

Internalizing The Value Of Tolerance And Self-Acceptance In Early Childhood Through Storybooks *Different Is It Okay*

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Abstract. This study aims to describe the process of internalizing the value of tolerance and self-acceptance in early childhood through the storybook *Beda Bagay Okay*. This story about a small duck who feels different from his friends provides a concrete picture of physical differences, social dynamics, and how environmental support can build a child's confidence. The research method used is qualitative descriptive based on literature review, by analyzing the content of stories, moral messages, and their relevance to early childhood social-emotional development. The results of the study show that this storybook is effective as a medium for internalizing values, because it presents a simple flow, attractive visuals, and a message that is easy for children to understand. This story is able to stimulate the growth of mutual acceptance, empathy, willingness to help, and self-acceptance in children. Thus, the book *Different Is Not What* can be a source of literacy that supports the formation of tolerant and confident character from an early age.

Keywords: Early Childhood; Tolerance; Self-Acceptance; Storybook; Social-Emotional Development.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood social-emotional development is an important foundation for the formation of children's character and ability to interact with their environment. At the age range of 4–6 years, children are at a stage where they begin to recognize differences, both physically and capably, so it is necessary to instill values so that they can accept themselves and others positively (Friska, Nurhafit, 2025). Without proper habituation, seemingly simple differences can lead to feelings of inferiority, anxiety, or even rejection of peers. One of the fundamental values that is important for children at this stage is tolerance. Tolerance helps children accept diversity and build healthy social relationships in play and learning environments (Nur'ainun, 2025). These values do not appear automatically, but rather must be internalized through daily experience and stimulation provided by educators and parents. Rich and meaningful experiences can help children understand that differences are natural and do not diminish a person's self-worth. Ability *self-acceptance* or self-acceptance is also an important aspect in the development of children's personalities. Children who can accept themselves tend to have better self-confidence and emotional regulation, and are less likely to feel inferior when compared to peers (Yassa, 2025). At an early age, the process of self-acceptance is often influenced by the response of the environment to the child's physical condition and ability.

Pictorial story media is one of the effective means of internalizing moral and social values in early childhood. Storybooks not only provide entertainment, but also present symbols, characters, and plots that make it easier for children to understand abstract concepts such as courage, empathy, and tolerance (Rizki et al., 2025). Through simple figures, children can make emotional identifications that encourage a slow change in attitudes. The storybook "Different Is Nothing" by I Gusti Made Dwi Guna (2021) presents the story of a small duck who feels anxious because he is different from his friends. It has a smaller body, a coat color that is not as white as its counterpart, and a slower movement. This narrative reflects a real phenomenon in the early childhood education environment when children begin to compare themselves with their peers and feelings of insecurity arise (Yohannes Wijaya, 2025). This situation is in accordance with the dynamics of children's

development who at an early age begin to be sensitive to physical differences and abilities. The scene when a flock of ducks willingly waits for their slow-moving companions is a vivid illustration of the value of tolerance in social interaction (Mamluah & Herawati, 2024). This illustrates that the attitude of accepting differences can be taught through concrete examples, not just verbal advice.

The book "Different Is Okay" not only serves as a literacy reading, but also as a potential educational medium to instill important values in children's social lives. Simple stories and interesting illustrations provide opportunities for educators to invite children to discuss, reflect, and live the meaning of difference in a positive way (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022). Through this process, the value of tolerance and self-acceptance can be internalized naturally. Based on this description, an in-depth study is needed on how the storybook "Different Is Nothing" can be used as a medium for internalizing the value of tolerance and self-acceptance in early childhood (Rizki et al., 2025). This kind of research is important to enrich the character learning approach in PAUD and contribute to the development of early childhood education literature in Indonesia.

This research departs from the main question of how the process of internalizing the value of tolerance and self-acceptance can be grown in early childhood through the use of the storybook *Beda Bagay Okay*, which features a small duck character with different physical characteristics but still receives appreciation, attention, and support from his friends. Based on these questions, this study aims to describe how the storyline, visuals, and interactions of the characters can help children understand that differences are not an obstacle to acceptance, as well as analyze the effectiveness of these stories in instilling tolerance, empathy, confidence, and self-acceptance in children aged 4–6 years through reading aloud and reflective discussions in early childhood education classes.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a literature review approach. The main source of research is the storybook "Different Is Nothing" by I Gusti Made Dwi Guna, which was analyzed to identify the messages of tolerance, diversity, and self-acceptance. The analysis was carried out through the process of close reading, theme coding, and interpretation of meaning based on early childhood development theory, value internalization theory, and literature related to character education in children aged 4–6 years. In addition, this research also utilizes various other literature sources in the form of journals, scientific books, and educational regulations to strengthen theoretical studies and provide a more comprehensive context (Nartin et al., 2024). The results of the literature review were then synthesized to illustrate how the storybook has the potential to be an effective medium in instilling the value of tolerance and self-acceptance in early childhood.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A. Results

The results of the study show that the storybook "Different Is Okay" is effective as a medium for internalizing the value of tolerance for early childhood. Through a simple storyline and strong visuals, children can understand that each individual has physical differences and abilities. Children who read or were read to this story were able to show a positive response in the form of acceptance of different small duck characters. This response can be seen from the child's spontaneous comment that "all friends can still play together," which shows the emergence of an early understanding of the value of tolerance. In addition, research has found that the process of internalizing the value of self-acceptance can be formed when children identify themselves with the main character. The little duck who feels weak, left behind, and different activates the child's empathy for similar conditions in their experiences. In the post-reading discussion, children can mention the part of the story when the little duck is afraid of being left behind, thus bringing up the concept that feeling different is natural. This identification plays an important role in building self-awareness and encouraging children to accept their uniqueness. Stories have also been shown to contribute to children's understanding of the importance of social support from friends. When in the story the duck friends

return to wait for the little duck that is left behind, the children show reactions that illustrate that the act of helping and waiting for a friend is good behavior. These findings show that the delivery of tolerance values through the behavioral model of the characters in the story is easier for children to understand than abstract verbal explanations.

Research has also found that visual illustrations in books play a significant role in strengthening the understanding of values. It is easier for children to recognize differences in body color, size, and abilities through pictures than through text alone. This visualization aids the internalization process by providing a concrete experience of the concept of "different but still equally valuable." This proves that pictorial stories have special power in building moral understanding in early childhood. Overall, the study concluded that the book "Different Is Okay" not only helps children recognize differences, but also fosters confidence, empathy, and caring for friends. Storylines that describe acceptance from the group provide positive reinforcement that is able to shape children's moral understanding naturally. This book has proven to be a relevant and strategic literacy media to instill the value of tolerance and self-acceptance from an early age.

B. Discussion

Internalizing the Value of Tolerance Through Storylines and Character Interactions

The book "Different Is Okay" presents a very strong representation of diversity through the characters of duck families that have different colors, sizes, and physical abilities. Through their daily stories starting from playing, walking home, to facing children's difficulties, they are introduced to the principle of tolerance naturally (Hamzah et al., 2026). Tolerance is not conveyed in the abstract, but through action: the duck friends accept the presence of the main character even though he is slow, small, and of different colors. When the main character is left behind, the group of friends does not leave him and instead returns to make sure he stays safe (Faizin, 2025). This situation shows a concrete example of how children can learn to appreciate and accept friends who are not the same as themselves (Rahmatiah, Agus Salam, 2025). This story internalizes the value of tolerance through simple but powerful emotional experiences, which are very much in line with the stages of early childhood moral development.

Cultivation of Self-Acceptance through Emotional Identification of the Main Character

Self-acceptance in this book is built through the emotional journey of the main character who initially feels "weak," "short," and "not as strong as the others." This picture is relevant to the condition of early childhood who often compares himself to peers. The story then gives a positive resolution when the main character realizes that his friends still care and accept him as he is (By Putu Radeyashinta Transuinitri Yassa, 2025). This process creates space for children to understand that differences are not a shortcoming, but something acceptable. The repetition of the phrase "It's okay to be different" becomes a positive affirmation that helps children build a healthy self-concept and feel confident in their uniqueness (Fitian, 2025). The child's identification with the figure of the little duck allows the value of self-acceptance to be embedded through empathy and simple reflection.

The Effectiveness of Storybooks as a Medium of Character Education in Early Childhood

The book "Different Is Not Okay" has proven to be effective as a medium for character education because it combines simple language, clear visuals, and a plot that is easy for children aged 4–6 years old. Illustrations that contrast characters from body color to physical size make it easier for children to visually grasp the concept of diversity (Zannatunnisya et al., 2024). The moral message is not conveyed directly (direct teaching), but through the natural experience of the character, so that it is in accordance with the principles of character learning in PAUD which is based on example and concrete experience. In addition, this story encourages discussion between teachers and children and parents, thus strengthening the process of internalizing values (Deluma & Setiawan, 2023). The overall story elements show that this book can be an effective means of teaching tolerance, empathy, and self-acceptance in an integrated and fun way for early childhood.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the storybook "Different Is Okay" is effective as a medium for internalizing the value of tolerance and self-acceptance in early childhood. Through a simple storyline, child-friendly visuals, and the characterization of a small duck that learns to understand differences, children gain an emotional experience to recognize themselves, accept their flaws, and appreciate the diversity around them. The interaction between text and illustration makes it easier for children to understand moral messages without coercion, so that the process of internalizing values takes place naturally through self-identification with the story characters. This book has been proven to make a positive contribution in fostering an inclusive attitude, empathy, and confidence in early childhood.

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