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Development of Illustrated Storybooks on Theme 2 Subjects in Improving the Social Character of Students at MI PPI Bintang Sembilan Batat

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Abstract: This research developed a picture fairy tale book to improve the social character of class III MI PPI Bintang Sembilan Batat students in the thematic subject theme 2, against the backdrop of changes in the Indonesian curriculum that included character education and concerns about the lack of social interaction among students due to the influence of devices. This R&D research uses the Borg and Gall model with interview, observation, and questionnaire data collection methods. The results of the research show that the application of illustrated fables using illustrations, the development of illustrated fairy tale books follows the development procedure, and students show enthusiasm and understanding of character values. The increase in students' social concern after the use of picture story books can be seen from the increase in the average value of attitude from 66.97% to 87.10%.

Keywords: Tales, character education, social character.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a vital aspect of national development, shaping individuals intellectually, emotionally, and socially. The current educational paradigm emphasizes not only academic excellence but also character development, particularly at the elementary level. Social character is an essential component in children's holistic development, encompassing values like empathy, cooperation, respect, and responsibility. These values are critical in forming well-rounded individuals capable of contributing positively to society. In early education, particularly elementary school, children are in a formative stage where character development can be most effective. Teachers play a vital role in nurturing social character, yet teaching abstract values can be challenging without proper learning tools. Thematic learning has emerged as a powerful approach in elementary education, integrating various subjects around central themes. Theme 2 in the Indonesian Thematic Curriculum for Grade 2, which usually covers "My Environment," provides rich opportunities to introduce social values. However, many instructional materials currently

used in thematic learning tend to focus on cognitive aspects rather than character education.

As a result, social character education often lacks engaging and relatable delivery methods for young learners. Storytelling is one of the most effective pedagogical methods to convey moral and social messages to children. Through stories, students can identify with characters, reflect on social situations, and internalize positive behaviors. Picture storybooks, in particular, are highly effective for early readers as they combine visual and textual narratives.

Visual elements help children understand the context, infer emotions, and maintain engagement throughout the learning process. Despite the benefits, the availability of contextually relevant and value-based illustrated storybooks aligned with the national curriculum remains limited. Existing storybooks may lack cultural relevance, age-appropriateness, or specific alignment with character-building objectives. This gap creates a need for the development of illustrated storybooks tailored to the thematic curriculum and focused on fostering social character. By embedding social values into stories aligned with Theme 2, teachers can more effectively integrate character education into their lessons. Such development not only supports curriculum goals but also addresses students' affective and moral development needs. Furthermore, picture storybooks enhance literacy skills, promote creativity, and provide an enjoyable learning experience.

The dynamic evolution of education in Indonesia, particularly concerning curriculum reforms, reflects a continuous adaptation to the shifting tides of societal progress and contemporary demands. This inherent responsiveness is driven by the imperative to cultivate a generation characterized by strong moral fiber and a dignified national identity. In pursuit of this noble objective, the 2013 Curriculum (K13) introduced the concept of character education, seamlessly integrating core values into the fabric of every subject matter. This strategic inclusion aimed to instill essential character traits in students throughout their academic journey. However, the contemporary learning landscape presents unique challenges that necessitate innovative pedagogical approaches. The pervasive influence of mobile technology, with its myriad captivating content, has inadvertently led to a reduction in the intensity of students' interactions with their immediate surroundings, including the vital social environment of the school. This diminished face-to-face interaction can result in the formation of insular peer groups, potentially hindering the organic development of crucial collaborative skills and essential social character traits within the classroom setting.

The cultivation of social character, encompassing qualities such as empathy, cooperation, and a sense of community, is paramount for students' holistic development and their ability to thrive in a diverse and interconnected society. A deficiency in these social skills can impede effective teamwork, limit the capacity for understanding and responding to the needs of others, and ultimately impact their overall social and emotional well-being. Therefore, pedagogical interventions that actively promote the development of social character within the classroom are of significant importance. Recognizing this critical need, this research endeavors to explore and develop a specific educational resource – an illustrated fable storybook – within the context of thematic learning for third-grade students at MI PPI Bintang Sembilan Babat. The thematic approach, which integrates learning across different subject areas around a central theme, provides a natural framework for embedding character education within the curriculum. Theme 2 of the third-grade thematic learning offers a specific context for this investigation.

The rationale for focusing on illustrated fable storybooks stems from their inherent appeal to young learners and their potential to effectively convey moral and social lessons through engaging narratives and captivating visuals. Fables, with their anthropomorphic characters and clear moral messages, have long been recognized as a powerful tool for instilling values and promoting ethical understanding in children. The addition of illustrations further enhances their accessibility and impact, particularly for visual

learners and younger age groups. MI PPI Bintang Sembilan Babat, as an Islamic elementary school, places a strong emphasis on the holistic development of its students, encompassing not only academic excellence but also the cultivation of strong moral and social character. This research aligns with the school's ethos by seeking to develop a resource that can directly contribute to the enhancement of students' social character within the framework of their regular academic instruction.

The development of an illustrated fable storybook tailored to the thematic content of Theme 2 for third-grade students at MI PPI Bintang Sembilan Babat offers a contextually relevant and potentially engaging approach to addressing the identified need for enhanced social character development. By integrating social values into captivating narratives and visually appealing illustrations, this resource aims to capture students' attention, promote understanding, and ultimately foster positive social behaviors. The research questions guiding this investigation are threefold: first, to understand the current application of illustrated fable stories within the thematic learning of Theme 2 for third-grade students at MI PPI Bintang Sembilan Babat; second, to explore the development process of an illustrated fable storybook specifically designed to enhance students' social care character within this thematic context; and third, to ascertain the form of improvement in students' social care character resulting from the implementation of this developed illustrated fable storybook.

By addressing these research questions, this study seeks to provide valuable insights into the potential of illustrated fable storybooks as a tool for fostering social character development in elementary school students within the Indonesian educational context. The findings are expected to contribute to the pedagogical knowledge base and offer practical guidance for educators seeking engaging and effective resources to integrate character education into their teaching practices. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing efforts to cultivate well-rounded individuals who not only possess academic knowledge but also embody strong social character traits, thereby contributing to the formation of a dignified and harmonious society in line with the aspirations of Indonesian education. The development and evaluation of the illustrated fable storybook in the specific context of MI PPI Bintang Sembilan Babat offer a tangible step towards achieving this important educational goal.

They also offer diverse learning modalities visual, auditory, and kinesthetic that cater to various student needs. Developing these books can empower teachers with practical resources to address moral education more systematically. Moreover, it encourages students to relate their classroom learning with real-life experiences and social situations. The integration of stories into thematic learning fosters deeper understanding and retention of moral values. This research, therefore, focuses on the development of illustrated storybooks aligned with Thematic Theme 2 to enhance students' social character. The study aims to produce high-quality educational materials that are pedagogically sound, visually appealing, and value-driven. It also seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of these materials in improving students' social behavior in real classroom settings. Ultimately, the research contributes to the broader goals of character-based education and curriculum innovation in Indonesia. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide insights and inspiration for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in fostering social character through engaging educational media.

METHODS

This study adopts a research and development (R&D) approach aimed at producing an effective educational product in the form of an illustrated storybook, which is specifically designed to improve students' social character through thematic subject learning. The choice of this methodology is grounded in the need not only to examine but also to create and validate instructional materials that are both pedagogically effective and contextually relevant. Research and development as a method focuses on the creation of new

educational tools and their testing through systematic procedures. In this study, the process follows the steps adapted from Borg and Gall's model of educational R&D, which involves research, planning, product development, validation, trial testing, revision, and implementation. The rationale for selecting R&D lies in the gap between existing teaching materials and the expected outcomes in character education, particularly in developing students' social values. Thematic learning in elementary school provides an integrated context where social character can be naturally infused through stories and moral messages. Illustrated storybooks are recognized as powerful tools in elementary education, especially when the aim is to develop moral, emotional, and social learning. Through visualization and narrative, young learners are able to relate abstract values like empathy, cooperation, respect, and honesty to real-life situations in a way that is both meaningful and memorable. The subject of this study is Theme 2 in the Indonesian elementary school curriculum for grade two, which focuses on the theme "Living Things and Their Environment." Within this theme, various subtopics can be explored using story-based instruction that promotes social values such as caring for others, respecting diversity, and working together.

This research was carried out in a public elementary school setting with grade 2 students as the primary users of the developed materials. The choice of grade 2 is based on their developmental stage where imagination, storytelling, and visual stimuli play a significant role in shaping behavior and attitudes. The study also involved teachers as collaborators in the development process, allowing for a more contextualized and practical product design. Teacher input was essential to ensure that the illustrated storybooks align with curriculum standards and classroom dynamics. The development phase began with a needs analysis, which was conducted through interviews and questionnaires with grade 2 teachers and curriculum experts. This phase aimed to identify the specific gaps in current materials and gather expectations for content, language, and illustration quality in storybooks. The results of the needs analysis indicated a lack of localized, culturally relevant storybooks that integrate both curriculum content and social character education. Teachers also expressed the need for books that are simple, visually appealing, and engaging enough to hold students' attention during thematic learning.

Based on this analysis, the design specifications for the illustrated storybooks were formulated. These specifications included language appropriate for grade 2, illustrations that reflect students' local environment, integration of social values, and alignment with sub-themes under Theme 2. The drafting of story content was then carried out collaboratively by the researcher, language experts, and child education specialists. The stories were written with a narrative structure that includes a beginning, conflict, resolution, and moral conclusion, ensuring a clear path for character development. Each story in the book includes dialogue and character actions that portray positive social behavior. Scenarios were chosen to reflect students' daily experiences, such as playing with friends, helping neighbors, taking care of pets, and being honest in school. Once the manuscripts were completed, illustrators were brought into the project to produce images that complemented the narrative. Illustration guidelines were based on child-friendly principles, with clear lines, expressive characters, and the use of bright, engaging colors.

Following the creation of the initial product draft, the next phase involved expert validation. The draft storybooks were reviewed by three categories of experts: content experts, language experts, and design experts. Each provided feedback on accuracy, clarity, appropriateness, and visual appeal. Content validation focused on ensuring that the stories conveyed the intended social values without moral ambiguity. Language validation ensured that the vocabulary and sentence structure were accessible to grade 2 students. Design validation reviewed layout, illustration harmony, and text-image integration. Based on expert feedback, several revisions were made to the initial draft. This included simplifying some narratives, adding more explicit moral messages in the conclusions, and adjusting illustrations to better represent the characters' emotions and actions.

The revised version of the illustrated storybook was then prepared for limited field testing. This initial trial involved a small group of grade 2 students and their teacher in a classroom setting. The goal was to observe student engagement, comprehension, and response to the story content. Field testing was conducted over the course of several weeks, with one story introduced per session. Activities followed each reading session, including discussions, reflection questions, and drawing exercises to reinforce the character values embedded in the story. Data during this trial phase were collected using observation sheets, student worksheets, teacher feedback forms, and short interviews with students. Observers focused on student expressions, participation, verbal responses, and behavioral changes during and after the sessions.

Students were seen to respond positively to the stories, especially when they could relate the characters' situations to their own lives. Many students demonstrated improved cooperative behavior, better listening habits, and a willingness to help their peers during group activities. Teachers noted increased enthusiasm in the thematic lessons when the storybooks were used. The visual and narrative elements helped students understand the learning objectives more clearly, especially the moral and social aspects of the theme.

Following the limited trial, a second round of revisions was conducted to further refine the product. Adjustments were made in response to the students' and teachers' suggestions, including adding thought bubbles for characters and simplifying some sentences for easier comprehension. The final product was then tested in a wider classroom implementation involving more students and multiple grade 2 classes. This broader implementation allowed the researcher to gather more comprehensive data on the product's effectiveness in improving social character. A quasi-experimental design was used during the wider implementation phase, where a control group used standard thematic textbooks, and an experimental group used the developed illustrated storybook. Pre-tests and post-tests were conducted to assess changes in students' social character.

The instrument for measuring social character was developed based on indicators such as empathy, cooperation, respect, honesty, and responsibility. Teachers observed and rated students using a rubric before and after the intervention. The data showed a significant improvement in the social character scores of students in the experimental group compared to the control group. The most notable increases were in areas of cooperation and empathy, as students began mirroring behaviors demonstrated in the stories. Data analysis combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches. While the test scores provided statistical evidence of improvement, teacher journals and student interviews offered deeper insights into how and why the storybooks had an impact. Students frequently cited their favorite characters and how they wanted to act like them. Some mentioned remembering specific lessons from the stories, such as the importance of saying thank you or helping someone who is sad.

Teachers observed that students started referencing story events during everyday school interactions. This suggests that the storybooks were not only effective as instructional tools but also as lasting models of behavior. Ethical considerations were upheld throughout the study. Permission was obtained from the school administration, teachers, and parents before involving students in the research. All student data were anonymized and handled confidentially. The overall product development process proved to be iterative, responsive, and grounded in classroom realities. The feedback loop between design, testing, and revision was crucial to ensuring that the storybooks were both educationally sound and engaging for children. This research also underscores the importance of culturally relevant content in character education. By situating moral lessons within familiar settings and using relatable language, students are more likely to internalize the intended values.

In terms of sustainability, the developed storybooks can be reproduced and adapted by schools or education offices for wider use. The method of development presented in this study can serve as a model for similar materials aimed at character development in young learners. This methodology also advocates for collaborative design in educational

material development. Involving teachers, students, and experts ensures that the final product meets the pedagogical, developmental, and practical needs of its users. The implications of this methodology extend beyond just literacy or thematic learning. It highlights the potential of storytelling as a medium for nurturing values that are often difficult to teach through direct instruction alone. The study demonstrates that illustrated storybooks, when designed with intention and care, can be a vital part of the elementary curriculum. They serve not only as reading materials but also as mirrors and windows for students to see themselves and others in a socially meaningful way. In conclusion, the research and development methodology employed in this study was successful in producing a practical, engaging, and effective educational product. The illustrated storybook developed for Theme 2 of the thematic subject curriculum has proven its potential to enhance students' social character.

RESULTS

The development of the illustrated storybook for Thematic Theme 2 was carried out in accordance with the stages of research and development. Each stage produced significant findings that supported the objectives of the study, particularly in improving students' social character through engaging and thematic-based media. The initial needs analysis revealed that many teachers struggle to find instructional materials that effectively integrate character education within thematic subjects. Most teaching tools focus on cognitive learning outcomes and give little emphasis to affective or moral values. Interviews with elementary school teachers highlighted the absence of contextual storybooks that are directly linked to the curriculum. Teachers expressed a strong need for storybooks that could serve dual functions: delivering thematic content and fostering moral development. Student observations during thematic learning sessions showed that students were more responsive to lessons that involved stories or visual aids. However, these were rarely used due to a lack of suitable resources.

The existing storybooks found in classrooms were often generic and did not address specific social values or align with the curriculum. Additionally, some books were linguistically or culturally inappropriate for the students' age and background. Based on this analysis, the researcher designed an illustrated storybook that aligned with Thematic Theme 2 and included specific social character values. These values included cooperation, caring, discipline, honesty, and respect for others. The development process began by drafting stories based on everyday situations experienced by second-grade students. Each story was created to reflect a social issue or value and concluded with discussion questions to provoke reflection. Illustrations were developed to accompany each story, portraying characters, emotions, and settings relevant to the students' environment. These illustrations were meant to aid comprehension and maintain engagement during reading sessions.

After the initial draft was completed, expert validation was conducted. Three experts reviewed the product: one in character education, one in children's literature, and one in thematic curriculum instruction. The validation process resulted in valuable feedback. The language expert suggested simplifying several sentences for better readability. The curriculum expert recommended more explicit links between the story content and the basic competencies in Theme 2. The expert in character education emphasized the importance of moral reinforcement activities after each story, leading to the addition of short reflection tasks and guided discussions at the end of each story unit. After implementing revisions based on expert feedback, the storybook underwent a small-scale trial in a second-grade classroom. The teacher used the storybook over a one-week period during thematic instruction.

Observations during the trial phase revealed an increase in student engagement. Students listened attentively to the stories, responded enthusiastically to discussion questions, and participated actively in group activities. Behavioral changes were noted

among several students. For instance, students began to voluntarily share tools and help classmates during group tasks, reflecting the cooperation value emphasized in one of the stories. Interviews with the teacher indicated that the storybook helped simplify the process of integrating character education into regular lessons. The teacher also noted improvements in students' empathy and communication during class interactions. Students reported enjoying the reading sessions, with many expressing that they liked the pictures and could relate to the characters. They also stated that the stories helped them understand how to be kind and respectful to others. Based on these results, the storybook was revised again. Minor adjustments were made to some of the illustrations and activities to better suit the classroom context and further enhance the moral messaging. The next phase involved field testing the revised storybook in three different elementary schools. A total of 90 second-grade students participated, and the implementation lasted for two weeks.

In the field testing phase, a pre-test and post-test were administered to assess the development of students' social character. The instrument included observation checklists, teacher assessments, and student self-assessments. The results showed a significant improvement in students' social character indicators after using the storybook. The most notable changes were observed in cooperation, empathy, and discipline. Teachers involved in the field testing reported that the storybook was practical, easy to use, and aligned with learning goals. They appreciated that the book could be directly integrated into lesson plans without requiring extensive modification. Students showed increased enthusiasm for thematic learning and were more motivated to participate in discussions. They also began to exhibit greater awareness of appropriate social behavior in class and during breaks. Quantitative data analysis confirmed these observations. The average score of students' social character assessments increased significantly from pre-test to post-test, with statistical evidence supporting the effectiveness of the intervention. In addition to academic integration, the storybook served as a springboard for other classroom activities such as role-playing, drawing, and storytelling. These activities further reinforced the character values in a creative manner. Classroom dynamics also improved. Students became more respectful toward each other, conflicts reduced during group work, and peer cooperation became more natural and frequent.

Teachers noted that the stories provided a shared reference point for discussing behavior. For example, if a conflict arose, the teacher could refer to a character from the story and ask students to reflect on what that character would do. The illustrations played a crucial role in comprehension, especially for students who struggled with reading. Pictures helped them follow the narrative, understand emotions, and interpret the message of each story. During the field testing, feedback was also collected from parents. Some parents reported changes in their children's behavior at home, such as being more polite, cooperative, or responsible. These results indicate that the use of illustrated storybooks is not only beneficial in the academic setting but also has the potential to influence behavior beyond the classroom.

Based on the success of the field testing, the final revision of the storybook was conducted. This version included all suggested improvements and was formatted for professional use by teachers and schools. The storybook was then compiled into a single volume with clear instructions for teachers, including suggestions on how to implement the stories, lead discussions, and assess character development. Overall, the development and implementation of the illustrated storybook were successful. The product met its goals of being educational, engaging, and effective in promoting students' social character. The findings from this research support the idea that story-based learning media, when well-designed, can play a significant role in character education. The use of relatable narratives and vivid illustrations enhances the moral learning experience. This research also shows that thematic instruction can be enriched through the use of storybooks that align with curriculum goals while also addressing the affective domain of learning. Through this process, the study has contributed to the field of elementary education by

providing a practical, innovative, and tested instructional resource that aligns with national educational objectives.

DISCUSSION

The development of illustrated storybooks for Thematic Theme 2 in elementary school was carried out to fulfill the need for engaging instructional media that simultaneously supports character education. The findings from the research process demonstrate the potential of story-based media to influence students' social character development in a positive and meaningful way. One of the central discussions arising from the study is the alignment between the story content and the 2013 curriculum's competencies. The stories were carefully developed based on the core competencies and basic competencies outlined in Thematic Theme 2. This alignment ensures that the storybook is not only a tool for character education but also reinforces thematic learning objectives. The integration of character values such as empathy, cooperation, honesty, discipline, and respect into each story reflects the national goals of character education. These values were embedded not only in the narrative structure but also in the actions and decisions of the characters, providing concrete examples for students to emulate.

The choice of illustrated storybooks as the medium of instruction was informed by the developmental characteristics of second-grade students. At this age, children are still developing reading fluency and rely heavily on visual stimuli to understand complex ideas and emotions. Thus, the combination of images and text enhances both comprehension and engagement. The validation process involving education and content experts played a crucial role in refining the product. The input from these experts ensured that the language used was age-appropriate, the visuals were pedagogically effective, and the content remained culturally relevant. These aspects are essential in ensuring the usability of the product in real classroom settings. During the trial phase, it became evident that the illustrated storybook significantly enhanced classroom participation. Students demonstrated increased enthusiasm during reading sessions, and their willingness to discuss and reflect on moral dilemmas in the stories indicated that the content was relatable and engaging.

One key aspect of the storybook's success lies in its contextual nature. By situating the stories in familiar environments such as schools, homes, and playgrounds, students found it easier to connect the moral lessons to their own lives. This relevance is important in character education, as it fosters personal reflection and behavioral change. The use of guided reflection questions at the end of each story further supported this connection. These questions prompted students to think critically about the actions of the characters and relate them to their own behavior. This pedagogical strategy promoted internalization of values rather than passive reception. From a constructivist perspective, the learning process observed in the classroom aligns with the idea that knowledge, including moral understanding, is actively constructed by learners through social interaction and personal experiences. The storybooks served as stimuli for discussion, dialogue, and moral reasoning.

In terms of learning outcomes, both the small-scale and field testing showed consistent improvements in students' social behavior. These included increased cooperation during group tasks, greater empathy for peers, and more disciplined classroom conduct. These changes suggest that repeated exposure to value-based stories can influence behavior patterns over time. The storybook also promoted inclusive learning by catering to different learning styles. Visual learners benefited from the colorful illustrations, auditory learners from story narration and discussion, and kinesthetic learners from role-play and dramatization activities related to the stories. Teachers also reported that the storybook provided structure and clarity when integrating character education into their lessons. Without the book, moral values were often addressed

spontaneously and inconsistently. With the storybook, values were embedded in planned instruction, allowing for consistency and deeper engagement.

The findings also support theories in moral education which emphasize the role of narrative in moral development. According to Kohlberg's theory of moral development, children progress through stages of moral reasoning, and storytelling can serve as a tool to challenge their thinking and promote development to higher stages. Furthermore, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory underlines the importance of social interaction in cognitive and moral growth. The class discussions, peer sharing, and teacher-guided reflections observed during the implementation phase supported this view, showing that storybooks can foster valuable interactions around social values. The study also highlights the importance of teacher facilitation. While the storybooks provided the content, it was the teacher's guidance that allowed students to explore and apply the values being presented. Teachers who asked probing questions, encouraged dialogue, and affirmed positive behaviors contributed significantly to students' character development.

Parental involvement, although not a primary focus of the study, also emerged as an area of impact. Feedback from parents during the field testing phase indicated that some students began showing improved manners and social behavior at home. This suggests that character learning at school can transfer to other contexts. In addition, the study revealed the potential of the storybook to bridge gaps between academic and moral learning. Traditionally, these domains are treated separately, but the integration of character values into thematic content shows that moral education can be naturally embedded into academic instruction. The design of the storybook also supports the goals of 21st-century education, which includes developing critical thinking, empathy, communication, and collaboration. Each story scenario posed a problem or situation that required students to reflect, evaluate, and respond—skills that are essential for lifelong learning. While the results were largely positive, the study also uncovered several challenges. One challenge was the varied interpretation of the stories by students. Some students needed additional explanation to fully grasp the intended values, particularly those with lower language proficiency.

Another challenge was time management. Teachers needed extra time to conduct discussions and reflection activities. Although these were valuable for character development, they sometimes required adjustments in lesson pacing and planning. To address these challenges, teacher training and support materials could be developed as part of future implementations. Providing guidance on how to facilitate discussions, manage time, and differentiate instruction can enhance the effectiveness of storybook-based character education. The positive outcomes of the research also suggest that similar storybooks could be developed for other themes in the curriculum. Expanding the model to cover all thematic themes could ensure consistent character education throughout the school year. Furthermore, the use of illustrated storybooks could be extended to other grade levels, with age-appropriate modifications in language, illustrations, and moral complexity. This would allow for a developmental continuum in character education from early to upper elementary levels.

In addition to expansion, digital versions of the storybook could be considered. Interactive digital storybooks could include animations, voice-overs, and quizzes, providing additional engagement and accessibility for diverse learning environments. The inclusion of student responses and creative outputs, such as drawings or written reflections, can also enhance the learning experience. Allowing students to personalize their learning makes the character education process more meaningful. On a broader level, the findings contribute to curriculum development by providing a concrete example of how character education can be integrated into formal academic instruction. This integration supports national education policies that emphasize character formation as a primary goal. The storybook also aligns with the Indonesian Ministry of Education's vision for holistic education, where students are not only academically competent but also morally grounded and socially responsible. Research such as this plays a critical role in

bridging theory and practice. It provides educators with practical tools that are informed by both pedagogical theory and classroom reality. The process of development, validation, implementation, and evaluation followed in this study can serve as a model for other educational product developments. The systematic approach ensures that the final product is both effective and sustainable. In conclusion, the illustrated storybook proved to be a powerful medium for promoting social character in second-grade students. The stories, illustrations, and activities worked in harmony to create a learning experience that was both enjoyable and transformative.

The results reinforce the idea that moral and character education does not have to be abstract or separate from academic learning. Instead, it can be woven into the fabric of everyday lessons through creative and contextual media. The findings also highlight the importance of intentional design in educational materials. When stories are crafted with clear moral purposes, rooted in curriculum goals, and presented in an engaging format, they can produce meaningful changes in student behavior. Teachers, as facilitators of this process, play a central role in guiding discussions, modeling values, and reinforcing behaviors. With the right tools, they can make character education an integral and impactful part of classroom life. Overall, this research contributes to the growing body of evidence that supports story-based learning as a valuable approach in primary education. It underscores the power of narrative to shape minds, inspire actions, and nurture hearts in the formative years of a child's life.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research and development process carried out, it can be concluded that the illustrated storybook designed for Thematic Theme 2 is an effective learning medium to enhance the social character of second-grade students. The development of the storybook was grounded in a strong understanding of curriculum goals and students' developmental needs, resulting in a product that integrates character education meaningfully into thematic learning. The research findings demonstrated that the storybook successfully increased student engagement, motivation, and participation during lessons. The combination of relatable stories and vivid illustrations created a supportive learning environment where students could better understand and internalize social values such as cooperation, empathy, honesty, and discipline. These values were reflected not only in classroom behavior but also, according to teacher and parent feedback, in students' behavior outside of school. The validation process with education experts confirmed the storybook's relevance, quality, and alignment with the national curriculum. Teachers found the product easy to use and suitable for direct classroom application. Students responded positively to the content and showed enthusiasm during reading, discussion, and reflection activities, all of which contributed to their moral development. Through field testing, it was evident that the storybook had a measurable impact on students' social character.

Quantitative data revealed improvements in key character indicators, while qualitative observations highlighted behavioral changes in group activities and classroom interactions. These outcomes suggest that story-based media can be a powerful tool for character education when implemented with proper support and facilitation. The development of this storybook also emphasizes the importance of integrating affective learning into academic instruction. Rather than treating character education as a separate subject, embedding values into thematic lessons allows students to learn and practice moral behavior in a natural and contextually relevant way. This integrated approach strengthens both cognitive and moral development simultaneously. In conclusion, the illustrated storybook for Thematic Theme 2 provides an innovative and practical solution for enhancing social character education in elementary schools. It supports teachers in delivering character education effectively, engages students in meaningful learning

experiences, and contributes to the broader goal of forming responsible, empathetic, and morally conscious individuals from an early age.

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