

# The Effect of Storytelling-Based Learning on Anti Bullying Attitudes in Children Aged 4-6 Years in Kindergarten/Early Childhood Education

Ridwan<sup>1</sup>, Forijati<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Early Childhood Education Teacher Education Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Nusantara PGRI Kediri, Kediri, Indonesia,

<sup>2</sup>Post Graduate Program, Master of Economics Education, Universitas Nusantara PGRI Kediri, Kediri, Indonesia,

Corresponding Author: Ridwan

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## ABSTRACT

Behavioral bullying can emerge from an early age and has the potential to hinder children's social-emotional development if not handled appropriately. Early childhood is an essential phase in character formation, so efforts to prevent bullying need to be made early on through learning strategies that are appropriate for children's characteristics. This study aims to determine the effect of storytelling-based learning on the anti-bullying attitudes of 4- to 6-year-old children at Bunda Hati Kindergarten/Early Childhood Education Centre. This study used a quasi-experimental design with a pretest–posttest control group. There were 20 children in the study, divided into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received anti-bullying storytelling learning, while the control group followed regular learning. Data were collected through observation using an anti-bullying attitude observation sheet and supporting documentation. Data analysis used descriptive and inferential statistics to examine changes in children's attitudes before and after the treatment. The results showed that storytelling-based learning had a significant effect on improving anti-bullying attitudes in early

childhood. Children in the experimental group showed greater improvement in empathy and prosocial behaviour and a greater reduction in aggressive behaviour than those in the control group. Thus, storytelling-based learning can be recommended as an effective strategy in character education and bullying prevention in early childhood

**Keywords:** storytelling, anti-bullying attitudes, early childhood

## INTRODUCTION

Bullying does not only occur among primary school children and adolescents, but can also emerge from an early age (Fika and Lu'luil Maknun 2023; Pratiwi, Islamy, and Riwanda 2024). In early childhood education, bullying behaviour often appears in simple forms, such as teasing friends, grabbing toys, pushing, hitting, or refusing to play together (Ashar, Idamayanti, and Jumrah 2024; Tanrikulu 2020). Although often considered part of children's play dynamics, this behaviour cannot be ignored because it can lead to negative social interaction patterns if it occurs repeatedly and is not appropriately guided (Feindler and Schira 2022; Rizkiaadni, Retnoningsih, and Febriansyah 2025). During early

childhood, children are in a crucial phase of character, moral values, and social-emotional development, so negative experiences such as bullying can have a long-term impact on a child's personality (Fitria and Ernawati 2025).

The impact of bullying on young children is felt not only by the victims but also by the perpetrators (Ariani et al. 2025; Ayuni 2021). Children who are accustomed to aggressive behaviour tend to experience difficulties in developing empathy, emotional control, and the ability to form healthy social relationships (Farina and Lambung Mangkurat 2025). Meanwhile, children who are victims of bullying may exhibit symptoms of fear, anxiety, and low self-confidence when interacting with their peers (Ramadani et al. 2025). Therefore, efforts to prevent bullying need to be made early on through an educational approach that emphasises strengthening children's moral, social, and positive character values. Preventing bullying in early childhood requires learning strategies that are appropriate for children's developmental characteristics (Agustin Ningrum and Mahendra R. K. Wardhani 2021). Children aged 4–6 years learn optimally through concrete experiences, play, and imagination. One learning approach that is considered adequate for instilling moral and social values is storytelling (Hajisoteriou, Panaou, and Angelides 2022; Permatasari et al. 2025). Stories enable children to understand moral messages indirectly through characters and storylines that are close to their daily lives, thereby instilling values such as empathy, honesty, and mutual respect in a more meaningful way (Swapna and Nagarajan 2023; Wiwik Sumariati, Syarifan Nurjan, and Muhammad 'Azam Muttaqin 2024).

Story-based learning plays an essential role in fostering empathy and prosocial behaviour in early childhood (Dheasari 2020; Yudha, Muhammad, and Muhammad 2024). Through listening to and discussing stories, children can learn to recognise their own and others' emotions, understand the

consequences of actions, and imitate the positive behaviours displayed by the characters in the stories (Herminastiti et al., 2019). Furthermore, storytelling aligns with Vygotsky's view, which emphasises the importance of social interaction and language as the primary means of children's cognitive and social development.

Bunda Hati Kindergarten/Early Childhood Education Centre, as an early childhood education institution, faces diverse social interactions among its students. Based on the researcher's initial observations, behaviours that constitute mild bullying, such as teasing friends, hitting, and grabbing toys during play activities, were still observed. This condition indicates the need to apply appropriate, context-specific learning strategies to guide children towards positive behaviour and instil an anti-bullying attitude from an early age.

Based on this description, this study aims to determine the extent of storytelling-based learning's influence on children aged 4–6 years' anti-bullying attitudes at Bunda Hati Kindergarten/Early Childhood Education Centre. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of early childhood education studies, particularly in character education, as well as practically to educators in implementing effective learning strategies to prevent bullying in early childhood education centres.

## **MATERIALS & METHODS**

### **1. Type and Design of Research**

This study utilised a quasi-experimental design with a pretest–posttest control group. This Design was chosen because it allowed researchers to compare changes in children's anti-bullying attitudes before and after treatment, both in the experimental and control groups. Through this Design, the effect of storytelling-based learning on the anti-bullying attitudes of early childhood children can be analysed more objectively by comparing the results of the two groups. This study was conducted at Bunda Hati Kindergarten/Early Childhood Education Centre, an early childhood education

institution serving students aged 4–6 years. The selection of the research location was based on the suitability of the subjects' characteristics to the research objectives and the presence of initial phenomena indicating the need for bullying prevention efforts through appropriate learning strategies.

## 2. Research Subjects

There were 20 children aged 4–6 years old in this study. The subjects were divided into two groups: 10 children in the experimental group and 10 in the control group. The research subjects were selected using purposive sampling, based on children's ages and recommendations from classroom teachers. This technique was chosen so that the subjects involved truly met the research criteria and could participate in the entire series of learning activities.

## 3. Treatment

The experimental group received storytelling-based learning with an anti-bullying theme for 4–5 meetings. Each meeting lasted approximately 20–30 minutes. The stories used were designed to contain moral messages, such as empathy, mutual assistance, and mutual respect among friends. Meanwhile, the control group participated in regular learning activities commonly implemented in schools, without using anti-bullying-themed stories. The difference in treatment was intended to observe the effect of storytelling on changes in children's anti-bullying attitudes.

## 4. Research Instrument

The instrument used in this study was an observation sheet on children's anti-bullying attitudes. The instrument contained several behavioural indicators, namely not hitting or pushing friends, not teasing or using harsh language, being willing to share, being willing to help friends, and being willing to apologise after making a mistake. Each indicator is assessed on a scale of 1–4, indicating the level of anti-bullying behaviour in children. This instrument is

used to systematically observe and evaluate changes in children's attitudes during the research process.

## 5. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study was conducted through direct observation of children's behaviour during learning activities and play with peers. The observation focused on anti-bullying attitude indicators specified in the research instrument, enabling researchers to record children's behaviour systematically. Observations were made of children's interactions naturally in the classroom and play environment, without disrupting their learning activities.

In addition to observation, data collection was carried out through documentation as supporting evidence. Documentation included photographs of learning activities and classroom teacher notes related to children's social behaviour during the research process. Observations were conducted twice: at the pretest stage, before the treatment was given, and at the posttest stage, after the entire series of storytelling-based learning treatments had been completed. Data from observations and documentation were used to examine changes in children's anti-bullying attitudes more comprehensively.

## 6. Data Analysis Techniques

The data obtained from the observations were first analysed using descriptive analysis. This analysis aimed to determine the general picture of children's anti-bullying attitudes before and after the treatment was given. Descriptive analysis included calculating the mean values and the percentage increases in anti-bullying attitude scores for both the experimental and control groups. The results of the descriptive analysis are used to see the general trend of changes in children's attitudes after the implementation of storytelling-based learning.

Furthermore, the data are analysed using inferential statistics to determine the significance of the treatment effect. The

paired t-test is used to determine differences in pretest and posttest scores within each group, while the independent t-test is used to compare posttest scores between the experimental and control groups. In addition, gain scores were calculated to determine the level of improvement in children's anti-bullying attitudes after the treatment. The results of the statistical analysis served as a basis for drawing conclusions about the effect of storytelling-based learning on children aged 4–6 years' anti-bullying attitudes.

This study aims to analyse the effect of storytelling-based learning on children aged 4–6 years' anti-bullying attitudes at Bunda Hati Kindergarten/Early Childhood Education Centre. Research data were collected through observations of children's behaviour at the pretest and posttest stages, in both the experimental and control groups. The results of the study are presented in terms of a comparison of anti-bullying attitude scores before and after treatment, along with the results of the statistical analysis.

## RESULT

### 1. Pretest Results

The results of observations during the pretest stage showed that the average anti-bullying attitude score for children in the experimental group was 12.8, while in the control group it was 13.1. The difference in average scores was relatively small and did not indicate a significant gap between the two groups. This suggests that before the treatment was given, the initial anti-bullying attitudes of children in the experimental and

control groups were at almost the same level.

The results of the paired-samples t-test showed that in the experimental group, anti-bullying attitudes increased significantly after treatment ( $t(9)=4.556$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ). Conversely, in the control group, the increase was not significant ( $t(9)=1.877$ ;  $p=0.093$ ). Furthermore, the results of the independent t-test on post-test scores showed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups ( $t=3.561$ ;  $df=11.85$ ;  $p=0.004$ ).

### 2. Posttest Results

After the storytelling-based learning treatment, posttest observations showed an increase in anti-bullying attitude scores in both groups. The experimental group experienced a significant increase in average scores to 18.7, while the control group only increased to 14.2. The greater increase in the experimental group indicates a more pronounced change in attitude than in the control group.

The difference in score increases between the two groups indicates that storytelling-based learning has a more substantial impact on the development of children's anti-bullying attitudes. Children in the experimental group showed more positive behavioural tendencies after participating in storytelling activities than those in the control group, which only participated in regular learning.

### 3. Comparison of Pretest and Posttest

A comparison of the average pretest and posttest scores for the experimental and control groups is shown in Figure 1.

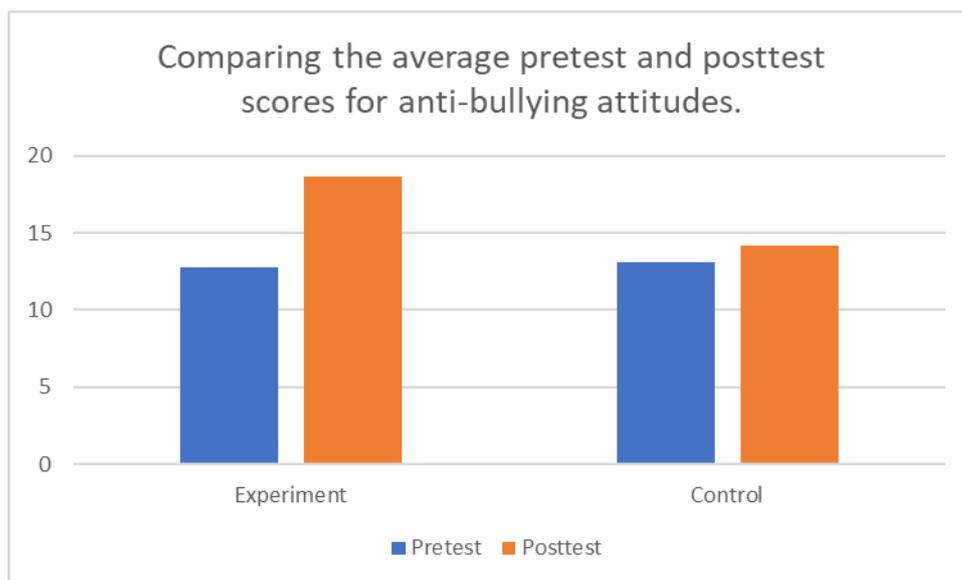


Figure 1. Bar chart comparing pretest and posttest scores on anti-bullying attitudes.

#### 4. Prerequisite Tests and Hypothesis Testing

Before testing the hypothesis, prerequisite tests are conducted, including tests for normality and homogeneity. These prerequisite tests aim to ensure that the data meet the assumptions of parametric statistics.

##### a. Normality Test

The normality test was conducted on the anti-bullying attitude scores of children in

the experimental and control groups at both the pretest and posttest stages, using the Shapiro–Wilk test because the number of research subjects was less than 50.

The results of the normality test show that the significance value (Sig.) of the pretest and posttest data in both the experimental and control groups is greater than 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that the children's anti-bullying attitude scores are normally distributed.

Table 1. Results of Normality Tests for pretest and posttest Data

Group	Stage Test	Statistik Shapiro–Wilk	df	Sig.
Experiment	Pretest	0.936	10	0,512
Experiment	Posttest	0.948	10	0,628
Control	Pretest	0.921	10	0,387
Control	Posttest	0.933	10	0,474

Based on Table 1, the significance value (Sig.) for the pretest and posttest data of the experimental and control groups is greater than 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that all data in this study are typically distributed.

##### b. Homogeneity Test

The homogeneity test was conducted to assess the similarity of variances between the experimental and control groups. The homogeneity test was performed using Levene's test at the 0.05 significance level. The results of the homogeneity test showed that the significance value (Sig.) was greater

than 0.05, indicating that the variances between the experimental and control groups were homogeneous.

Table 2. Results of Posttest Data Homogeneity Test

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
0.842	1	18	0.371

Based on Table 2, the significance value (Sig.) is 0.371, which is greater than 0.05; therefore, the variances between the experimental and control groups are homogeneous. Therefore, the data meet the

requirements for hypothesis testing using the t-test.

## 5. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis testing was conducted to determine the effect of storytelling-based learning on children aged 4–6 years' anti-bullying attitudes. Hypothesis testing was

performed using the paired sample t-test and the independent sample t-test.

### a. Paired Sample t-test

The paired sample t-test was used to determine the difference in anti-bullying attitude scores of children before and after treatment in each group.

Table 3. Paired Sample t-test Results

Group	Mean Difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experiment	5.90	4.556	9	0,001
Control	1.10	1.877	9	0,093

Based on Table 3, the experimental group shows a significance value of  $0.001 < 0.05$ , indicating a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores after storytelling-based learning.

Conversely, in the control group, the significance value is  $0.093 > 0.05$ , indicating that there is no significant difference between the pretest and posttest

scores in the group that underwent regular learning.

### b. Independent Sample t-test

The independent-samples t-test is used to determine the difference in posttest scores between the experimental and control groups.

Table 4. Results of the Independent Sample t-test Posttest Scores

Group	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experiment	18.7	1.49	3.561	11.85	0.004
Control	14.2	3.71			

Based on Table 4, it is known that the significance value of  $0.004 < 0.05$ , so it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the posttest scores of the experimental group and the control group. This shows that storytelling-based learning significantly increases anti-bullying attitudes in early childhood.

## 6. Gain Score

The normalised gain score (N-Gain) was used to determine the level of improvement in children's anti-bullying attitudes following storytelling-based learning. The results showed that the experimental group obtained a gain score of 0.82, which is in the high category, while the control group obtained a gain score of 0.16, which is in the low category. The difference in gain scores indicates that the increase in children's anti-bullying attitudes in the

experimental group was greater than that in the control group.

The high gain score in the experimental group indicates that storytelling-based learning can lead to meaningful changes in young children's attitudes. Conversely, the low gain score in the control group shows that regular learning has a relatively small impact on improving children's anti-bullying attitudes. Thus, the results of the gain score analysis reinforce the findings of the statistical test, indicating that storytelling-based learning is an effective learning strategy for improving children aged 4–6 years' anti-bullying attitudes.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that storytelling-based learning has a significant effect on improving children aged 4–6 years' anti-bullying attitudes at Bunda Hati Kindergarten/Early Childhood Education

Centre. This is evident from higher anti-bullying attitude scores in the experimental group compared to the control group, as observed and confirmed by statistical analysis. Children who participated in storytelling learning showed positive behavioural changes, such as increased empathy towards friends, greater willingness to share, reduced teasing, and the ability to apologise after making a mistake (Fung, Wong, and Fu 2023; Retnasari et al. 2023). These findings indicate that storytelling not only affects children's cognitive understanding but also contributes to the development of positive social attitudes and behaviours.

The findings of this study align with the view (Isbell et al. 2004) that storytelling plays an essential role in developing the social-emotional aspects of early childhood. Through stories, children are introduced to characters, conflicts, and moral values that are close to their daily lives, so that the messages conveyed can be understood concretely (Isbell et al. 2004). Young children tend to imitate the behaviour of characters they find interesting or positive (Essler et al. 2023; Juwita and Yunitasari 2024). Thus, stories are an effective means for children to learn to distinguish between socially acceptable behaviour and inappropriate behaviour, including bullying. In addition to serving as a medium for conveying moral values, storytelling also provides children with space to actively engage in the learning process (Putri Nilasari and Syafiq 2025). In this study, storytelling activities were not only carried out through reading stories but were also followed by simple discussions and role-playing. These activities allowed children to express their understanding of the stories and practise the values they had learned in situations that resembled real life. Through these activities, anti-bullying values such as empathy, mutual assistance, and mutual respect could be more strongly instilled in children.

Changes in children's behaviour are not only visible during learning activities but also

during free play (Dolev et al. 2023; Maghfiroh, Usman, and Nisa 2020). Children in the experimental group showed a tendency to be more cooperative when playing with friends, more patient in waiting for their turn, and better able to control their emotions when faced with minor conflicts. This shows that story-based learning can sustainably influence children's behaviour, not only during learning activities but also in daily social interactions in the school environment (Zahra Harahap et al. 2025; Zarifsanaiey et al. 2022).

In contrast, the control group that did not receive anti-bullying storytelling treatment did not show significant changes in attitude. Although scores increased slightly, the change was not statistically significant. This indicates that conventional instructional approaches that do not involve children's concrete experiences tend to be less effective at instilling moral values deeply (Huda et al. 2024). Young children need real examples and enjoyable learning experiences so that social values can be well understood and internalised (Buckley 2023; Pujianti et al. 2025)

The results of this study also reinforce the views of Piaget and Vygotsky, who emphasise that young children learn through concrete experiences and social interactions (Piaget 1969; Vygotsky 1978). Storytelling provides learning experiences appropriate to children's developmental stages, as it combines language, imagination, emotions, and social interaction in a single learning activity (Batini et al. 2025; Maknun and Adelia 2023). Thus, storytelling is a relevant and effective method in early childhood character education, especially in efforts to prevent bullying behaviour.

Based on these results and discussions, it can be concluded that storytelling-based learning is an effective learning strategy for shaping positive social attitudes and instilling anti-bullying values from an early age. Consistent and planned application of storytelling can help children develop empathy, emotional control, and the prosocial behaviour necessary for building

healthy social relationships in the school environment.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that storytelling-based learning significantly improves anti-bullying attitudes among children aged 4–6 years at Bunda Hati Kindergarten/Early Childhood Education Centre. This is demonstrated by higher anti-bullying attitude scores in the experimental group than in the control group. Children who participated in storytelling learning experienced positive behavioural changes, particularly reduced aggressive behaviour, increased empathy, and greater mutual respect in social interactions.

Storytelling learning enables children to understand moral messages concretely through storylines, characters, and conflicts that are close to their daily lives. Through listening to stories, discussing them, and imitating the characters' behaviour, children can develop the ability to recognise emotions, understand other people's feelings, and distinguish between socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Thus, storytelling not only serves as a medium of entertainment but also as an effective tool in character building and social-emotional development in early childhood.

Based on these findings, storytelling-based learning can be recommended as one of the character education strategies in early childhood education institutions, particularly in efforts to prevent bullying behaviour from an early age. The planned and continuous application of storytelling is expected to create a learning environment that is safer, more inclusive, and supports children's optimal social-emotional development.

### Declaration by Authors

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