

DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S STORIES AS AN ANTI-BULLYING EDUCATIONAL MEDIA FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop children's stories as an anti-bullying educational medium for elementary school students to instill the values of empathy, caring, and mutual respect from an early age. The study used the Research and Development (R&D) method with the ADDIE model, which includes the stages of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. The resulting product is an anti-bullying-themed children's storybook adapted to the developmental characteristics of elementary school students. Validation was carried out by material experts, language experts, and media experts, while trials involved teachers and elementary school students. The development results showed that the children's story had a very good level of suitability based on aspects of content, language, presentation, and illustration. The use of children's stories also increased students' understanding of the forms of bullying, their impact on victims, and the importance of mutual respect and resolving conflicts peacefully. Thus, children's stories are suitable for use as an effective learning medium to support character education and bullying prevention in elementary school environments on an ongoing basis.

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INTRODUCTION

Besides impacting the victims, bullying also impacts the overall school climate. Students who are perpetrators or witnesses of bullying are likely to experience decreased empathy, increased aggressive behavior, and a reduced sense of security in the learning environment. According to Olweus (1993), bullying is aggressive behavior that is repeated and occurs when there is an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. Therefore, prevention efforts should not only focus on the victims but also on building a school culture that values diversity, mutual respect, and fosters caring for others.

Strengthening social and emotional values from elementary school age is an effective approach to preventing bullying. Learning that develops the ability to recognize emotions,

self-control, empathize, and build positive social relationships has been shown to reduce aggressive behavior in schools (CASEL, 2020). Durlak et al. (2011) also stated that the implementation of social and emotional learning (SEL) has a positive impact on improving prosocial behavior, academic achievement, and mental health in students.

The use of children's stories as a learning medium aligns with constructivism theory, which positions students as active subjects in building understanding through meaningful learning experiences. Stories that present conflict, problem-solving, and characters relevant to everyday life can help children understand moral values contextually (Tompkins, 2015). In addition to improving reading literacy, reading and discussing stories can also foster empathy, critical thinking, and decision-making skills in addressing various social issues.

The development of children's storytelling media also supports the School Literacy Movement (GLS), which aims to build a reading culture and strengthen students' character through a variety of quality reading materials (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017). In this context, anti-bullying stories can serve as reading material relevant to students' lives, making the moral messages easier to understand and internalize. Through reading, discussing, and reflecting on the story's content, students are expected to develop attitudes of mutual respect, appreciation for differences, and rejection of all forms of violence in the school environment.

Research conducted by Gini and Pozzoli (2009) showed that empathy skills have a negative relationship with bullying behavior, meaning that the higher a child's empathy level, the lower their tendency to engage in bullying. This reinforces the importance of providing learning media that can develop students' affective aspects through enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences.

On the other hand, Slee and Skrzypiec (2016) emphasized that effective bullying prevention interventions need to be implemented sustainably through integration into the learning process, strengthening school culture, and involving teachers and parents. Therefore, developing children's stories as an anti-bullying educational medium is not only an innovation in literacy learning but also part of a character education strategy that supports the creation of a safe, inclusive, and child-friendly school environment.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used the Research and Development (R&D) method with the ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) model. The ADDIE model was chosen because it provides systematic stages in producing valid, practical, and effective learning products for use in schools. According to Branch (2009), the ADDIE model is a

systematic and flexible learning development framework that can be used to design, develop, and evaluate learning products continuously. The ADDIE stages include needs analysis, product design, development, implementation, and evaluation, making it suitable for application in the development of children's story-based learning media.

The analysis phase was conducted through observation, interviews with elementary school teachers, and an analysis of student needs related to understanding bullying behavior. The needs analysis aims to identify student characteristics, learning problems, and competencies that need to be developed so that the resulting product meets user needs (Dick, Carey, & Carey, 2015). The results of the analysis serve as the basis for determining the story theme, character traits, plot, moral values, and anti-bullying educational materials to be developed. The design phase includes writing the story script, creating a storyboard, designing illustrations, and developing validation instruments and user response questionnaires.

In the development stage, the product, a children's storybook, was developed according to the design and then validated by material experts, language experts, and media experts to obtain input on content, language, presentation, and visual appearance. Revisions were then made based on the validator's suggestions until a product was obtained that was suitable for trial testing. The implementation stage was carried out through limited trials on elementary school students and classroom teachers to determine the level of practicality and user response to the developed media. The evaluation stage was conducted formatively at each stage of development and summatively after implementation to assess the product's feasibility based on aspects of validity, practicality, and effectiveness. Evaluation in development research aims to ensure that the product meets quality standards before being implemented more widely (Sugiyono, 2019). Research data was obtained through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documentation, then analyzed using quantitative and qualitative descriptive techniques to draw conclusions regarding the quality of the developed learning media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research resulted in a product in the form of an anti-bullying children's storybook designed as an educational tool for elementary school students. Product development was conducted using the ADDIE model, which includes the stages of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. Each stage yielded findings demonstrating that the developed media met the validity, practicality, and effectiveness aspects as a learning tool.

The analysis phase began with observations and interviews with elementary school teachers to identify the need for learning media that could support character education, particularly in preventing bullying. Observations revealed that bullying was still common, often involving teasing, negative nicknames, peer exclusion, and even minor physical actions such as pushing or taking a friend's belongings. Most teachers reported that students often viewed these behaviors as jokes, and therefore did not understand them as a form of bullying that could have psychological impacts on victims.

Interviews also showed that teachers predominantly use lectures and discussions when delivering material on character education. While these methods are effective in providing explanations to students, teachers struggle to consistently instill empathy. Furthermore, learning materials specifically addressing bullying prevention are limited. Storybooks available in school libraries generally contain only entertaining stories without conveying moral messages related to anti-bullying behavior.

An analysis of student characteristics shows that elementary school students are more attracted to visual media filled with colorful illustrations, characters close to their lives, and stories that use simple language. Students also prefer stories that highlight everyday school life, making them easier to understand and relate to their own experiences. Based on these analysis results, it was concluded that learning media in the form of children's stories that integrate anti-bullying messages with an engaging, communicative presentation that is appropriate for elementary school students' cognitive development.

Based on the results of the needs analysis, the researcher compiled a draft of a children's story book entitled "Good Friends Always Care"..The story follows the lives of several elementary school students who face conflict due to teasing, ostracizing their peers, and using hurtful nicknames. The conflict is resolved through communication, mutual apologies, and teacher guidance, enabling all characters to understand the importance of respecting differences and helping one another.

At this stage, the storyline, characters, illustrations, page layout, and moral messages are also developed, inserted at the end of each chapter. The language used is tailored to the reading ability of elementary school students, with simple, communicative, and easy-to-understand sentences. The illustrations are designed in full color to capture students' attention and stimulate reading interest.

In addition to compiling the story content, the researchers also developed research instruments in the form of validation sheets from subject matter experts, language experts, and media experts, teacher response questionnaires, student response questionnaires, and

observation sheets for learning implementation. All instruments were compiled using a five-level Likert scale to facilitate quantitative data analysis.

The designed product was then validated by three validators: a character education material expert, an Indonesian language expert, and an instructional media expert. Validation was conducted to determine the product's suitability before implementation with students.

The validation results from content experts showed that the story content aligned with the learning objectives and the characteristics of elementary school students, and included values of empathy, caring, tolerance, and respect for peers. The content experts gave an average score of 94%, categorized as very appropriate. Some suggestions included adding examples of verbal bullying behavior and explaining what to do if a student becomes a victim of bullying.

The validation by linguists obtained an average score of 92%, categorized as very appropriate. The language in the story was deemed communicative, appropriate for children's language development, and used effective sentence structure. Improvements included simplifying several terms considered difficult for lower-grade students and adjusting the use of punctuation.

Meanwhile, the results of the media expert validation obtained an average score of 96% with a very suitable category. The illustrations were deemed attractive, the colors harmonious, the font size easy to read, and the page layout well-proportioned. Media experts suggested adding a reflection activity at the end of the story so students could connect the content to their experiences at school.

Based on the validation results, the product was revised according to the validator's input. These revisions included adding a reflection page, refining character illustrations, simplifying some dialogue, and adding discussion activities for teachers to conduct after the reading session. After revision, the product was deemed suitable for testing.

The revised product was then implemented with elementary school students through a limited trial. Learning activities began with the teacher introducing the learning objectives, followed by a group reading of the story, a discussion of the characters and conflict, and reflection on students' experiences related to bullying.

Throughout the learning process, students demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm. They paid attention to the illustrations, followed the storyline well, and actively answered the teacher's questions about the characters' behavior. Most students were able to identify the forms of bullying that appeared in the story, explain their impact on the victims, and provide appropriate solutions to resolve the conflict.

Observations showed that student learning activities improved compared to the previous lecture-only learning method. Students appeared more confident in expressing their opinions, respecting their peers while speaking, and were able to collaborate in group discussions. The teacher also stated that using children's stories facilitated the delivery of character education materials because students could understand the moral message through the experiences of the characters in the stories.

The results of the teacher response questionnaire obtained an average score of 95% by category Very practical. Teachers stated that the media is easy to use, aligns with the curriculum, and can be applied to various character education materials. Teachers also assessed that storybooks can increase students' reading motivation and serve as a means of instilling anti-bullying values.

Student responses also showed very positive results. The average questionnaire score reached 93%, categorized as very good. Most students stated that the story was easy to understand, the illustrations were engaging, the characters were likable, and the moral message was easily applicable to everyday life.

Evaluation was conducted formatively at each stage of development and summatively after implementation was completed. The evaluation results showed that the product met the three main indicators of development research: validity, practicality, and effectiveness.

The validity aspect was demonstrated through expert assessments, with an overall average of 94%, making it highly suitable. The practicality aspect was evident in the positive responses from teachers and students, which reached an average of 94%. The results show that the media is easy to use in the learning process. The effectiveness aspect is evident in the students' increased understanding of the forms of bullying, their impacts, and how to prevent and overcome it through mutual respect, empathy, and cooperation.

Overall, the research results indicate that the development of children's stories as an anti-bullying educational medium makes a positive contribution to character education learning in elementary schools. The developed media not only increases students' interest in reading but also helps teachers deliver anti-bullying material in a more engaging, contextual, and meaningful manner. The stories presented can build students' awareness to respect their peers, avoid bullying behavior, and create a safe, comfortable, and inclusive learning environment. Therefore, the developed product is suitable for use as an alternative learning medium to support character building for students in elementary schools.

The children's story developed meets the criteria of being valid, practical, and effective as an anti-bullying educational medium for elementary school students. The high

validation results from material experts, language experts, and media experts indicate that the product is appropriate to the characteristics of students and is able to integrate character education values into an engaging storyline. These findings reinforce Nurgiyantoro's (2018) opinion that children's stories are a literary medium that functions not only as entertainment but also as a means of character building and developing children's social skills.

Positive responses from teachers and students indicate that the use of children's stories can increase reading interest while also facilitating students' understanding of the forms, impacts, and prevention of bullying. Through characters, conflicts, and problem-solving that are relevant to everyday life, students more easily develop empathy and understand the importance of respecting differences. This finding aligns with Bandura's (2001) social learning theory, which explains that children learn through observing and imitating behavior exemplified by models or characters they consider positive.

Increased student participation during the learning process also demonstrates that story-based media can create more active, enjoyable, and meaningful learning. This situation supports the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes character building through contextual learning experiences and the development of the Pancasila Student Profile (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). In addition to improving reading literacy, the developed children's stories have successfully become educational media that foster students' awareness of rejecting bullying behavior, fostering mutual respect, and creating a safe and inclusive school environment. Therefore, the development of children's stories is a suitable alternative learning medium to support character education and prevent bullying in elementary schools.

The findings can be interpreted more deeply through the perspective of narrative learning. The developed storybook does not merely transmit definitions of bullying; it places bullying within a sequence of recognizable events involving characters, motives, emotions, consequences, and resolution. This structure is important because elementary school students often understand social situations more easily when abstract values are represented through concrete experiences. Mar and Oatley (2008) explain that fiction can function as a simulation of social experience, allowing readers to observe relationships and infer the feelings and intentions of others. In the context of this study, the characters in the story provide models through which students can identify teasing, exclusion, hurtful nicknames, and other forms of bullying while simultaneously considering how such actions affect peers. This narrative mechanism helps explain why students were able to identify forms of bullying and propose peaceful solutions after using the developed media. Thus,

the educational value of the story is not limited to literacy practice, but also includes social interpretation and moral reflection.

The high responses from students are also consistent with evidence that bullying-themed literature can support perspective-taking and empathy. Wee, Kim, Chung, and Kim (2022) found that children's engagement with bullying-themed picture books, especially when accompanied by role-playing, can help develop understanding of bullying, perspective-taking, and empathy. The present product has a similar pedagogical potential because its storyline presents conflict from positions that are close to children's everyday school experiences. When students are invited to discuss why a character feels hurt, what a bystander should do, or how a conflict can be resolved, they move beyond recalling information and begin to evaluate social behavior. Such activities are highly relevant for anti-bullying education because the prevention of bullying requires not only knowledge of rules but also the capacity to recognize another person's emotional state. Therefore, the reflection page and teacher-led discussion added during product revision should be regarded as important components rather than supplementary features, because they transform reading into a guided social-emotional learning experience.

The usefulness of the developed book can also be viewed from the perspective of bibliotherapy. Woodall and Jenkins (2024) emphasize that children's literature related to bullying can be intentionally used in school settings to help students discuss victimization, perpetration, bystander behavior, and possible resolutions in a psychologically safer way. Stories provide a certain distance from students' personal experiences because the initial discussion focuses on fictional characters. This can be advantageous for elementary school classrooms, where students may feel reluctant to disclose that they have been bullied or have participated in bullying. Through questions about the characters, teachers can gradually invite students to connect the story to classroom norms and real-life choices without forcing personal disclosure. The developed book therefore has potential as a preventive medium and as a starting point for guided conversations. However, teachers need clear facilitation guidance so that discussions do not stop at identifying 'good' and 'bad' characters, but instead explore motives, consequences, responsibilities, help-seeking, and the role of witnesses in stopping harmful behavior.

The results also reinforce the importance of linking anti-bullying media with broader social and emotional learning. Durlak et al. (2011) demonstrated through a large meta-analysis that universal school-based social and emotional learning programs can improve students' social-emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance. More recent evidence by Cipriano et al. (2023) similarly shows that universal social and emotional

learning interventions are associated with improvements in skills, peer relationships, school functioning, and perceptions of school climate and safety. These findings provide a broader framework for interpreting the positive responses observed in this study. The storybook may become more effective when it is not used as a one-time reading activity but is integrated into repeated classroom practices that strengthen empathy, self-management, responsible decision-making, communication, and respect. In practical terms, teachers could use the story in a sequence of activities such as predicting character actions, identifying emotions, discussing alternative responses, practicing assertive communication, and creating class agreements about respectful behavior. This integration would make the product more consistent with sustained character education rather than a single anti-bullying lesson.

The very high validation scores from material, language, and media experts also show that quality in anti-bullying educational media is multidimensional. Content accuracy alone is not sufficient for elementary school students. The message must be expressed in language that is developmentally appropriate and supported by visual design that sustains attention without obscuring the moral meaning. In this study, content experts requested additional examples of verbal bullying and clearer guidance for victims, language experts recommended simplifying difficult expressions, and media experts suggested reflection activities. These revisions illustrate the benefit of expert triangulation during the ADDIE development process. They also show that feasibility scores should be interpreted as evidence of alignment among message, language, illustration, and instructional use. A story may contain a positive moral message but still be ineffective if students cannot understand the vocabulary, if the illustrations do not support the narrative, or if teachers are not provided with opportunities to discuss the message. Consequently, the high feasibility of the product is best understood as the result of iterative refinement across several dimensions of instructional quality.

At the same time, the positive findings should not be interpreted to mean that a storybook alone can eliminate bullying. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that school-based anti-bullying programs can reduce both perpetration and victimization, but their effectiveness depends on systematic implementation and program components that extend beyond a single classroom activity (Gaffney, Ttofi, & Farrington, 2019). This point is important for positioning the developed storybook realistically. The book can serve as an accessible instructional resource for prevention, awareness, and discussion, while wider school policies remain necessary to establish reporting procedures, adult supervision, consistent responses to incidents, parent involvement, and supportive peer norms. In other

words, the media should complement rather than replace a whole-school approach. Its greatest contribution may be in providing teachers with a concrete, age-appropriate entry point for conversations that are sometimes difficult to initiate. When used repeatedly and supported by school-wide commitments, the story can help create shared language about empathy, respect, bystander responsibility, and safe help-seeking.

The implementation results also suggest several practical implications for elementary school teachers. First, the story should be read interactively rather than delivered only as independent reading. Teachers can pause at critical events and ask students to predict consequences, identify emotions, and suggest alternative actions. Second, visual illustrations should be used as discussion prompts because younger students may interpret facial expressions, gestures, and social distance before they can fully articulate complex moral reasoning. Third, students can be invited to dramatize alternative endings, write short messages to the characters, or create classroom posters about respectful communication. These activities can extend the media from a reading resource into a broader literacy and character-education unit. Fourth, teachers should monitor classroom responses carefully because discussions about bullying may remind students of personal experiences. A supportive classroom atmosphere and clear pathways for seeking adult help are therefore essential. These considerations strengthen the practical value of the product while acknowledging the ethical responsibility involved in using sensitive social themes with children.

Finally, the study has limitations that provide directions for further development. The trial was limited in scope and primarily assessed feasibility, practicality, and students' immediate understanding. Future studies should examine whether the use of the storybook produces sustained changes in empathy, bystander behavior, peer relationships, and reported bullying incidents over a longer period. Comparative or quasi-experimental designs could also be used to distinguish the effect of the storybook from ordinary character-education activities. In addition, future development can explore digital and interactive formats while retaining the narrative strengths of the printed version. Audio narration, branching choices, reflective quizzes, and teacher dashboards could broaden access, although digital features should be evaluated for usability and age appropriateness. Further research could also involve parents so that anti-bullying messages are reinforced at home. These directions are consistent with the view that the current product is a promising educational medium whose effectiveness can be strengthened through repeated use, rigorous evaluation, and integration with comprehensive school prevention strategies.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study successfully developed a children's story as an anti-bullying educational medium for elementary school students using the ADDIE development model, which includes the stages of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. The results showed that the developed product obtained the category of "best" (unclear text).very worthybased on assessments by material experts, language experts, and media experts. Furthermore, the results of trials with teachers and students indicate that the media has a high level of practicality and is able to increase students' understanding of the forms of bullying, their impact on victims, and the importance of implementing empathy, tolerance, and mutual respect in everyday life. The use of children's stories with interesting illustrations and developmentally appropriate language has also been shown to increase students' interest in reading and engagement during the learning process. Thus, children's stories can be an effective alternative learning medium to support character education and bullying prevention in elementary schools. Further research is recommended to develop interactive digital media-based stories and test their effectiveness in a wider range of schools to obtain more comprehensive results.

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