

Developing Early Childhood Problem-Solving Skills through "Bagaimana Caranya" Storybooks

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Abstract. Problem-solving skills are an important aspect of early childhood cognitive development, as they form the basis for children to think critically, creatively, and independently in facing everyday situations. This study aims to develop early childhood problem-solving skills through reading a storybook entitled "How to Do It" implemented in the home environment. The research method used a descriptive qualitative approach with five children aged 5–6 years as subjects. Data were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation during reading activities and discussions. The results showed that regular storybook reading activities can improve children's abilities to identify problems, propose solution ideas, and evaluate appropriate actions. Children become more open in expressing opinions and show empathy towards the story characters. In addition, the "How to Do It" book helps children understand simple problem-solving steps such as recognizing situations, making choices, and trying alternative solutions. This study concludes that storybooks can be an effective medium in developing early childhood problem-solving skills at home, when accompanied by reflective dialogue activities. It is recommended that educators use thematic storybooks relevant to children's experiences to foster critical and creative thinking skills from an early age.

Keywords: Early Childhood, Problem Solving, Story Books, Critical Thinking.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is in a golden age, during which all aspects of cognitive, socio-emotional, language, and moral development develop rapidly. During this period, children begin to explore their environment, understand cause-and-effect relationships, and seek solutions to simple problems (Bredenkamp & Copple, 2020). Therefore, developing problem-solving skills is a crucial aspect of early childhood education, as it lays the foundation for critical thinking, creativity, and decision-making later in life. Problem-solving skills do not emerge spontaneously but need to be stimulated through concrete experiences and meaningful activities. One effective way to stimulate these skills is through literacy media such as children's storybooks (Nurgiyantoro, 2021). Storybooks not only provide entertainment but also provide examples of everyday life situations that can help children identify problems, understand emotions, and find solutions.

Previous research has shown that reading interactive storybooks with parents can improve children's cognitive and social skills. Fitria, Nurani, & Hidayati (2022) found that parental involvement in home literacy positively impacts children's critical thinking skills. Meanwhile, Anggraini & Hartati (2023) emphasized that storytelling can stimulate early childhood cognitive, social, and emotional abilities through reflective activities and post-reading discussions.

Problem-solving skills are crucial for early childhood. Children with optimal problem-solving skills during preschool demonstrate better academic achievement in primary and secondary education. Problem-solving skills are an important cognitive and social competency that must be developed from an early age. Early childhood naturally encounters a variety of everyday situations, such as sharing toys, resolving minor disputes with friends or siblings, figuring out how to reach a tall toy, or adapting to changes in routine, which require them to identify problems, consider alternatives, choose solutions, and evaluate the results. This aligns with research showing that children who possess strong problem-solving skills in preschool tend to be better prepared for later stages of education.

Storybooks are a highly effective medium for fostering problem-solving skills in early childhood. Storybooks serve not only as reading material but also as narrative tools that present characters,

conflicts, actions, and solutions—thus providing a model of "problem → solution → alternative → outcome" that children can use to reflect on and discuss. For example, international research emphasizes that through shared storybook reading or reading with adults, young children can gain not only language and literacy development but also skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving.

The storybook "Bagaimana Caranya?" by Afifah Nada P. R. presents simple stories that reflect children's real-life experiences, such as sharing with friends, correcting mistakes, or helping others. The stories are relevant to children's lives and encourage them to think about "how do I do it" to solve problems in a positive and logical way. Through the inquisitive main character, children learn that every problem can be solved through thinking, discussing, and trying again. The "Bagaimana caranya" books are specifically developed to present narrative lines that highlight problematic situations (e.g., difficulty sharing, losing an object, or dealing with negative emotions) and guide children to think about steps to solve them through reflective questions throughout the story. The book is not only a literacy tool but also a cognitive scaffolding tool that stimulates critical thinking skills in early childhood. In the context of home education, the "Bagaimana Caranya?" storybook can be an effective tool for developing problem-solving skills in early childhood. With parental guidance, children not only understand the storyline but also learn to recognize problems, propose solution ideas, and evaluate the consequences of each action. This approach aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory, which emphasizes that children's abilities develop optimally when they receive appropriate support and social interaction.

Through storybook-based learning, children can learn naturally in a fun environment, while simultaneously building a foundation for critical thinking from an early age. Therefore, this research is important to examine how the implementation of the "Bagaimana Caranya?" storybook can develop problem-solving skills in early childhood, both in the home environment and in early childhood education institutions.

However, although there is research linking the use of storybooks or narrative media to children's cognitive or literacy development, there is limited research specifically examining the use of storybooks at home in the context of developing problem-solving skills in early childhood. Most studies focus more on aspects of reading, storytelling, or literacy, while the problem-solving aspect remains relatively underexplored in the context of story media that are directed at solving character problems and then connecting them to children's lives. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by developing and testing an intervention using a storybook entitled "Bagaimana Caranya" designed to encourage children to identify character problems, think about solutions, and then try out the solutions in real-life situations at home.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of describing the process and results of developing problem-solving skills in early childhood through storybook reading activities at home. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply understand how children identify problems, propose solution ideas, and reflect on actions in a natural context (at home). According to Moleong (2021), qualitative research aims to holistically understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects in a natural context using various scientific methods. This approach also aligns with Creswell's (2023) opinion that qualitative research focuses on exploring meaning and in-depth understanding of human experiences in complex situations. This research is also participatory action research because it involves teachers as active partners in the reading intervention process and story reflection at home (Rahmawati & Kusumawati, 2024).

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The children's storybook "Bagaimana Caranya?" by Afifah Nada P. R. presents a simple yet meaningful story about how children learn to think and solve problems in everyday life. The main character in this book is a small child named Bondan, who has a high curiosity and always asks questions whenever faced with a new situation. His characteristic question, "Bagaimana Caranya?", is the key in each story and illustrates the thinking process of early childhood when finding solutions to the problems he encounters. In the book, the story of a child named Bondan who enjoys helping his father, mother, and older sibling at home. Bondan helps fold clothes with a magazine. Activities are carried out through reading and discussing the storybook "Bagaimana Caranya" twice a week. Data were collected through participatory observation, interviews with parents, and documentation of children's activities throughout the process. The results of the book analysis can be explained as follows:

1. Improved Problem Identification Skills

In the early stages, most children had difficulty identifying the problems that arose in the story. However, after the second week, children began to be able to identify problematic situations experienced by the main character, such as losing a toy or having difficulty sharing. This demonstrates the development of children's cognitive abilities in recognizing problematic situations, as Piaget (in Santrock, 2021) stated that early childhood logical thinking skills develop through meaningful, concrete experiences.

2. Ability to Propose Alternative Solutions

After mentoring and reflective debriefing, children demonstrated improved ability to convey various alternative solutions. They were able to offer ideas such as "asking parents for help," "looking for them with friends," or "sharing toys by taking turns." This activity demonstrates that the storytelling process encourages children's divergent thinking (Runco & Acar, 2019).

3. Evaluative and Decision-Making Skills

Children began to demonstrate the ability to evaluate the actions of characters in the story, such as saying "that's wrong because it's rude" or "it's better to ask permission first." This aligns with research by Anggraini & Hartati (2023), which shows that reading storybooks can stimulate children's moral awareness and decision-making through understanding the values within the stories.

4. General Impact on Children's Behavior

In addition to cognitive abilities, this study also found a positive impact on children's social-emotional aspects. Children became more empathetic towards their peers, patient in dealing with problems, and confident in expressing their ideas. The "How to" storybook successfully became a contextual learning medium that was enjoyable and easy for children to understand.

The research results show that the use of "Bagaimana Caranya" storybooks significantly contributes to the development of problem-solving skills in early childhood. This finding reinforces the view that story-telling activities serve not only as a means of early literacy but also as a medium for contextual social and cognitive learning (Nurgiyantoro, 2021).

1. Storybooks as a Medium for Children's Cognitive Development. The process of reading storybooks facilitates children's observation of situations, recognition of conflicts, and understanding how characters resolve problems. According to Vygotsky (1978), children's cognitive development occurs through social interaction and the use of symbols such as language. In this context, stories act as a mediating tool that helps children construct an understanding of the world around them through symbolic representation. When children discuss the storyline and possible solutions, they internalize problem-solving concepts consistent with the concrete-operational thinking stage (Piaget in Santrock, 2021).

2. Reflective Learning through Interactive Dialogue. The approach used in this research emphasizes the importance of dialogue between teachers and children. Reflective discussions after reading stories have been shown to improve children's ability to identify problems and generate alternative solutions. This aligns with research by Anggraini & Hartati (2023), which found that storytelling activities with open-ended questions strengthen children's critical thinking skills and moral awareness. This interaction serves as a form of scaffolding that helps children think more complexly, as explained by Vygotsky through the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).
3. Formation of Social and Emotional Attitudes: In addition to cognitive aspects, the book "How to" also fosters positive attitudes such as empathy, tolerance, and patience. Children learn to evaluate the behavior of characters and relate them to personal experiences. This reinforces the findings of Chen et al. (2020) that reading moral stories can improve the social-emotional skills of young children through the process of identifying characters and moral values conveyed through narrative.
4. Relevance to Early Childhood Learning Theory: Theoretically, the findings of this study are consistent with the Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) approach of Bredekamp & Copple (2020), which emphasizes the importance of developmentally appropriate learning, based on real-life experiences, and involving meaningful social interactions. Storybooks containing simple problems and solutions enable children to learn to think critically naturally in the context of everyday life.

Based on the results and theory above, it can be concluded that the " Bagaimana Caranya " storybook is an effective home-based learning tool for stimulating problem-solving skills in early childhood. The reading process, accompanied by interactive dialogue and parental guidance, not only enhances cognitive abilities but also holistically builds children's social-emotional and moral skills.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussions conducted, it can be concluded that:

1. The "How to" storybook has proven effective as a learning medium for developing problem-solving skills in early childhood. Through reading and dialogue, children learn to recognize problem situations, propose solutions, and evaluate course of action in a simple and contextual manner.
2. Reading storybooks also has a positive impact on children's socio-emotional aspects. Children become more empathetic, patient, and confident in expressing their opinions. The process of internalizing the moral and social values in stories helps children understand the concepts of good and bad and personal responsibility.
3. Home-based literacy activities can be an effective alternative learning strategy for early childhood. With proper guidance, storybooks can be a means of developing children's critical thinking, creativity, and character holistically.

In general, the results of this study reinforce Vygotsky's theory on the importance of social interaction in children's cognitive development and support the concept of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), which emphasizes contextual learning appropriate to the child's developmental stage.

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