



Environmental Care Character Profile of Elementary School Students in the Era of Independent Curriculum

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v11i12.6304>

Abstract

An attitude to environmental care means paying attention to everything in the environment, both biotic and abiotic and being responsible for always maintaining its sustainability and balance by trying to avoid damage. In daily life, humans can act towards their environment in good or bad ways. To help people become more concerned about the environment, education should be provided by inserting materials about caring for the environment. Having a strong understanding of the environment is expected to encourage people to act better for the environment. This research is a type of quantitative descriptive research. Descriptive research aims to describe or describe existing phenomena, both natural and human-made phenomena. The subjects used in this study were elementary school students in 6th class. As many as 30 students took 10 samples and 3 teachers. The data collection instruments used were interviews, test questions and questionnaires. The data analysis technique used is a qualitative descriptive approach. The results showed that the attitude of environmental care in elementary schools is included in the low criteria with a percentage of achievement of 58, 82%. Suggestions that can be proposed in this study are to increase parental participation in the application of environmental care character.

Keywords: *Profile; Character; Care; Environment*

Introduction

Education is the key to making the nation's children smart. For this reason, all efforts are made to make everyone in Indonesia smart. One part of this effort is education. It has long been known that education is the forerunner of the nation (Zhao, 2019). Education is an effort to prepare teaching and learning activities in which students can actively participate in all learning activities and improve students' intelligence, knowledge, and personality (Zhoc et al., 2020). The national education system in Indonesia focuses on the goal of transforming an unaware nation into an aware one. UNESCO through its *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) program since 2016 invites all elements of education to instilled especially environment-based education or education based on local excellence. The follow-up of the Indonesian government is the instillation of the habit of caring for the environment through the Strengthening Character Education Movement (Rakhmawati & Suhartono, 2023). It provides programs that support environmental action with the aim of environmental love character that can be rooted in every student.

Several phenomena indicate that there are ongoing problems in the natural environment. This shows that it is important to introduce children to good behaviour, especially maintaining the surrounding environment (Fisher, Godwin & Seltman, 2014). Environmentally conscious characters shape students' minds, their characters, and help students succeed in learning and living in society (Darling & Cook, 2018). In the world of modern education, increasing environmental awareness is considered a very important goal. This shows that instilling environmental awareness from an early age is very important for students. The environment has a significant influence on the quality of human life (AL Horr et al., 2016). Conversely, various human activities also have an impact on environmental quality. People and the environment depend on each other. In the process of utilizing natural resources, humans play an important role in maintaining environmental conditions.

Environmental awareness means paying attention to everything in the environment, both biotic and abiotic (Iela, Wihardjo & Purwanto, 2021), and being responsible for always maintaining its sustainability and balance by trying to avoid damage (Buerke, Straatmann & Müller, 2020). In daily life, humans can act towards their environment in good or bad ways. To help people become more concerned about the environment, education should be provided. Having a strong understanding of the environment is expected to encourage people to act better for the environment (Steg et al., 2014).

Based on the results of observations, it shows that the character of responsibility for the environment at SDN Gading V is still lacking. It was found that students often put garbage not in its place, lack of attention to the beauty of the environment so that it remains beautiful, picking and pulling plants around the school, not yet found students who are creative in keeping the environment cool by growing awareness of planting trees, planting flowers, caring for plants that are already available and utilizing waste as compost for plant fertility so that the environment becomes clean and cool.

It is expected that learning linked to environmental care attitudes can help students become more concerned about their own environment and students' nature (Boca & Saraçlı, 2019). This is in line with Bergman's (2016) opinion, which states that one of the outcomes of learning that is associated with environmental care attitudes is that students become more concerned about the environment. Familiarizing students with what kind of waste to throw away, taking care of plants, keeping classrooms and schools clean, and so on can help them become more concerned with the environment (Rachman et al, 2021).

In an effort to prevent environmental damage, according to Liu et al (2020) indicators of environmental care include (1) environmental care, learners' views on keeping the environment clean and tidy; (2) reduction of plastic use, learners' views on how to reduce plastic; and (3) waste management by type (4) learners' views on the importance of sorting and disposing of waste by type. (5) energy saving, learners' perspectives on efforts to stop global warming by ensuring the availability of clean water and efficient use of electricity. In addition, in an effort to repair the damage to nature that has occurred, there are several steps. The first is planting trees. Learners realize how important it is to plant trees to reduce carbon emissions. The second is the utilization of used goods and plastic waste. Learners also realize how important it is to turn used goods and plastic waste into useful items to reduce the accumulation of waste in the surrounding environment (Situmorang, Liang & Chang, 2020).

Based on the results of interviews on June 5, 2024, it shows that the character of environmental care at SDN Gading V is low, there are still many students who have not been able to throw garbage in its place, maintain plant fertility by not picking leaves, breaking plant branches. Given that the younger generation will be the successor to the Indonesian nation, it is important to instilled awareness of the importance of environmental care from an early age (Abadi et al, 2022). Character education in elementary schools can be instilled towards environmental awareness to students. Teachers act as the main figure in having a role and influence on the success of character education in schools. According to Wagner & Ruch (2020), teachers must be role models for their students, so the application of character

education must start from themselves by modelling good behaviour to students. Thus, teachers should be the first to implement character education by providing examples of environmental care character.

Method

This research is a type of quantitative descriptive research. Descriptive research is able to describe a phenomenon in a particular population. Descriptive research aims to describe or describe existing phenomena, both natural and human-made phenomena. In accordance with the opinion according to Willis et al., (2016), descriptive research is shown to describe a phenomenon or condition as it is. Researchers do not provide treatment or manipulate the object of research.

This research was conducted in the even semester of the 2024/2025 school year for fourth grade students at Gading V Elementary School, Tambaksari District, Surabaya City. The population in this study were fourth grade students at SDN Gading V Surabaya, totally 30 students, the sample taken was 10 students. The data collection method used in this study is the written test method. The research data were collected through test techniques using an instrument of environmental care character ability scale sheet. Aspects of environmental care character include understanding of protecting the environment.

Furthermore, the data obtained from the field is then analysed. The final results of all test instruments are in the form of percentages as a whole and on each indicator. The final score is categorized based on the level of ability of the environmentally concerned character consisting of very high, high, medium, low and very low. The correct answer is given a score of 1 (one) and the wrong or unanswered answer is given a score of 0 (zero). The value of students' environmental awareness character ability is calculated using a percentage calculation between the correct score and the maximum score. The percentage of values obtained by students is grouped into the criteria of very good, good, sufficient, less.

Determination of environmental care attitude criteria by Table 1 as follows;

Table 1. Criteria for Environmental Care Character

No	Score	Criteria
1	< 60	Less
2	60 – 70	Simply
3	> 70 – 80	Good
4	> 80	Very good

Results and Discussion

Environmental education has a cognitive effect, which helps people better understand population environmental issues and be better able to remember, apply, analysed, structure, and assess situations in the student's environment (Siswanto et al., 2019). The following table shows the relationship between grades, grade levels, and indicators for those grades. Indicators from grade 1 to grade 6 are more complex.

Table 2. Environment Care Indicators

Value	Indicator	
	1-3	4-6
Caring for the environment is an attitude and action that can always prevent and repair damage to the surrounding environment.	Urination and defecation stations	Cleaning the toilet
	Dispose of garbage in its place	Removing trash
	Cleaning the school environment	School environment cleaned
	Do not pick flowers in the school garden.	Learning centres and schools are beautified with plants
	Avoid stepping on the grass in the school garden	Participate in the maintenance of the garden in the school grounds.
	Keeping the house clean	Participate in activities that support environmental cleanliness.

(source: Ministry of Education, 2010: 31)

Data from the distribution of questionnaire criteria for the environmental care character of SDN Gading V students

Table 3. Recapitulation of Environmental Care Attitude Score

No	Category	Environmental awareness score	Number of students
1	Less	< 60	5
2	Simply	60-70	15
3	Good	>70-80	7
4	Very good	>80	3

Percentage score of environmental care attitude of students of SDN Gading V Surabaya

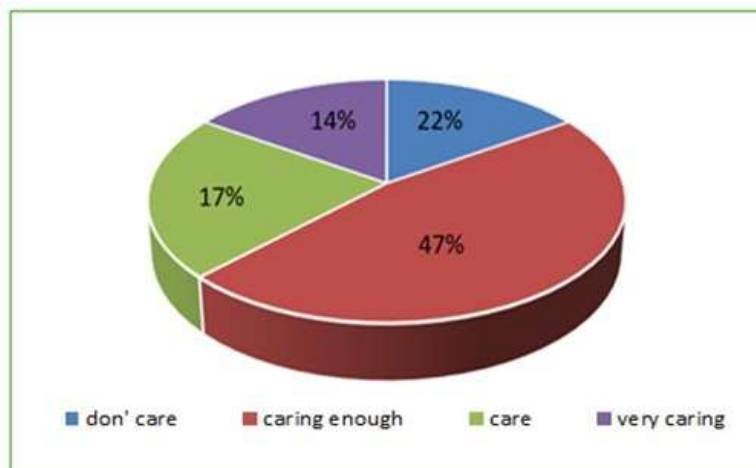


Figure 1. Recapitulation of Environmental Care Attitude Score

According to table 4, the percentage of students who are most concerned is in the moderately concerned category, 23% are less concerned, 17% are concerned, and 13% are very concerned. The data shows that learning in schools still does not include visualization of the environment. Learning about the environment is mostly done verbally, with a focus on mastering concepts alone (Filgona, Filgona &

Sababa, 2017). Students have a good understanding of the environment, but they are less successful in fostering positive environmental stewardship in themselves. This is shown by their caring scores: students in the moderately caring category have the highest percentage of caring. Nonetheless, environmentally conscious attitudes should be instilled in students (Erhabor, & Dor, 2016). It is hoped that learning related to environmental awareness can help students become more aware.

The problem of low environmental awareness in society must be prevented by continuous education (Kopnina, 2018). Therefore, the problem of low environmental concern can be well solved through education through learning activities, although this takes a long time (Otto & Pensini, 2017). Environmental concern should be based on three main components of attitude: feelings, awareness, and behaviour (Lin & Niu, 2018). Students must realize the importance of protecting the environment and be sensitive to the surrounding environment. The application of awareness and sensitivity is done through action or behaviour. This is in accordance with the opinion of Suhasri (2023) who states that there are three important components in attitudes: 1. Cognition component (awareness), which relates to beliefs, ideas, and concepts; 2. Affection component (feelings), which relates to a person's emotional life; and 3. Conation component (behaviour), which relates to a person's tendency to act. Therefore, awareness and feelings about the environment determine the behaviour called environmental care attitude. In this case, SDN Gading V's awareness of environmental awareness still needs to be improved.

Students can foster environmental stewardship through both in-class learning and out-of-class activities. Field practice, nature-assisted learning, and incorporation of environmental materials in learning can help develop in-class activities (Ardoin & Bowers, 2020). Wise knowledge, attitudes and behaviours are needed to solve environmental problems. Every member of society is responsible for maintaining the quality of their environment so that it can sustain all activities of society (Carley & Spapens, 2017).

Conclusions

Based on the results of the environmental care questionnaire, it can be concluded that the students of SDN Gading V Surabaya as a whole have a fairly high environmental care score, namely quite caring (47 percent), caring 17 percent, very caring (14 percent), and less caring (22 percent). Therefore, the level of environmental care character at SDN Gading V Surabaya must be improved to the good or even very good category.

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