RESEARCH ARTICLE

Character Education through Innovative Stories in Early Childhood

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ABSTRACT

Character education is considered crucial starting in early childhood because it is an educational process aimed at developing values, attitudes, and behaviors that reflect noble morals or noble character. Early childhood, or what psychologists call the golden age, is proven to be crucial for children's ability to develop their potential. Therefore, in children's character education, storytelling can be used to shape and develop it. This study aims to describe the application of character education through innovative stories in early childhood. The research method used is descriptive qualitative, with data collection techniques through observation and review of previous research. The results of the study indicate that the application of innovative stories is effective in instilling character values in children. Teachers act as facilitators in guiding children's moral understanding through reflective activities after the story is presented. Thus, innovative stories can be an effective educational strategy in character formation in early childhood.

***Keywords:** Character Education, Innovative Stories, Early Childhood*

INTRODUCTION

From an early age, children should be provided with stimulation through character education because early childhood is considered the *"golden age,"* during which the brain experiences highly significant development. At this stage, children can easily record and imitate whatever happens in their surroundings. If they encounter negative experiences, they will imitate negative behaviors; likewise, when they experience positive situations, they will imitate positive behaviors in their speech and actions.

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology today has become one of the factors that greatly influence children's character development, particularly through mass media, especially electronic media with television as the primary source. Character education has become one of the solutions to address the moral degradation affecting the Indonesian nation at all ages, caused by the rapid development of the digital era, especially in early childhood. Various approaches can be applied, ranging from storytelling, singing, modeling, habitual routines, and many more.

Character education plays a crucial role and should be instilled from early childhood, as it is an educational process aimed at developing values, attitudes, and behaviors that reflect noble morals and virtuous character. Character formation can occur through both formal and informal educational pathways. Early childhood, which psychologists refer to as the golden age, is a stage of development that greatly influences children's ability to optimize their potential. Therefore, in character education, the storytelling method can be used as an effective way to shape and build character values. Storytelling provides meaningful learning experiences for kindergarten children

through oral delivery of stories. Stories delivered by teachers should be interesting, able to capture children's attention, and aligned with the educational goals of early childhood development. Thus, storytelling becomes a learning method that provides meaningful oral learning experiences, as each story contains moral messages intended to be conveyed to children. To ensure these messages are well received, storytelling should be delivered attractively, enjoyably, and in a way that does not cause boredom, so that learning objectives can be achieved optimally.

In addition to selecting appropriate media and story content, teachers' storytelling skills must also be considered, because children become more engaged when teachers deliver stories using expressive voice modulation and body movements. Character education in early childhood can be effectively developed through the use of innovative storytelling methods that combine visual, interactive, and moral elements, thereby fostering positive attitudes such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy.

The application of storytelling methods for early childhood must also consider developmental level differences. Whether children will enjoy learning through this method or otherwise must be evaluated; however, previous research findings suggest that young children tend to enjoy learning through storytelling, particularly in character building. Although children already possess basic character values taught by parents, this alone is not sufficient. Children must still receive character education reinforcement, one of which can be done through storytelling. Based on existing problems, the author selected the title "Character Education through Innovative Stories in Early Childhood," aiming to describe the implementation of character education through innovative storytelling for early childhood learners.

METHOD

The research conducted by the author used a descriptive research method with a qualitative approach. The descriptive research method requires the researcher to observe real-life social settings in order to provide a fair description of each individual. During the research process, the author observed several aspects related to the topic being

discussed, including the behavior of children who lacked parental support in developing learning motivation.

Sugiyono (2013:9) states that qualitative research is a research method based on post-positivism philosophy, used to examine natural conditions where the researcher acts as the key instrument. Data collection techniques are conducted through triangulation, data analysis is inductive, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization.

Data Collection Techniques

The researcher used literature studies and observation as data collection techniques by reviewing several previous research sources discussing similar topics and observing several children whose families lacked adequate support.

RESULTS

Based on findings from observations and literature reviews, several key results were obtained regarding the implementation of innovative storytelling in character education for early childhood, namely:

1. **Children more easily understand moral values through visualized stories.** Innovative stories using picture media, hand puppets, short videos, and expressive teacher narration were proven to increase children's attention. Children were better able to remember the content of the story as well as its moral messages, such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy.

2. **The role of the teacher as a facilitator strongly determines the effectiveness of character learning.** Teachers not only act as storytellers but also as facilitators of reflection. After the story is delivered, question-and-answer sessions and simple dialogues help children understand the meaning of positive behaviors in the story.

3. **Innovative storytelling encourages prosocial behavioral changes.** Observations showed that children began to demonstrate behaviors imitating the positive characters presented in the story, such as helping friends,

saying sorry, and tidying up toys without being told.

4. **Emotional involvement becomes a bridge for value internalization.** Engaging storytelling techniques—including voice intonation, gestures, and media—enable children to become immersed in the storyline, allowing values to be understood not only cognitively but also emotionally.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that innovative storytelling is an effective strategy for developing character in early childhood because the method aligns with children's psychological developmental stages. During the golden age, children primarily learn through imitation, meaningful experiences, and emotional engagement. Therefore, delivering character values through storytelling becomes a natural and comprehensive learning medium.

These findings are consistent with previous research showing that storytelling is an experiential learning method that enables children to independently interpret moral messages. The use of creative and interactive media increases children's intrinsic motivation to listen and imitate role model characters in the stories.

In addition, the teacher's role as a moral facilitator is very dominant. Teachers assist the process of value internalization through reflective dialogue, a technique that reinforces the meaning of positive behavior. This distinguishes innovative storytelling from conventional one-way storytelling. Innovative storytelling not only conveys messages but also builds children's active engagement in the process of understanding moral values.

These findings contribute to the development of more contextual, humanistic, and participatory character learning strategies in early childhood education settings. They also strengthen evidence that story-based literacy can serve as a foundational platform for shaping well-charactered children.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of character education through innovative storytelling is effective in helping children understand and practice moral values from an early age. Innovative stories not only enrich learning experiences but also bridge the process of value internalization through visualization, emotional engagement, and guided reflection with the teacher.

Through creative and interactive storytelling techniques, children demonstrated improvements in prosocial behaviors such as honesty, empathy, and responsibility. Teachers play a central role as facilitators who help guide children's understanding of the moral messages embedded in the stories.

Therefore, innovative storytelling can be recommended as an effective strategy for character education in early childhood learning settings (PAUD), and further research may develop this learning model by integrating digital technology to ensure greater relevance within the current era of development.

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