

Digital Books of Picture Stories as an Effort to Improve Reading Comprehension Skills: A Case Study in Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to: 1) Describe the implementation of digital picture book media in understanding moral values through students' reading comprehension skills; 2) Describe the support for understanding moral values through the application of digital picture book media; 3) Describe the application of digital picture book media on students' reading comprehension skills; 4) Describe the application of digital picture story books on students' understanding of moral values; and 5) Describe the inhibiting and supporting factors in understanding moral values through the application of digital picture book media. This is a descriptive qualitative study. The media used were digital picture books. The research subjects were second-grade students and teachers at SDN Timbulharjo Bantul Yogyakarta. The object of the study was the digital picture book media. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The instruments used were observation sheets and interview sheets. Data analysis employed the interactive technique of Miles and Huberman. The research results indicate that: 1) The implementation of digital picture book media in reading comprehension of moral values involves the teacher's role in guiding literacy; 2) The application of digital picture book media in imparting moral values is supported by the teacher's methods and the combination of illustrations and narrative texts, which facilitate understanding the story content and support students' reading skills; 3) Students' reading comprehension abilities through digital picture book media vary, as shown by their performance on reading comprehension indicators; 4) Students' understanding of moral values after implementing digital picture book media focuses more on moral values and concepts that cannot be explicitly expressed; 5) Inhibiting factors in understanding moral values through digital picture book media include the small font size of character dialogue texts, while illustrations and narrative texts in digital picture books support understanding moral values.

KEYWORDS

Digital Books
Language Learning
Digital Literacy
Picture Stories
Reading Skills

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1. Introduction

Education in Indonesia does not only focus on improving knowledge, but also on character building. Law Number 20 of 2003 Article 3 expressly states the goal of national education to develop the potential of students to have noble and moral morals. Therefore, concrete efforts are needed in moral education to overcome the challenges of morality in today's digital era. Education must be adapted to the development of the times in order to

make it easier for children to understand and apply the knowledge they have obtained, especially at the basic education level (Hughes, 2002; Ralph, 2014).

The development of the times to the digital era has major implications for various sectors, including education. Digital media provides wide access to various learning materials that can be accessed through the internet. However, negative impacts can also arise, such as immoral content that children can access. Cases of bullying in schools, reported by the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI) as an example, show the importance of preventive efforts in moral education to protect children from behavior that is not in accordance with moral values (Fernández-Batanero et al., 2022; Sandberg & Bostrom, 2006).

The digital era does not always have a positive impact, but there are also negative impacts. Wide access through digital media can lead to negative content such as content that contains immoral acts, one of which is video content that records school students bullying or bullying their classmates, it will be fatal if the content is accessed by children because children are still immature in thinking and have not been able to distinguish between good and bad in detail so that negative content can potentially imitated by children (Frau-Meigs et al., 2017; Haleem et al., 2022). As for many online news reporting bullying that was not only carried out by teenagers but also by elementary school children, the online news media *Tribun Mataram* reported on bullying carried out by elementary school children in Menganti District, Gresik Regency which caused the victim of a grade II child to suffer damage to his eye organs due to the actions of the perpetrator who was the victim's upperclassman. The Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI) (2023) reported as many as 16 cases of bullying in schools (during January-July 2023, it was reported that the majority of bullying cases occurred in elementary and junior high schools with a percentage of 25%, high schools and vocational schools (18.75%), MTs and Islamic boarding schools (6.25%).

The moral crisis that is very worrying in elementary school children today encourages preventive efforts so that children do not act outside of their moral values when they grow up. Therefore, the environment where children grow needs to be friendly to efforts to support the creation of children's morals. There are three environments where children get education as contained in the *Tri Center of Education* stated by Ki Hajar Dewantara in the book *Ketamansiswaan* (Dewantara, 1977), including the family environment, school environment, and community environment. Moral education, both in the family, school, and community environment, has an important role in shaping children's character. In schools, the role of teachers and principals is crucial in providing effective moral learning. The use of picture storybooks in Indonesian learning is one of the effective methods because it is able to convey moral values visually through in-depth picture illustrations. This helps children to better understand and apply the content of the story concretely.

Research at SD Negeri Timbulharjo shows that although digital books of illustrated stories are available, they have not been used consistently to improve students' reading comprehension skills, especially in lower grades such as grade II. This inconsistency raises concerns about the potential underutilization of resources that could otherwise foster foundational literacy skills among young learners. Digital books, particularly those enriched with visual illustrations, have been proven in various studies to enhance engagement and aid in cognitive processing, which can significantly improve comprehension. However, without a structured and sustained implementation, their benefits remain untapped, leaving a gap in the development of critical literacy abilities during these formative years. Recognizing this gap, the author is motivated to explore the use of digital illustrated books as a tool for instilling moral values alongside improving reading skills.

2. Methods

The type of research used in this study is qualitative research while the design used is descriptive so that this research is more structured. Qualitative research is an inquiry strategy that emphasizes the search for meanings, definitions, concepts, symptoms, symbols, characteristics and descriptions of phenomena, focus and multimethod, which are natural and holistic, prioritize quality, use several methods and in narrative expression (Creswell, 2012; Sugiyono, 2020; Taylor et al., 2015). This study uses a qualitative type of research. This type of qualitative research has a descriptive nature and tends to use analysis in this research, the process and meaning will be more highlighted in accordance with the facts in the field (Sugiyono, 2020). Data collected directly by researchers from primary sources. As for the primary data sources in the study, there were 10 students of class II A, teachers of class II A, and the principal of SDN Timbulharjo Bantul Yogyakarta. Ten students were selected as purposive sampling, which is the selection of samples based on predetermined categories. The data collection techniques in this study use interview, observation and documentation techniques. The research instruments are observation sheets, interview guideline sheets. The research data analysis technique uses Miles and Huberman analysis which consists of data reduction (Data Collection), data presentation (Data Display), conclusion drawing (Conclusion Drawing/ Verivication).

3. Results and Discussion

The implementation of Digital Book Media of Picture Stories on Reading Skills to Understand Moral Values of grade II students at SD Negeri Timbulharjo, Tembi, Timbulharjo Village, Sewon District, Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta was carried out in the morning literacy habituation session. The policy was initiated by the principal as a step to shape the moral character of students at SD Negeri Timbulharjo, by implementing morning literacy activities in each class before starting learning, where students read books available in the book corner of each class. In the research on the implementation of digital picture story book media on students' understanding of moral values, the researcher used a digital picture story book entitled "My Pets" which was used in the morning literacy session in grade II A. The results of observation of students showed that they were able to understand the content of the story and the moral values conveyed through behavior that reflected the moral message in the story, Although they have not fully understood the term or meaning of moral values literally, which was revealed from the results of interviews with students and teachers after the implementation of the digital book of picture stories.

The understanding of the form of moral values through this digital book of picture stories is also highly dependent on the role of teachers in presenting steps and accompanying the literacy process. According to teachers interviewed after the implementation of the digital picture story book, students' reading comprehension skills showed good progress based on several indicators, although there were still some aspects that were not optimal (Frau-Meigs et al., 2017). One of the factors related to digital books of picture stories is the size of letters or text in character dialogues which are sometimes too small, making it difficult for students to read them even though they are assisted by illustrations that illustrate the content of the story. However, through the implementation of this digital book of illustrated stories, students of grade II A SD Negeri Timbulharjo have been able to understand moral messages and forms of moral values with their reading comprehension skills, which can continue to be improved in the future.

Prior to the implementation of the media, interviews were conducted with the principal to find out the school's policies related to culture, instilling moral values, strategies for

overcoming problems, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors in the formation of students' morals. School principals have a central role in encouraging formal education to shape students' personalities and educate them, by implementing various policies such as classroom discipline, habituation activities, extracurriculars, and the integration of moral values in learning (Sadowski et al., 2013). The results of interviews with class II A teachers before the implementation of the digital picture story book showed that there were still inappropriate behaviors in students, such as sitting impolitely, returning items by throwing, and impolite interactions. Although the understanding of moral values is rated quite well, some students tend to imitate inappropriate behavior from their surroundings. Therefore, continuous mentoring and guidance is expected to improve students' understanding and moral behavior in a sustainable manner.

Students were identified as engaging in a variety of inappropriate behaviors in class, such as speaking in a disrespectful manner, making inappropriate jokes, taking items without permission, yelling, hurting or harassing friends with taunts, punches, slaps, pinching, or stomping on shoes. In this first interview session, all students also stated that they did not fully understand the concept of moral values. Therefore, to reduce and prevent inappropriate behavior that can lead to more serious bullying, efforts are needed to provide an understanding of moral values through students' reading comprehension skills using supportive media (Hart, 2011). It is important to assess the extent to which students' reading comprehension skills can help in forming positive behaviors through the messages conveyed in the reading material.

3.1. Application of Digital Book Media of Picture Stories in Providing Understanding of Moral Values through Reading Comprehension Skills for Students

Through teacher observation, it is known that the application of digital book media of picture stories includes steps in its use and teachers' efforts in dealing with bullying (Perumal et al., 2021). In providing moral understanding through students' reading comprehension skills, teachers take several steps, namely displaying stories through projectors projected on LCD screens, inviting students to read stories together, asking questions about events or texts in the story, providing stimuli and questions about the messages contained in the stories, exploring the moral values contained in the stories with students, as well as associating moral messages with values and behaviors in daily life and in making friends.

In dealing with bullying, teachers try to use students' reading comprehension skills with the media of digital books of picture stories by associating moral messages contained in stories (Perumal et al., 2021). The message includes respect for fellow living beings, including humans, and teaches that students should not hurt, mock, fight, or do anything else that could hurt friends or others. Inhibiting and supporting factors in efforts to understand moral values through students' reading comprehension skills using digital book media of illustrated stories are related to the characteristics of the media (Struik et al., 2019). One of the inhibiting factors is the small font size of the characters' conversation text, which can hinder students in the back row from seeing clearly. However, the existence of illustrations that clarify the content of the story and narrative text that is large enough is a supporting factor that makes it easier for students to understand. The results of observations of teachers also show that their role as facilitators is very important. In addition to imparting knowledge, teachers also function as facilitators who help students use learning resources well, create a fun learning environment, and encourage students to actively participate and convey their ideas (Akili, 2014). In conclusion, despite the challenges and support that come from the digital book media of picture stories, teachers

have maximally assisted the students' literacy process to provide an understanding of moral values through reading comprehension skills.

3.2. Supporting the Application of Digital Book Media of Picture Stories in Providing Understanding of Students' Moral Values

In line with the implementation of digital media of picture stories, through observation it is known that the role of teachers is very important in supporting the success and improvement of students' reading comprehension skills by providing an understanding of the meaning of moral values. In addition to the role of teachers, the results of interviews with teachers in the second session and observations show that illustrations and narrative texts in digital books of illustrated stories also help students' understanding of the content of the story, thus supporting students' understanding of moral values by strengthening aspects of reading comprehension skills. The fulfillment of this aspect of students' reading comprehension skills is supported by the results of the second session of interviews with class teachers regarding reading comprehension skills after the use of digital book media of picture stories. Based on student observations and teacher interviews, it is known that students have language proficiency in the realm of words and sentences and their meanings, which is a capital for them in understanding the content of the digital book of picture stories.

This is in line with the stages of Piaget's cognitive theory, where grade II students who are in the concrete operational stage have passed the concrete pre-operational stage at the age of 2-7 years, when they have progressed in language skills with increased vocabulary mastery. For this, grade II students who are in the concrete operational stage enter the stage of language development which includes the addition of objects, where children can understand words and combinations of words to connect.

3.3. Students' Reading Comprehension Ability Through the Application of Digital Book Media of Picture Stories

Students' reading comprehension ability through the use of digital book media can be seen from the fulfillment of students' reading skill indicators through interviews with teachers and students, which shows that the reading comprehension ability of grade II students of SDN Timbulharjo Bantul varies. Based on the level of reading comprehension according to Somadayo, it can be explained that some students in the second grade of SDN Timbulharjo Bantul Yogyakarta have reached the level of critical comprehension, which is the highest level of reading comprehension where students can draw conclusions. In addition, there are students who are at the level of interpretive understanding, who are able to find implicit and explicit messages in stories. There are also students who are still at the level of literal understanding, namely understanding the reading material and understanding the content of the story.

Finally, students' ability to form conclusions from the content of the story also showed variations in their responses. Some students are able to summarize the content of the story well, while others have difficulty in stringing sentences or choosing the right words to express their understanding. This shows that students have different abilities in capturing and conveying the meaning of the stories they read, although overall they show progress in reading comprehension skills through the digital book media of picture stories.

3.4. Understanding Students' Moral Values Through Digital Books of Picture Stories

The understanding of students' moral values through the media of digital books of picture stories based on the second session of interviews with students shows several

things. First, students' understanding of the meaning or definition of moral values is still lacking, because most students do not know the meaning of the term. In fact, one in ten students misinterpreted moral values as emotions, answering with emotional terms such as happy and sad. Even so, some students can understand the meaning of moral values when using the digital book media of picture stories, although they still have difficulty articulating their definitions in writing (Hart, 2011; Pamungkas et al., 2023).

Second, students' understanding of the form of moral values is also limited. Of the ten students, four of them answered that they only knew the form of moral values taught in the stories in the digital book, such as responsibility, without adding other forms of moral values outside the stories. The other six students answered that they did not know. This shows that the term moral values that have just been taught through the digital book media of picture stories are only understood by some students, while others still have difficulty articulating the form of moral values in writing. Students actually understand the form of moral values as behaviors that they understand and practice daily, such as being honest, fair, and respectful of others. However, they have not realized that this behavior is part of moral values, because in terms they do not fully understand what moral values are and their forms..

3.5. Inhibiting and Supporting Factors in Understanding Moral Values Through the Media of Digital Books of Picture Stories

The inhibiting and supporting factors in understanding moral values through the digital book media of picture stories were identified through teacher observation during the application of the media. The main obstacle lies in the font size of the characters' conversation texts being too small, resulting in some students sitting in the back row having difficulty seeing them. On the other hand, the supporting factor lies in the sizable illustration images and narrative text of the story, helping students understand the content of the story thoroughly. Based on the results of interviews with ten students in the second session, four students stated that they did not experience obstacles in understanding moral values, while six students admitted that they did not know. When asked about things that make it easier to understand moral values, students' answers vary; four students said "Yes", one student mentioned "Bird", while the other five students did not know. Students who did not experience obstacles and stated that they understood moral values showed that they received adequate support in understanding moral values through literacy activities with teachers, which helped them understand the meaning and form of moral values contained in the stories discussed (Barros-Castro et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, students who stated that they did not know about the obstacles and things that make it easier to understand moral values, or gave unrelated answers, indicated that they still needed to understand more about the concept of moral values. Based on Piaget's theory of concrete operational stages, grade II children have developed cognitive abilities to understand the messages conveyed. They are able to combine and separate words and understand cumulative concepts, which allows them to understand the content of the story text well. However, their ability to understand moral values is still limited because they tend to understand things that are real, while the concept of moral values requires a deeper and abstract understanding.

Based on the findings and discussions, grade II students are at the concrete operational stage in Piaget's theory. According to Nelwati and Rahman (2022, p. 20), at this stage of language development, children are able to combine and separate words and understand them (multiplication of classes) and understand the concept of accumulation (conservation), which is the knowledge they have accumulated before. This shows that children's ability to understand messages is influenced by their cognitive abilities, so the knowledge they have determines how well they understand the message conveyed.

Children have achieved a good level of cognitive comprehension, are able to read story texts fluently, and understand the content of short stories or fairy tales. However, Mifroh (2020, p. 261) notes that children's comprehension skills are still limited to real things. In this study, students have understood the form of moral values in practice because they are real, but have not been able to understand moral values and their forms by definition.

The relevance of theory and previous research can strengthen your research results. Implementation, as discussed in the Great Dictionary of Indonesian (KBBI) and the definitions of Van Meter and Van Horn, highlights the importance of implementing policies and decisions in specific contexts. This explanation is in line with the concept of implementation as a series of actions to achieve the goals that have been set. Meanwhile, the media, as outlined by Pagarra and Rahmaningtyas, is a tool to convey information and messages. The definition of media also includes its use as a tool to increase knowledge and insights, as well as facilitate learning. In this study, the results show that digital-based picture books have the potential to increase children's understanding of moral messages and stories contained in reading.

This is in line with Tarigan's theory which emphasizes that reading comprehension involves understanding the implied and explicit meanings in the text. This theory emphasizes that the purpose of reading comprehension is to understand the overall meaning of the reading content, which is also evident in the benefits of digital picture story books that not only expand vocabulary, but also teach moral messages and stimulate children's social-emotional abilities. These evidences show that digital-based picture storybooks not only enrich children's reading experience by combining text and images to strengthen their understanding, but also develop their ability to understand explicit information and draw conclusions from the text presented. The digital book of illustrated stories, described by Saefullah, Ruddamayanti, and Ofua, is an evolution of traditional books into a digital format that allows the incorporation of text, images, and other multimedia. This is in line with the development of new media marked by Flew, who stated that digital media is a form of digitization of previous media and can be spread through the internet. Comprehension reading skills, as defined by Alek, Achmad, and Aminuddin, include the critical and creative ability to understand and interpret texts. The importance of reading comprehension skills for the development of language skills and writing proficiency has also been stated by various studies, including those stated by Rinawati and Agustina. By relating these concepts, you can strengthen your research by supporting the argument through a solid theoretical framework and relevant previous research, without losing the necessary references.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research and discussion carried out, it can be concluded that the implementation of digital book media of picture stories in the reading comprehension skills of grade II students of SD Negeri Timbulharjo shows several important things. First, the role of teachers is very significant in assisting students' literacy and implementing this media. Second, the application of digital book media of illustrated stories in providing an understanding of moral values is supported by teachers' teaching methods and a combination of illustrations and narrative texts that support the understanding of the content of the story, as well as strengthen students' reading skills. Third, students' reading comprehension ability through this media varies, as seen from the indicators of reading skills that students meet. Fourth, students' understanding of moral values after the use of digital book media of picture stories is more focused on the form of moral values and concepts that cannot be explained literally. Finally, there are inhibiting factors in

understanding moral values, namely the font size of the characters' conversation texts that are too small, while images and narrative texts in digital books are the main supporting factors in understanding moral values.

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