remained. The problem became especially visible when the teacher was not present: under reduced supervision, participation declined and the classroom was frequently left untidy. The uploaded observation materials show a stable pattern in which students cleaned mainly after reminders, only some noticed trash without being told, and independent participation dropped sharply when teacher presence weakened.

This pattern matters educationally because it points to a gap between compliance and responsibility. A student may follow a teacher's instruction to clean and still not experience classroom cleanliness as a shared value or personal obligation. Kohn's educational argument remains relevant here: classrooms that rely primarily on external control may secure short-term obedience without cultivating deeper ownership, community, or moral responsibility (Kohn, 1996). More recent work in classroom management similarly shows that student-centered teacher responses, autonomy-supportive practices, and supportive classroom structures are associated with improved engagement, self-regulation, and responsibility, whereas heavily controlling responses tend to reinforce dependence on external authority (Karasova & Nehyba, 2023; Yang et al., 2022).

The broader literature also indicates that routines matter. Research in early and primary education has shown that consistent routines support children's readiness, self-regulation, and successful participation in school contexts (Kersna et al., 2025). Studies of classroom support likewise suggest that supportive learning environments shape engagement and academic functioning in elementary classrooms (Carbonneau et al., 2024). In parallel, work on school cleanliness and environmental programs has shown that awareness, school systems, and community-supported routines influence how students relate to cleanliness and shared responsibility (Ismail et al., 2024; Or & Ching, 2024; Sutriyanti et al., 2025).

Character education research in Indonesia also emphasizes that discipline and responsibility grow through habituation, modeling, rules, and school culture, not through isolated reminders alone (Albet et al., 2024; Dewi et al., 2023).

However, an important gap remains. Many studies discuss discipline, hygiene, or school environment in broad terms, yet fewer examine how student responsibility is formed in the micro-practice of everyday classroom cleanliness routines, especially when awareness is low and teacher supervision cannot be sustained continuously. The present study addresses that gap by framing classroom cleanliness as an educational problem of responsibility formation through routine-based classroom management in primary school. It asks: How can classroom cleanliness be improved when students show low awareness and self-discipline, and how do teachers address this problem through routines, guidance, and classroom management strategies?

Accordingly, this study has three aims. First, it identifies the roots of inconsistent classroom cleanliness in one Grade 6 classroom. Second, it analyzes the teacher's responses through routines, instructions, modeling, and supervision. Third, it proposes realistic, educationally grounded ways to shift cleanliness practice from reminder-based compliance toward shared student ownership. The study contributes to primary education research by showing that cleanliness routines can serve as a concrete site for character formation, especially for responsibility, self-discipline, and collective care in everyday classroom life.

METHODS

A. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design because the research problem concerned a bounded, real-life educational situation: the formation of student responsibility through classroom cleanliness routines in one primary classroom. A case study approach was suitable because the study did not seek statistical generalization; rather, it aimed to understand how responsibility, supervision, and routines interacted in daily practice. This design is also consistent with recent classroom observation studies in primary education that examine management, support, and student regulation in context (Kersna et al., 2025; König et al., 2023).

B. Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in one intact Grade 6 classroom at Cendekia Harapan Primary School, Bali. The participants consisted of one classroom teacher and 26 Grade 6 students who belonged to the observed class. In total, the study involved 27 participants. The classroom teacher was included because the study examined teacher routines, guidance, supervision, and classroom management strategies during the cleaning routine. The students were included because they were directly involved in the end-of-day classroom cleaning activity and became the main focus of observation in relation to awareness, self-discipline, participation, and responsibility.

The observation window reported in this study spans approximately three months, from 24 October 2025 to 15 February 2026. Within that broader period, the auditable archive available for manuscript development consisted of three structured observation sessions: one undated observation sheet and two dated sessions on 5 January 2026 and 6 January 2026. Each session focused on the end-of-day classroom cleaning routine. The

archived materials indicate that the classroom cleaning routine took place at the end of the lesson day and lasted approximately ten minutes. Accordingly, the structured observation sessions analyzed in this manuscript were centered on these ten-minute post-lesson cleaning periods. Because the notes were brief and focused, the observational unit of analysis was the routine episode rather than the whole school day.

C. Researcher Position and Data Collection

The researcher adopted an overt, non-participant observer role. The classroom routine was observed directly without interviews, surveys, or experimental manipulation. This positioning was chosen to capture naturally occurring student and teacher behavior during the cleaning period while minimizing disruption to everyday classroom life.

Data were collected through a structured observation guide that organized attention into five domains: student awareness of classroom cleanliness, student self-discipline during cleaning time, teacher routines and guidance, classroom management strategies, and environmental or structural factors. These five domains were not adopted from a single existing instrument and were not treated as fixed variables for statistical testing. Rather, they were developed as sensitizing observational domains adapted from relevant theories and prior classroom observation studies.

The first domain, student awareness of classroom cleanliness, was used to observe whether students noticed waste, messy areas, or disorder in the classroom without being prompted. This domain was informed by self-regulation and responsibility-related perspectives, which suggest that responsible behavior begins with students' ability to recognize a situation as requiring their attention and response (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Yang et al., 2022). The second domain, student self-discipline during cleaning time, focused on whether students cleaned voluntarily, waited for reminders, followed peers, or participated only under supervision. This domain was also linked to self-determination and self-regulation perspectives because the study examined whether students acted from internalized responsibility or mainly from external control.

The third domain, teacher routines and guidance, focused on how the teacher structured the cleaning routine through instructions, modeling, reminders, role assignment, and supervision. This domain was informed by classroom management literature, which emphasizes the importance of routines,

clear expectations, monitoring, and teacher responses in supporting student behavior and participation (König et al., 2023; Simonsen et al., 2008). The fourth domain, classroom management strategies, examined whether expectations were reinforced through follow-up, encouragement, consequences, and consistency. This domain was included because classroom routines become educationally meaningful only when they are supported by a stable management cycle rather than isolated reminders.

The fifth domain, environmental or structural factors, was used to observe whether the cleanliness problem was related to practical classroom conditions, such as the availability of cleaning tools, time allocation, classroom layout, or interruptions. This domain was necessary because the study needed to distinguish between a logistical problem and a responsibility-formation problem. If tools, time, and classroom layout were inadequate, then the issue would need to be interpreted as a structural barrier. However, if these conditions were sufficient but student initiative remained weak, then the issue could be interpreted more appropriately as a problem of habit formation, self-discipline, and ownership.

The use of these five domains was also supported by habit formation and situated learning perspectives. Research on habit formation suggests that repeated behavior in stable contexts can gradually become more automatic when supported by consistent cues and routines (Lally et al., 2010). This was relevant because the study examined whether the end-of-day cleaning activity had become a stable classroom habit. Situated learning theory further supported the treatment of classroom cleanliness as a shared social practice rather than a merely technical task. From this perspective, students learn responsibility through participation in meaningful classroom routines, peer interaction, and teacher-guided activity within the actual social context of the classroom (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Therefore, the five domains were considered sufficient and relevant because they captured the main elements needed to understand responsibility formation in the observed cleaning routine: whether students noticed cleanliness problems, whether they acted with self-discipline, how the teacher structured and guided the routine, how classroom management strategies reinforced or weakened the routine, and whether environmental conditions supported or limited participation. Although the five domains were not copied directly from a single prior instrument, they are consistent with classroom

observation studies that examine teacher management, student regulation, participation, and classroom support in primary education contexts (Kersna et al., 2025; König et al., 2023; Sins et al., 2024).

The archived instrument shows that observations attended to whether students noticed waste, cleaned voluntarily or only after reminders, participated without supervision, received clear instructions, experienced consistent routines, and had access to tools and time. Field-note recording followed a two-step procedure. First, brief observational jottings were entered into the structured observation sheet during or immediately after the focal cleaning routine. Second, these jottings were expanded into short descriptive field notes summarizing the condition of the classroom, the students' level of initiative, teacher reminders, and the adequacy of time and tools. Because the surviving archive contains both itemized checklists and brief narrative notes, the field-note corpus combined focused indicators with concise descriptive commentary.

D. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic coding in six stages. First, the researcher familiarized themselves with the observation archive by reading all structured sheets and narrative notes repeatedly. Second, initial open codes were assigned to recurrent behaviors and teacher actions, such as “noticing trash,” “cleaning after reminder,” “no cleaning without supervision,” “clear instruction,” “role assignment,” and “tools available.” Third, these codes were clustered using a hybrid deductive-inductive strategy: deductive categories were drawn from the observation guide, while

inductive codes captured recurring meanings not fully anticipated in advance. Fourth, related codes were combined into candidate categories through constant comparison across sessions. Fifth, the categories were reviewed against the full dataset to test whether each theme was adequately supported and whether discrepant cases required revision. Sixth, final themes were named and linked back to the study's educational framing of responsibility formation through routines. This analytic sequence aligns with qualitative content and thematic approaches used in recent classroom studies (Karasova & Nehyba, 2023; Kersna et al., 2025).

RESULTS

The analysis yielded four themes: low and inconsistent student awareness, dependence on external supervision, limited effectiveness of current teacher strategies, and weak habit formation with limited student ownership. Together, these themes indicate that the classroom cleanliness problem was primarily educational rather than logistical. Table 1 summarizes the thematic findings before each theme is discussed in detail. To strengthen the documentation of the findings, Table 2 presents the observational support for each theme. The table links each theme to specific entries from the structured observation archive and explains how those entries were interpreted during thematic analysis. This documentation is important because the study relied on structured observation sheets and brief descriptive field notes rather than interviews or surveys.

Table 1. Summary of Themes and Representative Evidence

Theme	Summary of pattern	Representative evidence from observation archive
Low and inconsistent student awareness	Students noticed waste inconsistently and rarely cleaned on their own	Only some students noticed trash; most cleaned only after reminders
Dependence on external supervision	Participation increased when the teacher was present and decreased sharply when absent	One record noted all students participated when told; another recorded only 1-3 students without prompting and “no” cleaning without supervision
Limited effectiveness of current teacher strategies	Instructions, modeling, and roles were present, but reinforcement was weak	Rules were clearly stated, but encouragement and consequences were absent or inconsistent
Weak habit formation and ownership	The problem was not lack of tools or time, but incomplete internalization of responsibility	Tools were available, layout was easy, time was sufficient, yet cleanliness still depended on reminders

Table 2. Supporting Documentation for Each Theme

Theme	Supporting documentation from observation archive	Interpretation
Theme 1: Low and inconsistent student awareness	The observation sheets repeatedly recorded that “only some” students noticed trash. Students were also described as cleaning “only after being reminded,” “only when reminded,” and “after being reminded.”	Student awareness was unstable because students did not consistently identify classroom mess as something requiring their own response. Awareness of classroom cleanliness existed in some

Theme 2: Dependence on external supervision	One observation noted that “when told all of them would participate but only some will participate when not been told to.” Another observation recorded only “1–3 student” participating without prompting, while behavior without supervision was marked “no.” The 6 January 2026 session also recorded that students did not clean when the teacher was not present.	students, but it had not yet become a shared classroom habit. Cleaning behavior was strongly activated by teacher presence and reminders. Students could participate when directed, but they had not yet developed enough independent responsibility to sustain the routine without supervision.
Theme 3: Limited effectiveness of current teacher strategies	The observation archive showed that cleaning instructions were clear, teacher modeling was present, rules were stated, supervision was usually present, and students were involved in roles. However, routine consistency was recorded as “no,” “yes,” and “sometimes,” while follow-up was recorded as “no,” “sometimes,” and “rarely.” The use of encouragement and consequences was repeatedly marked “no.”	Teacher strategies were present and helped produce short-term participation, but they were not reinforced consistently enough to create a stable management cycle. The routine therefore produced compliance more than durable responsibility.
Theme 4: Weak habit formation and limited student ownership	The archived sheets indicated that trash bins, brooms, and cleaning tools were available, the classroom layout was easy to clean, time allocation was sufficient, and external interruptions were absent. Narrative notes stated, “Most of the students did clean but was told by the teacher to do so” and “The class was very messy and was told from the teacher to clean it up.”	The main barrier was not lack of facilities, time, or classroom layout. Students were capable of cleaning once prompted, but they did not reliably initiate or sustain the routine as their own responsibility.

Based on this documentation, the following subsections discuss each theme in more detail.

A. Theme 1: Low and Inconsistent Student Awareness

The first theme concerns students’ limited awareness of classroom cleanliness. Across the archived sessions, students did not consistently notice trash around their desks, chairs, or the floor without prompting. In the undated observation sheet, awareness of waste was recorded as “only some will notice the trash.” In the dated observations on 5 January and 6 January 2026, the same pattern was repeated with the phrase “only some.” The recurrence of the same wording across sessions suggests that low awareness was not incidental, but a repeated classroom pattern.

This pattern is important because responsibility begins with perception. Students cannot take initiative toward a problem they do not routinely register as relevant. The field notes therefore suggest that the issue started before actual cleaning behavior. Students first needed to notice the messy and regard it as something that required their response. In this classroom, that attentiveness was unstable.

Initiative was similarly weak. In the archive, students were repeatedly described as cleaning only after teacher reminders. One sheet recorded that students “will clean only after being reminded,” while another stated “only when reminded,” and a third recorded “after being reminded.” These notes indicate that awareness did not consistently translate into action. Even when students recognized the

classroom condition, they seldom moved from noticing to acting without adult prompting.

B. Theme 2: Dependence on External Supervision

The second theme is students’ strong dependence on teacher supervision. Across the observation archive, participation increased when the teacher was present and clearly prompted students to clean. In one observation sheet, participation was summarized as follows: “when told all of them would participate but only some will participate when not been told to.” On 5 January 2026, participation without prompting was even more limited, recorded as “1-3 student,” while behavior without supervision was marked “no.” The 6 January 2026 session produced the same finding, again recording that students did not clean when the teacher was not present.

These records reveal a sharp contrast between supervised and unsupervised conditions. Under supervision, the classroom could be mobilized relatively quickly. Without it, the routine weakened. This suggests that the behavioral driver of cleaning was not yet shared student responsibility, but external activation through the teacher.

Peer influence also mattered. In several sheets, the notes stated that students “follow peers.” This means that behavior during cleaning time was socially contagious. If teacher prompting activated some students, others tended to join. Conversely, when the teacher’s presence weakened and peer initiative remained low, the routine stalled. The

dependence was therefore not only on direct teacher control, but also on the classroom's failure to sustain a self-organizing social norm around cleaning.

C. Theme 3: Limited Effectiveness of Current Teacher Strategies

The observation archive shows that the teacher did not ignore the problem. Cleaning instructions were consistently described as clear. Teacher modeling was present. Rules and expectations about cleanliness were clearly stated. Supervision during the routine was usually present. In addition, students were involved in "roles," suggesting at least some task assignment or division of labor. These observations indicate that the teacher had already established a basic management framework for classroom cleanliness.

However, the same archive shows that these strategies were not reinforced consistently enough to build long-term student responsibility. Routine consistency varied across sessions, being recorded as "no," "yes," and "sometimes." Follow-up after cleaning was logged as "no," "sometimes," and "rarely." More strikingly, "use of consequences" and "use of encouragement" were repeatedly marked "no." This means that students experienced instruction and supervision, but not a stable cycle of expectation, enactment, checking, feedback, and consolidation.

The resulting pattern was predictable. Students responded in the short term, but the routine did not reliably mature into a classroom norm. The data therefore suggest that the current strategies were partially effective for securing immediate compliance yet insufficient for cultivating durable ownership.

D. Theme 4: Weak Habit Formation and Limited Student Ownership

The final theme clarifies why the problem persisted. The archived sheets consistently indicate that trash bins, brooms, and cleaning tools were available, that the classroom layout made cleaning easy, that time allocation was sufficient, and that external interruptions were absent. These observations mean that the classroom was not failing because the task was physically impractical or poorly resourced.

Instead, the problem centered on habit formation and ownership. Students were often able to complete cleaning tasks once they had started. The sheets recorded that students generally completed the cleaning task and used the time effectively. Yet they did not initiate the routine reliably or sustain it without reminders. One narrative note observed, "Most of the students did clean but was told by the teacher

to do so." Another note stated, "The class was very messy and was told from the teacher to clean it up." These notes show that students were capable of cleaning and usually completed the task once prompted. What was missing was the transition from prompted action to shared responsibility.

At the classroom-culture level, then, cleanliness had not yet become a value enacted collectively. The room could become clean, but not yet in a way that signaled durable student ownership.

E. Brief Observational Excerpts

To make the themes more concrete, four brief excerpts illustrate the central patterns. First, the note "only some will notice the trash" captures the instability of student awareness. Second, the statement "they will clean only after being reminded" reflects the central dependency pattern of the study. Third, the entry "1-3 student" illustrates how sharply initiative dropped when the routine was not actively activated by the teacher. Fourth, the remark "The class was very messy and was told from the teacher to clean it up" highlights the gap between classroom condition and student action. Even when the room was visibly messy, student response still depended on teacher direction.

DISCUSSION

This study set out to examine how classroom cleanliness can be improved when Grade 6 students show low awareness and self-discipline, and how teachers address this issue through routines, guidance, and classroom management strategies. The findings indicate that the problem should not be interpreted narrowly as a matter of untidiness. Rather, it is a primary education issue concerning how responsibility is formed through repeated classroom routines.

The observed classroom did not suffer mainly from poor infrastructure, insufficient time, or student incapacity. Students were able to clean, tools were available, and the layout did not obstruct the routine. Yet cleanliness remained unstable because the behavior was not sufficiently internalized. Students responded to adult activation, but responsibility for the room had not yet become fully theirs. This is why the movement from compliance to ownership is the central interpretive issue in the study. Table 3 summarizes the relationship between the empirical findings, related educational theory, and their implications for classroom practice.

Table 3. Summary of Themes and Representative Evidence

Empirical finding	Related theory or scholarship	Interpretation	Educational implication
Students noticed trash inconsistently and rarely initiated cleaning.	Responsibility begins with attention and supported participation; autonomy support strengthens engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Yang et al., 2022).	Students had not yet internalized cleanliness as part of ordinary classroom awareness.	Teachers need routines that make noticing, naming, and responding to classroom messy more explicit and repeated.
Cleaning behavior dropped sharply without teacher supervision.	Compliance-based systems produce fragile order; student-centered responses support responsibility (Karasova & Nehyba, 2023; Kohn, 1996).	Behavior was externally activated rather than self-sustaining.	The routine should be redesigned so that students can continue it through shared norms and peer-supported responsibility.
Teacher instructions, roles, and modeling were present, but follow-up and reinforcement were inconsistent.	Effective classroom management depends on explicit expectations, routines, monitoring, and response systems (König et al., 2023; Simonsen et al., 2008).	The classroom had management actions, but not yet a sufficiently stable management system.	Teachers need a complete cycle of cue, action, check, feedback, and re-practice.
Tools and time were available, but ownership remained weak.	Repeated behavior in stable contexts supports habit formation (Lally et al., 2010); supportive structures help students regulate participation ((Kersna et al., 2025; Sins et al., 2024).	The central barrier was weak habit formation, not logistics.	A fixed daily routine, rotating teams, and visible completion criteria may help transform reminders into habits.
Classroom cleanliness functioned as a shared-space issue rather than an isolated technical task.	School environment and character education literature link routine practice, school culture, and responsibility (Albet et al., 2024; Barrett et al., 2015; Sutriyanti et al., 2025).	Cleanliness routines can serve as a micro-site of character education in primary school.	Classroom cleanliness should be framed as part of responsibility formation and collective care, not only classroom maintenance.
Classroom cleanliness involved shared space, peer behavior, teacher guidance, and repeated participation, but students still depended on teacher reminders.	Situated learning theory views learning as participation in meaningful social practice and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).	The cleaning routine had potential as a situated learning practice, but it had not yet become a self-sustaining classroom norm.	Teachers should strengthen student roles, peer-supported responsibility, reflection, and consistent reinforcement so that cleanliness becomes part of classroom community life.

The first major insight is that compliance is not equivalent to responsibility. Students in the observed classroom usually cleaned when directed, yet this did not mean they had developed ownership of the routine. The distinction matters because educational success in this context is not simply whether the floor becomes clean for a few minutes, but whether students begin to see themselves as responsible for maintaining a shared learning environment. This interpretation is consistent with Kohn's (1996) critique of compliance-oriented schooling. When adults focus primarily on making children obey, they may secure order in the short term while failing to build autonomy, responsibility, and community.

The current findings illustrate this tension clearly. The classroom could be made orderly through reminders, but order weakened when reminders disappeared. The implication is that external regulation was effective at the behavioral surface but insufficient at the level of internal commitment. Classroom cleanliness therefore became a revealing lens through which to observe the limits of compliance-based management.

The second major insight is that supervision dependence signals incomplete internalization. The observation archive repeatedly shows that participation declined sharply without teacher presence. This is significant because it suggests that the routine had not yet become part of students' self-regulation. From the perspective of self-determination theory, students are more likely to internalize expected behavior when the classroom supports autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the present case, competence was not the main issue. Students could complete the tasks when prompted. What remained underdeveloped was autonomous ownership.

This finding also aligns with research on autonomy-supportive teaching and student-centered classroom management. Yang et al. (2022) show that autonomy-supportive practices are associated with stronger student engagement over time, while Karasova and Nehyba (2023) demonstrate that student-centered behavior management responses influence motivation, responsibility, and classroom climate. The present study suggests that classroom cleanliness routines should be

designed with these same principles in mind. Students need to understand the purpose of the routine, have meaningful roles in it, and experience it as part of collective classroom life rather than as a temporary compliance task.

This finding can also be interpreted through situated learning theory. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that learning occurs through participation in social practices and communities of practice. Applied to this study, classroom cleanliness was not simply a task to be completed before dismissal, but a social practice through which students could learn how to participate responsibly in a shared classroom community. The observed routine partly reflected situated learning because it involved real participation, shared space, peer influence, and teacher-guided practice. Nevertheless, the findings show that situated learning did not yet function optimally in this class. Students participated when prompted, but the responsibility for initiating and sustaining the routine remained centered on the teacher. Therefore, the classroom cleaning routine had educational potential as a situated practice, but it still required stronger role distribution, peer norms, reflection, and consistent reinforcement before it could become a fully internalized classroom habit.

The third major insight concerns the role of routine itself. A routine becomes educationally formative not simply because it is repeated, but because it links a stable cue, a clear task structure, and repeated enactment. Research on habit formation indicates that behaviors become more automatic when consistently performed in stable contexts (Lally et al., 2010). The present data suggest that the cleaning routine had not yet reached that level of stability. Routine consistency was recorded differently across sessions, and follow-up was variable. When timing, checking, and reinforcement fluctuate, students are less likely to encode the behavior as a normal and expected part of classroom life.

Recent work on self-regulated learning in primary education supports this interpretation. Kersna et al. (2025) show that classroom environments can be intentionally structured to support self-regulated participation, while Sins et al. (2024) highlight that explicit instruction of self-regulated learning strategies in primary education is often rare and requires deliberate teacher support. Although these studies do not focus on cleanliness, they are relevant because they treat classrooms as environments where independence is developed through guided repetition, task structure, and reflective support. Classroom cleaning routines can be understood in the same way. They are not

incidental housekeeping acts, but repeated opportunities to practice regulation, cooperation, and responsibility.

The fourth major insight is that classroom cleanliness can be understood as part of character education. Responsibility in primary school is often formed through repeated communal practices rather than abstract moral instruction alone. When students are taught to care for shared spaces, they are also learning respect, discipline, and community membership. This connects the present study to broader work on school environment and character development. Barrett et al. (2015) show that classroom environments matter for learning conditions. School-based hygiene and environmental research likewise demonstrates that routines and systems shape how students relate to cleanliness and shared responsibility (Ismail et al., 2024).

In Indonesian educational contexts, the connection between routine practice and character formation is especially important. Albet et al. (2024) emphasize that discipline character education depends on cooperation between teachers, families, and the broader environment. Sutriyanti et al. (2025) similarly show that school-based zero-waste efforts can contribute to student character education when they are integrated into school culture rather than treated as isolated technical tasks. The present study extends those arguments to the classroom level. In the observed Grade 6 room, cleanliness had not yet become a strong classroom culture. Instead, it remained a task frequently triggered by the teacher. The implication is that responsibility will likely strengthen only when cleanliness is repositioned as part of who the class is, not merely what the teacher asks them to do before dismissal.

From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest a modest but feasible model of improvement. First, the class should have a fixed daily cleaning cue at the same time each day. A predictable cue matters because it supports both expectation and habit formation. Second, students should be organized into rotating small teams with clearly defined roles, such as floor checking, chair arrangement, board cleaning, and waste disposal. Role clarity can reduce passivity and encourage fair participation.

Third, the classroom should use a short visual checklist so that students know what "clean and ready for tomorrow" actually means. Fourth, students should be involved in creating a brief classroom cleanliness agreement, for example by defining what a ready classroom looks like and why it matters. This would

strengthen ownership because the rules would become partly student-authored rather than only teacher-delivered. Fifth, teacher follow-up should be brief but consistent. Even a short end-of-routine check, combined with specific acknowledgment of responsible behavior, can reinforce the routine without relying on harsh punishment. The goal is not to produce a cleaner room only. The deeper goal is to use cleanliness routines as a site where primary school students learn responsibility through repeated, visible, and shared practice.

CONCLUSION

This study has argued that classroom cleanliness in primary school should be understood as an educational issue of responsibility formation through routine-based classroom management. In the observed Grade 6 classroom, the key problem was not a lack of cleaning tools, insufficient time, or an impractical classroom layout. Rather, the core issue was that students had not yet developed stable awareness, independent initiative, and shared ownership of classroom cleanliness.

The study also shows that teacher strategies were present but only partially effective. Clear instructions, supervision, modeling, and role assignment helped produce short-term participation. However, because routine consistency, follow-up, encouragement, and reinforcement were uneven, the routine did not consistently develop into a durable student habit. As a result, cleanliness remained strongly dependent on teacher reminders.

The findings therefore answer the research question directly. Classroom cleanliness can be improved when teachers move beyond reminder-based management and cultivate consistent, participatory routines that help students internalize responsibility. Teachers can address the problem through predictable cleaning schedules, rotating roles, visible expectations, supportive follow-up, and student involvement in defining classroom norms. These approaches are practical and educationally meaningful because they treat cleanliness not simply as maintenance work, but as a repeated exercise in responsibility.

The contribution of the study lies in its reframing of classroom cleanliness as a site of character education in primary school. Through routine-based classroom management, everyday acts such as noticing trash, arranging chairs, and cleaning before dismissal can become part of how students learn care, discipline, and responsibility for shared spaces. This moves the discussion from how to make students clean to the more educationally important question of how to help students

become responsible members of a classroom community.

The study has limitations. It relied on one classroom, one teacher, and three auditable structured observations. It did not include interviews, student reflections, or a verifiable class roster in the archived dataset. Future research could extend this work by involving multiple classrooms and grade levels, documenting precise student numbers, collecting richer field-note data, and examining whether routine-based cleanliness programs strengthen responsibility over longer periods of time. Even with these limitations, the study provides a grounded account of how classroom cleanliness routines can function as a practical pathway for building student responsibility in primary education.

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