

DEVELOPMENT OF ILLUSTRATED STORYBOOK MEDIA FOR EDUCATING CHILDREN AGED 3-6 ABOUT THE VALUE OF GRATITUDE

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Abstract. Early childhood is a crucial stage in the development of a child's character. Introducing the value of gratitude at an early age can help children develop positive attitudes, humility, and greater happiness. However, there is still a lack of educational media that is appropriate for the developmental stage of young children to instill this value. Therefore, there is a need for effective and engaging media, such as illustrated storybooks. This study aims to design an educational medium in the form of an illustrated storybook that can introduce and instill the value of gratitude in early childhood (3–6 years). The research method used is a mixed-method approach, employing questionnaires distributed to parents. The final result of this study is an illustrated storybook entitled "Learning to Be Grateful from My Friend," specifically designed for children aged 3–6 years. The study concludes that illustrated storybooks are an effective medium for instilling moral values such as gratitude in young children, making the learning process more understandable and enjoyable. This book can serve as an educational tool for teachers and parents to teach gratitude, while also supporting the development of positive character traits from an early age.

Keywords: Character development in children, Early childhood, Educational media, Gratitude, Illustrated storybook.

1. Introduction

Gratitude is one of the ways to cultivate a positive outlook in individuals regarding every experience. Experts also note that people who practice gratitude tend to experience higher levels of life satisfaction compared to those who do not (Limbong, 2024). Moreover, expressing gratitude whether in small or significant ways helps foster humility and prevents arrogance (Nurmela et al., 2023).

According to Beck and Bredemeier, gratitude is a human tendency that generates happiness and is inherently positive (Limbong, 2024). Gratitude influences every aspect of a person's life and helps them view experiences through a positive lens. Grateful individuals are more aware of their mistakes and strive to improve, making them better prepared to face future challenges.

From a positive psychological perspective, gratitude is recognized as such. The Latin word "gratita" means "gratitude" (from the Arabic "Rahmad") and also signifies "gratitude" and "kindness of heart." According to Emmon, gratitude is a positive response that arises when someone receives something from another person, regardless of any difficulties they may have encountered (Melinsi et al., 2024). Watkins defines gratitude as expressing appreciation, acknowledging and valuing others' efforts, and not the feeling of inadequacy is one of the components of the sense of gratitude (Sholehah & Hairina, 2025).

According to the Lawrence Kohlberg hypothesis (Karmila Karmila et al., 2025), young children typically operate between the pre-conventional and early conventional stages of moral development. The term "cognitive development" refers to a child's capacity to comprehend issues (Khadijah & Amelia, 2020). Children aged three to six years are in the initial phase of development, encompassing both physical and cognitive-emotional growth. This period is crucial as children begin to understand their environment through experiences, social interactions, and the media they encounter.

According to Jean Piaget, a renowned figure in child psychology and cognitive psychology, children remain more active when engaged with their social and physical environments. Children interact with their physical surroundings as members of social groups rather than as isolated individuals. Consequently, the social environment serves as a bridge between children and their physical environment (Anggraeni et al., 2024).

Early childhood education employs various learning strategies, including storytelling. This approach aims to enhance children's receptive and expressive language skills by enabling them to grasp the messages in learning materials and articulate their thoughts and opinions after listening to well-read stories (Dwi Handayani & Anisa, 2023). The use of narrative and visual media serves as an effective method for instilling these values.

Through various activities including observing, listening, reading, writing, and speaking children can develop their literacy skills, as well as their ability to observe, comprehend, act, and use things carefully and intelligently (Sayyidatul Ifadah et al., 2024).

However, findings from the "World's Most Literate Nations Ranking" study conducted by Central Connecticut State University underscore this low literacy rate. According to a nationwide literacy comparison report, Indonesia ranks 60th out of 61 in reading habits (Ulfa Dwi Shafarani et al., 2024). A reading culture fosters a prosperous society, as reading is essential for acquiring knowledge therefore, cultivating a reading culture from an early age is imperative (Kanusta et al., 2021).

For young children in their developmental stage aged three to six illustrated children's books have proven to be an effective teaching tool, as they gently and effectively convey moral lessons aligned with their cognitive abilities. High-quality illustrated books assist teachers and parents in teaching the importance of gratitude through reading practice and group discussions. According to Huck, picture books are an excellent way to enhance children's early reading skills (Puspitasari & Supriyadi, 2024). Narration and illustrations are the core components of picture books; unlike text, which requires progressive comprehension, illustrations allow children to grasp the story directly.

Previous studies have utilized illustrated storybooks as a medium to instill moral principles in young children. Research by Shafarani, Jayadinata, and Ulfa Dwi Shafarani et al. (2024) emphasizes fostering the character development of early readers through picture book materials. Sayyidatul Ifadah et al. (2024) developed a "busy book" format designed to enhance children's basic literacy, using local Jambi folk tales as a foundation for character education. Similarly, Apriyanti et al. (2024) employed local Jambi folk tales to create educational materials on character building. Additionally, Rara Megawati Arifin et al. (2024) designed illustrated books to teach young children about bullying and violence prevention. However, among these four studies, none specifically designed an illustrated storybook to

teach the concept of gratitude to children aged three to six yet gratitude serves as a crucial foundation for shaping the character of young children.

Based on these discussions, the researchers are interested in designing learning materials on children's gratitude through an illustrated storybook for young children. Introducing the fundamental concepts of moral values, particularly gratitude, is essential education that should be imparted to children at the earliest possible age, laying the foundation for their development of positive character in their surroundings. This book serves as an instructional resource for young children, teaching them to appreciate the small joys in life, especially within their friendships. It is designed to be an engaging educational tool that helps children learn the importance of gratitude in an enjoyable manner, utilizing visual elements, vivid illustrations, and simple, child-friendly text.

In designing this learning media, the author employed a mixed-methods research approach. The primary objective of mixed-methods research is to integrate and optimize the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. By combining these two approaches, the study aims to provide a more comprehensive, thorough, and in-depth understanding of the investigated phenomena or issues (Hakim Nasution et al., 2024). Quantitative data supports conclusions during the media development phase, while qualitative data is utilized to examine user needs, ensuring relevance and alignment with the research objectives.

By employing a combined approach that integrates qualitative and quantitative methods, researchers can leverage qualitative findings to gain a broader understanding of the importance of fostering gratitude in children, enabling this insight to be incorporated into the design of the storybook "Learning Gratitude from My Friend."

2. Approach Method

In their study on using illustrated storybooks as an educational medium to foster gratitude, researchers employed a qualitative methodology based on the ADDIE framework (Analysist, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation), which was developed by Reiser and Mollenda in 1990. By creating an efficient and dynamic training program tool and infrastructure to facilitate implementation, Barokati and Anna argue that the ADDIE model promotes effective, dynamic learning and supports the learning process itself (Ibrahim Maulana Syahid et al., 2024).

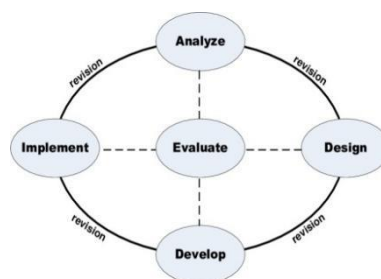


Figure 1: Stages of the ADDIE Model Development

Source: The Author's Documentation

In this study, the Development phase of the ADDIE model represents the final stage undertaken by the authors, as the research focuses exclusively on the design and

development processes. To produce valid learning materials, further expert studies are required to evaluate their effectiveness in real-world learning contexts. Accordingly, the authors have implemented the three ADDIE phases: Analysis, Design, and Development.

2.1. Analysis

At this stage, the author identifies the issues and collects data to gain a deep understanding of the children. Therefore, interviews are necessary to ensure that the data used is valid and comprehensive regarding the relationship between the children and the learning materials.

2.2. Design

Based on the findings from the Analysis phase, the author can then develop an engaging design concept that can be effectively packaged as a learning tool. At this stage, the author designs the visual style including font color choices and illustrations and establishes the narrative flow, character designs, and visual sketches. Subsequently, a storyboard and rough sketches are created to determine the layout for each page. A simple prototype is also developed using the finalized visual style.

2.3 Development

The Development phase commences upon completion of the design phase. During this stage, the previously developed concept is transformed into a storybook mockup for the primary medium. This phase serves as a reference for the author in case of any format discrepancies, enabling revisions and adjustments to the dimensions to prevent any images from being cropped or sections from folding.

2.4. Implementation and Evaluation

At this stage, the main media content, once completed and having undergone the revision process, will be tested by presenting the finalized mockup to the primary audience for this book's design.

Children aged 3–6 years and their parents. At this stage, the author will also observe the audience's reactions to the book and their feedback after reading it, in order to assess the effectiveness of the created mockups and ensure no information is left unclear.

After completing the Implementation phase, the implemented media content will undergo an evaluation stage. At this stage, the evaluation is crucial as it provides a foundation for improvements and decision-making in subsequent development efforts, while also assessing how well the implemented mockups align with children's needs and preferences.

2.5. Data Collection

In data collection techniques, the author will conduct interviews with parents digitally. A questionnaire is a method used to structure research or studies, consisting of a set of questions designed to gather information on the primary research topic (Latamada et al., 2024).

This questionnaire was developed to collect relevant information and gain insights into the characteristics and needs of young children from a parental perspective. The process began with creating a semi-structured yet open-ended list of questions to achieve the objectives of the illustrated book's design.

The 5W+1H approach (What, Why, When, Where, Who, and How) is employed to formulate more focused and in-depth interview questions. By utilizing this methodology, the author can investigate information from multiple perspectives—ranging from children's daily activities to the roles parents play in instilling specific values in their children. Moreover, this approach facilitates the creation of a relevant question list tailored to the objectives of an illustrated book.

After collecting data through questionnaires, the author conducted an analysis using the 5W+1H approach. This phase determined subjects' responses to the issues they faced. Based on the aforementioned explanations, the 5W+1H data analysis was formulated as follows:

Table 1. Results of the 5W + 1H Analysis

No	5W+1H	Question	Answer
1.	<i>What</i>	What problem has arisen that necessitates the creation of this book? What is the story behind this illustration?	Children aged 3 to 6 still struggle to understand the concept of gratitude, and parents also face challenges in teaching this value.
2.	<i>Why</i>	Why was this illustrated story book about children's gratitude created?	From a young age, children should learn to be grateful so that they can appreciate small things, develop positive character traits, and understand spiritual values such as gratitude to God. This is also considered essential for their emotional development. Learning to accept their current living circumstances.
3.	<i>Where</i>	Where are children usually found? Gaining learning experience Character (such as gratitude)?	Children's learning experience is much richer at home. This is complemented by experience from school and the surrounding environment.
4.	<i>Who</i>	Whoever is the target... Audience?	Children aged 3–6 years.
5.	<i>When</i>	When is it usually?	This problem can occur when a child is in the developmental stage and is beginning to understand their own personality.
6.	<i>How</i>	What solution is needed?	The planning of an educational media resource a illustrated storybook with a focus on understanding the value of gratitude. child

Source: Author's Documentation, 2025

3. Results and Discussion

This learning media design employs the three-stage ADDIE model development methodology (Analysis, Design, and Development) to guide the creation of instructional materials for young children, introducing the concept of gratitude through illustrated storybooks. Young children can learn the value of appreciation through appropriate and meaningful picture storybooks that enhance their understanding of themselves within their environment, particularly in peer relationships. The outcomes derived from the three stages of the ADDIE model are as follows:

3.1. Analysis

Based on interviews conducted with 18 parents using distributed questionnaires, instilling gratitude in children from an early age is crucial. Children should learn to be grateful to appreciate small things, cultivate positive character traits, and understand spiritual values such as gratitude to God. Gratitude education is also vital for their emotional development and learning to accept life's circumstances, serving as a solid foundation for children to grasp moral principles.

Moreover, many parents admit to frequently struggling to teach their children gratitude. Although the majority of respondents have instilled a sense of gratitude in their children at home through oral storytelling, fostering this quality remains a challenge for parents.

Therefore, all respondents agreed that picture storybooks featuring children's characters can help children understand moral values such as gratitude. Most respondents also hoped that

the upcoming picture storybooks would be specifically designed to teach moral values like gratitude through relatable characters, thereby fostering their reading interest and ensuring the content is easy for children to understand.

3.2. Design

The Design phase focuses on developing the conceptual and visual framework that will serve as the foundation for the illustrated storybook's design. All stages are grounded in the findings from the analysis phase, ensuring alignment with interview results and field observations. Effective storybook design requires thorough idea development through brainstorming, mind mapping, and moodboarding techniques to maintain focus and achieve desired outcomes. The process begins with brainstorming; once ideas are gathered, a mind map is created to organize them, followed by incorporating design references into the moodboard.

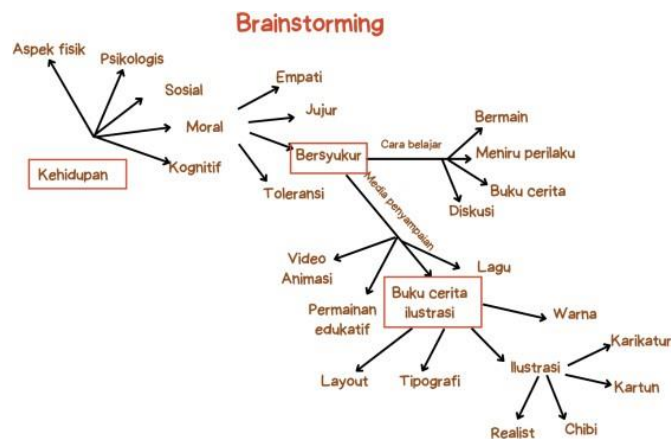


Figure 2. Brainstorming

Source: Author's Documentation

The author employs brainstorming as the initial planning phase to gather diverse creative ideas. These ideas will form the foundation for developing the concept of the illustrated storybook covering its narrative structure, character design, and visual style all tailored to meet the needs and developmental characteristics of children aged 3 to 6.

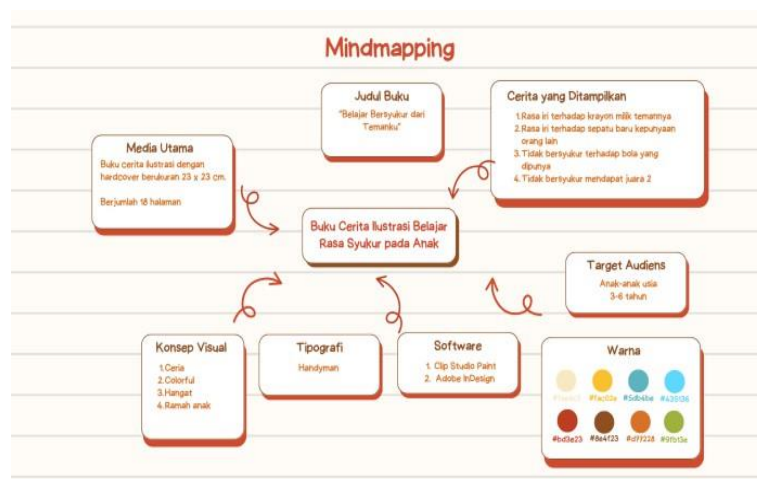


Figure 3. Mindmapping

Source: Author's Documentation

The mind mapping method can help individuals grasp concepts and ideas, enhance their understanding of the material, organize their thoughts, provide new insights, and highlight creative ideas that facilitate the comprehension of extensive information (Pratama et al., 2024).



Figure 4: Moodboard

Source: Author's Documentation

Researchers utilize moodboards as a tool or medium to help them develop concepts that meet their needs. This medium typically consists of images, sketches, clippings, fabric scraps, and sample reminders (Syamsul & Ernawati, 2024).



Figure 5: Storyboard

Source: Author's Documentation

After the author has finalized the visual concept to be presented, the next step is to create sketches. This involves producing an initial sketch or storyboard that outlines the layout for placing illustrations and typography, all based on the established storyflow..

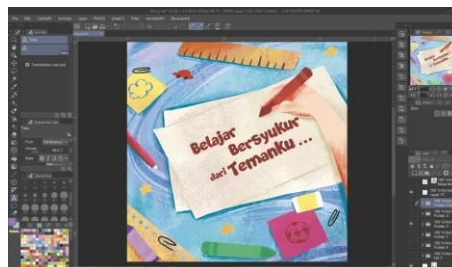


Figure 6: The Digital Processing Process

Source: Author's Documentation

In the next phase, the author began transforming the prepared storyboard into digital sketches and colorings. For the digitization process, the author utilized Clip Studio Paint employing cartoon illustration techniques. Digital illustrations were created in Clip Studio Paint, while Adobe InDesign was employed for designing the layout of the illustrated storybook.

4. Development

Based on the previous Analysis and Design findings, during the Development phase the author focused on creating the storybook in accordance with the predefined visual concept. At this stage, the visual elements and narrative content were systematically developed into a digital book mock-up.



figure 7: Book Cover

Source: Author's Documentation



Figure 8. Content of the Source Book

Source: Author's Documentation

This book's design aims to instill a sense of gratitude in children through cheerful and vibrant character illustrations. The opening story follows a boy named Andi, who is depicted on several pages with an unhappy expression as he constantly feels inadequate. The narrative then progresses toward resolving his issues through his friends mirroring the book's title, "Learning Gratitude from My Friends" where friends serve as a means to help Andi appreciate the simple things in life. The book measures 23 cm x 23 cm and features a hardcover binding with 10 pages.

5. Conclusion

Illustrated storybooks are an educational medium comprising illustrations and narrative text designed to help children grasp the author's intended message. This medium effectively supports children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, particularly for those aged three to six who are still forming their moral sense.

One of the moral values that should be instilled in young children is gratitude. Cultivating this attitude helps shape their character into a positive, humble, and empathetic individual who appreciates the simple things in life. To address this need, an educational resource a picture book titled "Learning Gratitude from My Friend" is essential, as it is designed to be engaging and easy for children to understand. Through this book, it is hoped that children will more easily understand and begin to apply the value of gratitude in their daily lives.

By utilizing its emphasis as an educational medium, this design also advances early childhood education and visual communication design. Based on this research, age-appropriate learning materials can be developed by applying structured design approaches such as the ADDIE model. Furthermore, the use of illustrative media to teach moral values provides an opportunity for further research into creating visual materials that specifically emphasize moral values and promote character education for children in general.

Statement on Conflicts of Interest

The author emphasizes that there are no potential conflicts of interest between the research conducted and the publication of this article..

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