

## THE INFLUENCE OF STORYTELLING METHODS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTALLY CONCERNED CHARACTER THROUGH THE HABIT OF DISPOSING OF GARBAGE IN ITS PLACE

Siti Khomsah Apsari <sup>1</sup>, Aries Dirgayunita <sup>2</sup>

Institut Ahmad Dahlan Probolinggo

[Nauramanzila95@gmail.com](mailto:Nauramanzila95@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of storytelling methods on the formation of environmental care character in early childhood, especially through the habit of disposing of garbage in its place at RA Al-Azhar Pondok Wuluh Leces, Probolinggo Regency. The type of research used is a quasi-experimental with a *One Group Pretest-Posttest Design*. The research subjects consisted of 20 children aged 5–6 years in group B. Data were obtained through an observation sheet of environmental care behavior that includes five main indicators and analyzed using a *paired sample t-test* with the help of the SPSS program version 25.0. The results showed a significant increase in children's environmental care behavior after the storytelling method was implemented. The average observation value increased from 1.48 in the pretest to 2.44 in the posttest with a significance value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ . The highest increase was in the indicator of disposing of garbage in its place and reprimanding friends who litter. These findings indicate that the storytelling method is effective in internalizing environmental care values through a fun, contextual, and appropriate approach to the world of early childhood. Thus, the storytelling method can be used as an alternative character learning strategy in PAUD institutions to foster children's awareness and responsibility for environmental cleanliness.

**Keywords:** storytelling method, environmentally conscious character, early childhood.

### INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (PAUD) plays a strategic role in laying the foundations for future personality and character. Early childhood is known as the golden age, a period when a child's full potential develops rapidly, both cognitively, affectively, and psychomotorically (Mardatillah et al., 2024). During this period, children learn primarily through direct experience, imitation, and repeated practice. Therefore, early childhood education must be designed to foster positive attitudes, values, and behaviors that will form the foundation of future character.

Character education is a fundamental aspect of the national education system, as stipulated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. The goal of national education focuses not only on improving intellectual abilities but also emphasizes the formation of good character and morals. Susanti (2022) explains that character education encompasses three main components: *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*. In the context of early childhood education, these three aspects need to be developed through enjoyable and meaningful learning methods so that moral values can be properly internalized.

One important character value that must be instilled from an early age is environmental stewardship. This value is a concrete manifestation of individual responsibility and awareness for the cleanliness and sustainability of their surrounding environment (Ismail, 2021). In daily practice in early childhood education institutions, environmental stewardship can be demonstrated through simple actions such as disposing of trash properly, maintaining classroom cleanliness, conserving water, and caring for plants around the school. However, the reality on the ground shows that many children still do not understand the importance of maintaining environmental cleanliness. At RA Al-Azhar Pondok Wuluh Leces, Probolinggo, for

example, children are still frequently found littering after eating or playing in the schoolyard. This situation indicates that environmental awareness has not yet developed optimally in early childhood.

This phenomenon demonstrates the importance of effective learning strategies to instill a caring and environmentally friendly character in a fun way. Early childhood education teachers play a central role as models and facilitators of character learning. One approach that has proven effective is the storytelling method. This method allows teachers to convey moral values and educational messages through engaging and contextualized stories for children. According to Qudsyi (2013), children learn to understand the world through narrative; stories serve as an important medium for children to connect personal experiences with social and moral values.

Stories told with expression, intonation, and props can stimulate children's imaginations and indirectly instill moral messages. For example, when children listen to a story about a character who keeps the school clean and reprimands a friend who litters, they not only understand the story's content but also emulate the character's behavior. This aligns with LUBIS's (2025) social learning theory, which states that children learn through observation and imitation of the models they see around them. Both the characters in the story and the teacher who tells the story can serve as positive role models for children.

Previous research has also demonstrated the effectiveness of storytelling in fostering character values. Wulandari et al. (2023) found that storytelling can increase social and environmental awareness in early childhood because stories simultaneously engage both the affective and cognitive domains. Meanwhile, Friatin's (2024) research confirms that environmental character education through storytelling helps children understand the consequences of inattentive behavior, such as pollution and littering.

Based on various studies and research findings, it can be concluded that storytelling is a potential approach to fostering environmentally conscious character in early childhood. By harnessing the power of children's imagination and grasping of moral messages, teachers can effectively instill positive habits such as disposing of trash properly. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effectiveness of storytelling in fostering environmentally conscious character in early childhood through the practice of disposing of trash properly at RA Al-Azhar Pondok Wuluh Leces, Probolinggo.

## METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental approach and a One Group Pretest-Posttest Design. This design was chosen because it allows researchers to compare conditions before and after treatment without a control group (Abraham & Supriyati, 2022). This model is considered appropriate for the context of early childhood education, where treatment should be enjoyable and avoid extreme differences between groups.

In this study, the treatment provided was the application of storytelling methods with the theme of environmental awareness, specifically regarding the habit of disposing of waste properly. Prior to the treatment, the children were given an initial observation (*pretest*) to determine their level of environmental awareness. After a series of storytelling activities over several sessions, a re-observation (*posttest*) was conducted to assess changes in the children's behavior. The research design is described as follows:

Group	Pretest	Treatment	Posttest
Experiment	O <sub>1</sub>	X	O <sub>2</sub>

Description:

O<sub>1</sub> = observation results before treatment ( *pretest* )

X = application of storytelling method with the theme of caring for the environment O<sub>2</sub> = observation results after treatment ( *posttest* )

### Research Location and Subjects

This research was conducted at RA Al-Azhar Pondok Wuluh, Leces District, Probolinggo Regency, East Java. The location was selected purposively, considering that the institution has implemented character-based learning, yet children still litter in the school environment. The research subjects were 20 children aged 5–6 years, consisting of 11 boys and 9 girls. All children were in group B. In addition to the children, the class teacher was also involved as a collaborator in the observation process and implementation of the storytelling method.

### Research Instruments

The instrument used in this study was an environmental behavior observation sheet, compiled based on the environmental character indicators from the Ministry of Education and Culture (2017). The observation sheet consists of five main indicators:

1. Get used to throwing rubbish in its place.
2. Reprimand a friend who throws rubbish carelessly.
3. Pick up and throw away rubbish found nearby.
4. Maintain the cleanliness of the classroom and school environment .
5. Showing dislike for behavior that damages environmental cleanliness.

Each indicator is assessed on a three-category scale:

- 1 = Not yet visible,
- 2 = Starting to develop,
- 3 = Very well developed.

The instrument's validity was assessed through a content validity test conducted by two experts in early childhood education (PAUD) and character education. The results showed that all indicators aligned with the construct of environmentally conscious character and could be used in research.

### Research Procedures

The research was conducted in three main stages:

1. PreparationStage:  
 Researchers prepare story sets that incorporate environmental values. The stories are tailored to the world of early childhood, using simple language and characters familiar to children , such as animals or peers who diligently maintain cleanliness.
2. ImplementationStage:  
 The storytelling activity was conducted over two weeks (six meetings). Each meeting lasted approximately 30–40 minutes and began with apperception, storytelling activities, light discussion, and simple reflection. The teacher used aids such as hand puppets, picture series, and vocal expressions to make the story more engaging and interactive.

### 3. Evaluation Stage:

After the storytelling activity was completed, researchers and teachers conducted a re-observation (posttest) to assess changes in children's behavior. The observation results were compared with pre-treatment data to determine the effectiveness of the storytelling method.

### Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the average increase in children's environmental care character scores before and after treatment. Meanwhile, inferential analysis used a *paired sample t-test to determine the significance of differences in pretest and posttest results*. Before the t-test was conducted, the data were tested for normality using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. All data analyses were performed using SPSS version 25.0. Qualitative data obtained through field notes and teacher interviews were analyzed descriptively to strengthen the quantitative findings. This analysis was used to interpret how the storytelling method implementation influenced changes in children's behavior.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted at RA Al-Azhar Pondok Wuluh, Leces District, Probolinggo Regency, with 20 children aged 5–6 years old as subjects. The study consisted of two observation stages: *a pretest* (before the storytelling method was implemented) and *a posttest* (after the storytelling method had been implemented for two weeks).

Data were obtained through an environmental awareness behavior observation sheet covering five main indicators. The results showed a significant improvement in all indicators after the treatment. Before the storytelling method was implemented, most children were still in the "beginning to develop" category, with an average overall score of 1.48. After the treatment, the average score increased to 2.44, indicating that most children were in the "very well developed" category.

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test showed that the data were normally distributed ( $p > 0.05$ ), so it could be continued with a *paired sample t-test*. The *t-test results* showed a significance value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ , which means there was a significant difference between the observation results before and after the implementation of the storytelling method.

Descriptively, the greatest improvement was seen in the indicators "throwing trash in the right place" and "reprimanding friends who litter." Children began to demonstrate new positive habits, such as finding a trash can when throwing away food wrappers and reminding friends who didn't. This demonstrates that storytelling can influence real behavioral changes in children within the context of caring for the school environment.

### Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that storytelling is effective in developing environmental awareness in young children, particularly in the habit of disposing of waste properly. This effectiveness can be explained through the following theoretical and empirical aspects. Stories as a Medium for Internalizing Moral Values. According to Bruner (1996), humans understand the world and their life experiences through narrative. Stories are an important learning tool for children because they can combine cognitive, affective, and

imaginative elements simultaneously (Krissandi, 2021) . Children who listen to stories not only understand the content intellectually but also experience emotional involvement with the characters and situations within them.

In this study, teachers presented stories about environmental awareness, such as a child who diligently disposes of trash properly or an animal character who keeps the forest clean. Stories that are close to children's worlds make it easier for them to identify with these characters. This identification process then encourages children to imitate the good behavior exemplified in the stories. This aligns with Albert Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which asserts that individuals learn through observation and imitation of models they see (Bandura, n.d.) .

Character Building through Three Moral Aspects. The findings of this study also support Lickona's (1991) theory of three components of character education: *moral knowing* , *moral feeling* , and *moral action*. Through storytelling, children acquire *moral knowing* because they understand the importance of maintaining environmental cleanliness from the content of the story told by the teacher. *Moral feeling* develops when children feel empathy for the story characters who experience difficulties due to a dirty environment. Furthermore, *moral action* is formed when children begin to implement the habit of disposing of trash in its place and encourage their friends to do the same. Storytelling activities accompanied by reflection afterward also help children strengthen their moral understanding. Teachers provide opportunities for children to respond to the story's content, for example by asking, "If you see a friend littering, what should you do?" Reflective questions like these encourage children to think critically and connect the story's message to real-life behavior in their environment.

Contextual Approach and Real Habituation. Story contexts adapted to children's daily lives have been shown to strengthen character learning outcomes. As Ningsih (2024) notes , character values are more easily ingrained when presented within the context of children's real-life experiences. In this study, stories about school and neighborhood cleanliness helped children understand that disposing of trash properly is not just a teacher's command, but a shared need to maintain a clean and comfortable environment. Teachers also follow up storytelling activities with practical activities, such as inviting children to clean the classroom or schoolyard after listening to the story. This approach creates continuity between cognitive learning and hands-on experience, so that moral values are not only understood but also put into practice.

The Role of Teachers as Character Models. Teachers play a central role in the character development of early childhood. According to Judrah et al. (2024), teachers serve not only as transmitters of material but also as moral role models who significantly influence the development of children's behavior. In storytelling activities, teachers serve as role models, demonstrating emotional expression, intonation, and positive attitudes toward environmental cleanliness. Observations show that children tend to imitate the teacher's behavior after the storytelling activity. For example, when the teacher picks up small pieces of trash on the floor before starting the lesson, the children follow suit without being asked. This proves that character building requires more than just telling; it requires real-life examples (Adib, 2024) .

#### Supporting Empirical Results

Empirically, the results of this study align with those of Wulandari et al. (2023) , which showed that storytelling significantly increased environmental awareness in children aged 5–6 years . Their research found that children were more active in maintaining cleanliness after

listening to stories with environmental themes. A similar finding was also expressed by Oktaviani & Laely (2024), who stated that storytelling effectively increased children's sense of responsibility and discipline in the context of school cleanliness.

Furthermore, this study reinforces the findings of research conducted by Muthmainnah et al. (2025) that storytelling activities using engaging props can increase children's participation and concentration during the character-learning process. Thus, the research findings at RA Al-Azhar Pondok Wuluh confirm that developing environmentally conscious characters through storytelling is an effective, contextual, and enjoyable approach.

**Educational Implications.** These findings have important implications for the development of character-based early childhood education (PAUD) curricula. First, storytelling can be used as an alternative learning method to integrate character values into play and learning activities. Second, PAUD institutions need to provide training to teachers to develop educational stories relevant to children's lives. Third, collaboration between teachers and parents is essential to strengthen environmental stewardship habits at home and at school. Through a consistent and continuous approach, the character values of caring for the environment will be firmly embedded in children and become habits that stick with them into adulthood.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research and analysis conducted, it can be concluded that storytelling is effective in fostering environmental awareness in young children, particularly through fostering the habit of disposing of trash properly. The interactive, engaging, and contextual storytelling method successfully increases children's awareness and responsibility for a clean school environment. *a pretest average of 1.48 to a posttest average of 2.44, with a t-test result of 0.000 < 0.05.* This means there is a significant difference between children's behavior before and after the storytelling method was implemented. The greatest improvement occurred in the behavior indicators of disposing of trash properly and reprimanding friends who litter.

These findings reinforce Lickona's (1991) theory of character formation through three main dimensions ( *moral knowing* , *moral feeling* , and *moral action* ) and Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which states that children learn by imitating the behavior of models displayed in real-life situations. Stories delivered by teachers in an expressive and reflective manner have been shown to foster empathy, moral understanding, and concrete actions in children to maintain a clean environment. Thus, the storytelling method can be used as an effective and enjoyable learning strategy to instill environmental character values in early childhood.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abraham, I., & Supriyati, Y. (2022). Quasi-Experimental Design in Education: Literature. *Mandala Education Scientific Journal* , 8 (3).
- Adib, MA (2024). The Urgency of Being a Role Model: The Role of Teachers as Role Models in Islamic Religious Education. *Edification Journal: Islamic Religious Education* , 7 (1), 31–44.
- Bandura, A. (nd). *Bandura's social learning theory in brief. Abstract: Albert Bandura: a social-cognitive theory of personality. Review of Bandura's Social Learning Theory* .
- Friatin, LY (2024). ECOCRITICISM EDUCATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH ENGLISH SHORT STORIES TOWARDS ATTITUDES, VALUES, AND BEHAVIOR TOWARDS

- THE ENVIRONMENT. *Junjung Buih: Journal of Community Service* , 2 (1), 41–52.
- Ismail, MJ (2021). Character education for environmental care and maintaining cleanliness in schools. *Guru Tua: Journal of Education and Learning* , 4 (1), 59–68.
- Judrah, M., Arjum, A., Haeruddin, H., & Mustabsyirah, M. (2024). The role of Islamic religious education teachers in building students' character as an effort to strengthen morals. *Journal of Instructional and Development Researches* , 4 (1), 25–37.
- Krissandi, ADS (2021). *Indonesian Children's Literature* . Sanata Dharma University Press.
- LICKONA, T. (nd). CHARACTER EDUCATION THOUGHTS. *Educational Horizons: Philosophy, Theory and New Ideas* , 149.
- LUBIS, M. (2025). IMPLEMENTATION OF MODELING TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE EARLY CHILDHOOD SOCIAL ABILITIES. *UNISAN JOURNAL* , 4 (3), 820–831.
- Mardatillah, A., Lubis, R., Maharani, FMP, Putri, H., Khairani, I., & Lestari, N. (2024). Characteristics of Psychomotor Development of Kindergarten-Age Children. *Mesada: Journal of Innovative Research* , 1 (2), 143–151.
- Muthmainnah, R., Febriyanti, R., & Adhiani, RR (2025). Application of Storytelling Method with Hand Puppets to Improve Listening Skills of Group B Children at RA PERSIS 16. *Journal of Critical and Collaborative Education* , 1 (1), 31–35.
- Ningsih, W. (2024). Strategy for instilling Islamic religious values in the formation of character and ethics in early childhood. *Indonesian Research Journal on Education* , 4 (1), 332–342.
- Oktaviani, A., & Laely, K. (2024). Improving Children's Responsibility Through Storytelling Using Hand Puppets. *Journal of Integrative Holistic Early Childhood (AUDHI)* , 6 (2), 1–14.
- Qudsyi, H. (2013). Instilling morals in children through storytelling. *Psikologika: Journal of Psychological Thought and Research* , 18 (1), 25–37.
- Susanti, SE (2022). Character education in building moral intelligence for early childhood from Thomas Lickona's perspective. *Trilogy: Journal of Science, Technology, Health, and Humanities* , 3 (1), 10–17.
- Wulandari, AP, Salsabila, AA, Cahyani, K., Nurazizah, TS, & Ulfiah, Z. (2023). The importance of learning media in the teaching and learning process. *Journal on Education* , 5 (2), 3928–3936.