

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY LEARNING IN THE BOOKS GARA GARA OLE: A STUDY OF VALUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Abstract. This study aims to examine the environmental literacy values contained in the children's book *Gara-gara Ole* written by Zulfa Adiputri (2022) and to analyze its implementation in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) learning. The book tells the story of a boy named Ole who unknowingly causes a drainage blockage by carelessly disposing of a plastic cup, and eventually learns the importance of keeping the environment clean. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method with content analysis techniques on the text and illustrations, as well as literature studies on the application of environmental values in early childhood education. The results show that *Gara-gara Ole* contains essential environmental literacy values such as responsibility for waste, ecological awareness, curiosity about natural phenomena, and learning through experience. These values can be implemented in PAUD learning through storytelling, role-playing, and simple projects related to waste management. Therefore, *Gara-gara Ole* serves as an effective medium to foster love and care for the environment from an early age.

Keywords: environmental literacy, early childhood, PAUD learning, educational values, *Gara-gara Ole*

INTRODUCTION

Environmental issues are one of the global challenges that require serious attention, including in the field of education (Miterianifa & Mawarni, 2024). Problems such as environmental pollution, plastic waste accumulation, and ecosystem damage not only have an impact on nature, but also on human survival (Prabowo et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important for early childhood education to instill awareness and concern for the environment from an early age. Environmental education introduced through literacy activities can help children understand the relationship between human behavior and the conditions of the surrounding environment (Anggraeni, 2024).

Environmental problems related to littering behavior are one of the ecological problems that have a direct impact on environmental quality and ecosystem balance. According to environmental behavior theory (Environmental Behavior Theory), Human actions towards the environment are influenced by awareness, knowledge, and attitudes towards the importance of maintaining cleanliness and preservation of nature. When individuals have a low level of environmental literacy, irresponsible behaviors such as littering will appear and cause various negative impacts, such as soil, water, air pollution, as well as blockages of waterways that have the potential to cause flooding. Therefore, environmental education from an early age is very important to instill an understanding and value of ecological responsibility so that children get used to maintaining cleanliness and behaving environmentally friendly in their daily lives.

One of the effective media to instill these values is children's storybooks. Children's books not only function as a means of entertainment, but also as an educational medium that shapes children's character and moral values (Rizkiyah, 2022). Through interesting storylines and illustrations, children can learn to understand the concepts of responsibility, cleanliness, and love for nature in a fun and contextual way (Siregar et al., 2020).

The book *Gara-gara Ole* is the work of the nation's children written by Zulfa Utami Adiputri and illustrated by Matto Haq, and edited by Mutiara. This book was published by the Language

Development and Development Agency, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia in 2022. This children's picture book consists of 28 pages with a size of 29.7 cm, and is included in the category of non-textual literacy books. Based on the Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 061/H/P/2022, this book is designated as a book that meets the eligibility requirements to support the learning process at the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) and elementary school levels. This identity shows that Gara-gara Ole not only serves as an interesting children's reading, but also as a learning medium that is officially recognized by the government in an effort to strengthen the National Literacy Movement.

This story depicts the character of Ole who unknowingly causes a clogged waterway due to carelessly throwing plastic cups, until he finally learns the importance of maintaining environmental cleanliness. This simple story contains a profound message about the impact of human behavior on the environment and the importance of changing attitudes towards responsible behavior.

The research entitled "Enhancing Environmental Awareness in Early Childhood Through the Trash Tracking Game" was conducted by Halida, Bujang Aswat, Ayu Aprilia Pangestu Putri, Putu Ari Dharmayanti, and Ririanti Rachamayanie Jamain (2024) at several PAUD institutions in South Pontianak. This research aims to increase environmental awareness in early childhood through an educational game-based learning approach called Trash Tracking Game (Halida et al., 2024). This game is designed to teach children to recognize, sort and place trash according to its type in a fun and interactive way. The method used is a quasi-experiment with a pretest-posttest design, where the child's environmental awareness is measured before and after play activities are carried out. This activity is integrated into daily learning in PAUD, with the guidance of teachers who act as facilitators.

The results of the study showed a significant increase in the level of awareness and behavior of caring for the environment of children after participating in the Trash Tracking Game activity. Children become more sensitive to environmental cleanliness, are able to distinguish between organic and inorganic waste, and show the behavior of throwing garbage in its place without having to be reminded by teachers. In addition, this study confirms that game-based learning media is able to strengthen environmental literacy education because it is in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood who learn through playing. Thus, this research provides empirical evidence that the application of an educational play approach can be an effective strategy in instilling the values of environmental concern and ecological responsibility from an early age.

Through the environmental literacy approach, PAUD teachers can use the book Gara-gara Ole as a contextual and inspirational learning medium. Children can be invited to discuss, role-play, or do practical activities such as sorting garbage and maintaining a clean school environment. Thus, environmental literacy learning not only adds to children's insights, but also forms a character of caring and responsible for nature from an early age (Anggraeni, 2024).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a content analysis method. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on studying the content of the text and illustrations in the children's book Gara-gara Ole by Zulfa Utami Adiputri (2022) which contains environmental literacy values. Descriptive qualitative research aims to provide an in-depth and systematic overview of the meaning, message, and values contained in the work, without manipulating the research object (Dr. Nursapia Harahap, 2020).

The content analysis method is used to identify, categorize, and interpret the messages implied and expressed in the text and images of books. Through this analysis, the researcher seeks to find environmental literacy values such as responsibility for waste, ecological awareness, curiosity about natural phenomena, and learning through experiences displayed in storylines and book illustrations (Waruwu, 2024).

The main source of data in this study is the children's book Gara-gara Ole, while supporting data was obtained through literature studies that include environmental literacy theory, early childhood character education, and relevant previous research on the application of ecological values in early childhood education.

The data collection technique is carried out through documentation and literature review, namely by carefully reading the content of the story, observing illustrations, and noting parts that represent the value of environmental literacy. The collected data is then analyzed through several stages, namely:

1. Data reduction, by selecting text and image sections that are relevant to environmental literacy themes;
2. Data categorization, by grouping the values found based on aspects of responsibility, environmental awareness, curiosity, and behavior caring for nature;
3. Data interpretation, by interpreting the meaning of these values in the context of early childhood learning;
4. Drawing conclusions, which summarize the main findings regarding the form and relevance of environmental literacy values in the book.

Through this method, the research is expected to be able to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the Gara-gara Ole book can be used as an effective learning medium to instill the values of caring for the environment to early childhood in a contextual and fun manner

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

1.1 Curiosity about Natural Phenomena in the Book *Because of Ole*

Curiosity is one of the important aspects of early childhood cognitive development. At this stage, children have a natural tendency to explore the surrounding environment, observe events that occur in nature, and find out the causes and consequences of the phenomena they see. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development (Santrock, 2020) Early childhood is in the preoperational stage (ages 2–7), where they begin to use symbols, imagination, and language to understand the world around them. Children often ask questions such as "why" and "how" as an expression of their curiosity about natural and social phenomena.

In the book Gara-gara Ole by Zulfa Utami Adiputri (2022), Ole's character is described as having a high curiosity about his environment. When he found holes in the road, he didn't just see them as ordinary, but tried to understand what was happening by closing them with used plastic cups. Ole's actions reflect an early childhood way of thinking that seeks to "test" simple hypotheses through concrete actions. He learns through hands-on experience — a form of learning that is in accordance with the principles of learning by doing in early childhood education.

Natural phenomena that appear in the story—such as water flows, rain, and floods—become a learning context that is relevant to the child's real world. When a flood occurs due to a blocked waterway, Ole begins to understand the cause-and-effect relationship between his actions and the impact that occurs in the surrounding environment. The experience fostered ecological awareness and strengthened his understanding of the importance of maintaining the cleanliness of nature. This process describes the development of logical thinking in early childhood who begin to be able to understand the consequences of their actions on the environment.

In addition, illustrations in the book depicting situations of rain, drains, and piles of garbage help stimulate children's observation skills. The visualization stimulates children to ask questions and discuss with teachers or parents about how water flows, why drains can be blocked, and what the consequences are for the environment.

Thus, through Ole's simple story, this book acts as an environmental literacy medium that fosters children's curiosity about natural phenomena naturally and pleasantly. Children learn not only from

stories, but also from the emotional and visual experiences they have during reading. This growing curiosity is the initial foundation for the formation of scientific attitudes and ecological concerns that are important in building the character of love for the environment in early childhood.

1.2 Ecological Awareness in the Book of *Ole's Work*

Ecological awareness is a person's ability to understand the mutual relationship between humans and the environment and to be aware of the impact of behavior on the balance of ecosystems (Fadhli & Fithriyah, 2021). In early childhood, ecological awareness is not yet complex formed, but begins to develop through the concrete experiences they experience on a daily basis. According to the theory of moral and social development of the environment (Bandura, 1986) Children learn about environmental values and behaviors through observation, hands-on experience, and social interaction, especially with parents, teachers, and the surrounding environment.

In this context, the book *Gara-gara Ole* by Zulfa Utami Adiputri (2022) describes the process of growing ecological awareness through the character of a child who experiences directly the consequences of his actions against nature. Ole initially threw away plastic cups carelessly and closed the holes in the road without understanding their function. When it rains and floods occur due to blocked drains, Ole begins to realize the connection between his actions and the disaster that occurs in his neighborhood. From this experience, Ole learned that human behavior can cause environmental damage, but it can also be remedied through responsible actions, such as cleaning up garbage and reopening waterways.

This process is particularly relevant to early childhood cognitive and moral development. According to Piaget (Santrock, 2020) In the preoperational stage (ages 2–7 years), children begin to understand simple causes and effects and show empathy for living beings and the surrounding environment. Children begin to learn that their actions have consequences and can affect the state of nature. In the story *Gara-gara Ole*, this awareness is symbolically displayed through the change in Ole's attitude from indifference to caring.

In addition, the illustrations in this book support the process of internalizing ecological values. Children can visually see how garbage causes flooding and how the act of cleaning up the environment can restore the balance of nature. This visualization stimulates children's conceptual understanding of the concepts of cleanliness, responsibility, and environmental order, in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood learning that it is easier to understand meaning through images and direct experience.

Teachers and parents can use this book as a learning medium for environmental literacy by involving children in reflective discussions, for example by asking: "Why does flooding happen?", "How do you feel if the environment is dirty?", and "What can we do to keep the environment clean?". Activities like this help children build ecological awareness based on empathy and social responsibility, which is an important foundation for the formation of a character of love for the environment from an early age

Thus, the book *Gara-gara Ole* not only conveys a moral message about cleanliness, but also becomes an effective means of fostering ecological awareness of early childhood through contextual learning processes and meaningful emotional experiences.

1.3 Learning Through Experience in *Books by Ole*

Experiential learning is one of the basic principles in early childhood education. Children learn most effectively when they experience an event themselves, not just listening to explanations or memorizing information. According to the experiential learning theory of (Kolb, 1984), The child's learning process occurs through four main stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Through this cycle, children not only gain knowledge, but also form a deep understanding and attitude towards an event.

In the book *Gara-gara Ole* by Zulfa Utami Adiputri (2022), learning through experience is clearly depicted through the journey of the main character, Ole. At the beginning of the story, Ole throws

away plastic cups carelessly and closes a hole in the road without knowing its function. When the rain came and there was a flood in his village, Ole experienced the impact of his actions firsthand. This concrete experience became a turning point for his self-awareness. He began to understand that littering and closing waterways can cause environmental damage.

Ole's learning process is in accordance with the natural learning pattern of early childhood. Children learn from mistakes and real experiences, not from abstract lectures or advice. As Ole corrects his mistakes by cleaning up the trash and reopening the waterways, he is going through a stage of reflection and application of new knowledge — a form of meaningful learning that fosters ecological responsibility.

Cognitively developed, early childhood is in the preoperational stage (Santrock, 2020), where they perceive the world through tangible and symbolic actions. Therefore, experiential learning helps children connect events with moral and environmental concepts in a concrete way. Children who read the story of Gara-gara Ole can learn to understand the cause-and-effect relationship between the act of littering and the occurrence of floods, as well as imitate positive behaviors such as maintaining cleanliness and being responsible for the environment.

In addition, experiential learning also fosters empathy and social awareness. Children not only know that litter can cause problems, but also feel emotionally the impact of such actions through evocative stories and illustrations. This is in line with the view (Dewey, 1938) that experience is at the heart of the educational process; children learn through active engagement with the world around them, not through passive instruction.

In the context of early childhood education, teachers can follow up on the message of this book through exploratory activities such as:

1. Invite children to get to know the types of waste and their functions;
2. Carry out the practice of sorting and disposing of waste in its place;
3. Make simple projects of keeping the school yard clean; or
4. Conducting water flow experiments to show how the channel can be clogged by garbage.

This activity allows children to learn directly through real experiences, in accordance with the spirit of environmental literacy contained in the story of Gara-gara Ole.

Thus, this book is not just a literacy tool, but also an experiential learning tool that builds early childhood ecological knowledge, attitudes, and skills holistically.

1.4 Responsibility for Waste in Books Due to Ole

Responsibility for waste is a tangible form of environmental care behavior that needs to be instilled from an early age. In early childhood, moral, social, and cognitive development is in the stage of policy formation (Hura & Mawikere, 2020). Children learn to understand the concepts of right and wrong, and begin to develop awareness of the consequences of their actions on the surrounding environment. According to Piaget (Santrock, 2020) early childhood is in the preoperational stage where they begin to learn to understand cause and effect and imitate the behavior of adults who are considered good. Therefore, the cultivation of the value of responsibility for waste needs to be carried out through concrete experiences, examples, and learning media that are in accordance with the world of children.

The book Gara-gara Ole by Zulfa Utami Adiputri (2022) features a story full of messages about responsibility for waste. In the story, the main character, Ole, accidentally causes environmental problems by littering plastic cups and closing holes in the road. When the rain came, the water could not flow and caused flooding in his village. From that incident, Ole realizes his mistake and then takes responsibility by cleaning up the garbage and reopening the waterways. This change in attitude is a symbol of the moral and ecological learning process experienced by children through real experiences.

This story illustrates the process of forming ecological responsibility—that is, an individual's awareness that every action against the environment has consequences and needs to be corrected when something goes wrong. In the context of early childhood development, this value is very

important because it teaches children to act, not just know. Children learn that keeping it clean and disposing of garbage in its place is a form of personal concern and responsibility for the environment.

According to (Bandura, 1986) through the theory of Social Learning Theory, children learn through observation and imitation. When they see characters like Ole fixing their mistakes and keeping clean, they tend to imitate those behaviors in real life. Therefore, buku bergambar seperti Gara-gara Ole to be an effective medium to instill the values of responsibility through contextual stories and interesting illustrations.

CONCLUSION

The book Gara-gara Ole by Zulfa Utami Adiputri (2022) is one of the effective children's literacy media to instill environmental literacy values from an early age. Through a simple storyline and interesting illustrations, this book is able to teach children about the relationship between human behavior and its impact on the environment in a contextual and fun way.

From the results of the content analysis, it was found that this book contains several important values in environmental literacy learning, namely responsibility for waste, ecological awareness, curiosity about natural phenomena, and learning through experience. These four values have strong relevance to the characteristics of early childhood development, where children learn through direct experience, high curiosity, and the ability to imitate positive behaviors from characters in stories.

The character of Ole is a representation of moral and ecological learning for children. He learned from his mistakes when he threw garbage carelessly and closed the drains, until he finally realized the consequences and corrected his actions. This process shows how children can understand the concepts of responsibility, empathy, and caring for the environment through meaningful concrete experiences. Thus, Gara-gara Ole is not only an entertainment reading, but also a learning tool for ecological values that are in line with the goal of early childhood education, which is to form a character of caring, discipline, and responsibility for the environment.

In the context of early childhood learning, this book can be used as a supporting medium for experiential thematic learning activities, such as waste sorting activities, maintaining school cleanliness, simple experiments about water flow, or role-playing as Ole and his friends. Through these activities, children not only understand the moral message of the story, but also internalize environmentally friendly behavior in daily life.

Thus, it can be concluded that learning environmental literacy through children's books such as Gara-gara Ole plays an important role in shaping the basis of the ecological character of early childhood. The values taught in this story help children recognize, understand, and love the environment, so that they grow up to be individuals who care and are responsible for the preservation of nature from an early age.

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