



## EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY PROJECT at TK. CITRA KUSUMA 1

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the implementation of project “*Aku Sayang Bumi*” at Citra Kusuma Kindergarten using qualitative methods. The qualitative method was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the project implementation process and how *Pancasila* values, especially love and care for the environment, are internalized in early childhood learning activities. Data were collected through participatory observation, interviews with teacher and students, and documentation of learning activities. Data were analyzed descriptively to describe in detail the implementation of the project. The results show that the project is effective in fostering awareness and positive attitudes towards environmental conservation, while strengthening the character of students in accordance with *Pancasila* student profile. This research provides recommendations for the development of learning programs that integrate *Pancasila* values and environmental education at the early childhood education level.

**Keywords:** *early childhood; environmental literacy; project based learning, environmental education*

### INTRODUCTION

National Association of Education of Young Children (NAEYC) states that early childhood is children who are in early development , birth through age 8. Maria Montessori shared the concept of Absorbent Mind, which is the extraordinary ability of early childhood (0-6 years) to absorb everything from the environment around them naturally and unconsciously, like a sponge that absorbs water. One of the attitudes that need to be instilled in children at early childhood education is an attitude of environmental care. Environmental care is the attitude of someone who strives to restore and manage the environment properly so as to be able to utilize the environment sustainably (Purwanti, 2017). Children as the next generation have the right to live in a preserved natural environment. Therefore, it is necessary to form an attitude of environmental care from an early age so that children are accustomed to protecting the earth which will ultimately have a good impact on the sustainability of the earth. In line with this, (Harlistyarintica et al., 2017) states that an attitude of environmental care is the behavior of protecting the surrounding natural environment and repairing environmental damage that can be through a formation process that is not short. At the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) level, children have been accustomed to being able to protect their environment such as throwing garbage in its place, caring for plants, and turning off electricity that is not in use. From the above opinion regarding environmental care, it can be interpreted that environmental care is the behavior of a person who is able to maintain and care for his environment, and is able to describe various efforts to improve the surrounding natural environment through a continuous process of attitude formation from an early age, so that one day a human being who has a good level of environmental awareness will be created.

Environmental literacy is broadly defined as individual's ability to understand, analyze, and act responsibly towards environmental conditions and issues. It is not a binary state but rather a continuum of development throughout an individual's life. By teaching children about environmental literacy fosters a sense of responsibility towards the planet, empowering them to make positive changes. It also enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills, helping them understand the impact of their actions on the environment and their communities. Fostering an attitude of environmental care in children is the responsibility of all parties, the family environment, and schools. At school, fostering an attitude of concern for the environment can be through an introduction to the environment that is integrated into learning. The introduction of the environment is expected to foster a positive attitude towards environmental sustainability. Introducing the environment from an early age can be interpreted as an effort to foster children's understanding of the natural environment as a basis for the obligation to protect the earth. In line with the results of research conducted by (Munawar et al., 2019); Azhar et al. (2015) which states that there is a positive and significant relationship between environmental knowledge provided at school and students' environmental awareness. The same thing is also presented by Copple and Bredekamp in (Fauziyah, 2020), introducing environmental literacy to children can form attitudes, values and lifelong behavior with a sense of responsibility for the environment. According to ((Abramova, 2020)) in her research suggests that it is necessary to organize lessons on environmental protection to foster environmental awareness in children. Thus, early childhood is a very strategic age to be given an understanding of environmental care so that children have knowledge and attitudes in caring for protecting their environment.

Comprehension of environmental literacy can be done in various ways through learning media or games that are interesting to children. Storytelling is one way that can be used to increase children's environmental care attitudes and emotions from the stories told to children. The most appropriate time to start focusing on instilling and improving environmental care attitudes is when children are in kindergarten class B or the age range of 5-6 years (Siregar, 2020). Apart from the storytelling method, playing is also an effective way to improve children's environmental literacy. Play is a very important activity for children's growth and development. In addition, play can also be a source of learning various things, including its relation to instilling environmental awareness. In line with research conducted (Hartami, 2018) that increasing children's environmental awareness through play. Another study states that instilling an attitude of environmental love can be done with a literacy integration program with quartet card media (Rekha et al., 2020). From this it is clear that play can be a way used to foster and improve environmental care attitudes in children, so that game media is needed that can stimulate environmental literacy. Beside that, the project based learning plays effective educational models and vital for fostering environmental literacy from early childhood through higher education (Pertiwi et al., 2024).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The aim of the project is to develop a higher level of children's environmental awareness and stimulate children to take small actions that can help protect the environment. Children also can take actions from the results of reflection & evaluation of their own thoughts after identifying & asking questions during the project. The project conducted in 10 days. The first stage is preparation meeting by involving parents in the project. Beginning stage in day 1-3 is introduction & information gathering (how & what can be done to protect the



earth) such as, Watching video of environmental issues, observing school surrounding, and visiting PKWT to gain the information about planting. Day 2, the teacher took the children around the school environment while giving reinforcement about protecting and caring for the earth. The teacher gives the children the opportunity to record or draw what objects they encounter while traveling around the school environment. Then, together with the children, make an agreement on the activities that will be carried out tomorrow related to protecting and caring for the earth. The teacher gives the question to the student such as, what did you see while traveling around the school environment?; How is our school environment?; What will you do to care for & protect the earth?; The teacher repeats the activity for tomorrow and reminds the children. In day 3, the teacher discusses what concrete actions the children will take in protecting & caring for the environment/earth, the teacher invites the children to prepare the tools & materials needed to make projects as a result of the discussion, namely: planting plants; spinach, chili, ornamental plants (flowers), caring for plants, making crafts from used items- used bottles & plastic. In day 4, the activity was planting trees. The teacher accompanies and facilitates the implementation of the tree planting project. Children are allowed to be creative in their groups, the teacher goes around between groups while observing and documenting the process of children's project activities. Day 5, children continue the project activity such as plant care activity, children water their plants, children use fallen leaves to make crafts. The teacher continues to assist and facilitate the children's activities. While children are doing activities, the teacher stimulates them with open-ended questions to trigger children's ability to think at a higher level, for example how to make the soil fertile, how to make the plants become fertile and bear fruit quickly, what works can we make from a plant, be it leaves or stems. Day 6 is creating with used items; the teacher invites children to sort out waste that can be used as a work either in the home environment or at school; the teacher reinforces information about the use of used goods for recycling through videos; the child records the materials and tools needed to make the work that he will make by informing the teacher. In day 7-9, the child begins to carry out project activities to create with used goods according to what he has designed, the teacher continues to facilitate and assist the child's activity process. The teacher always gives reinforcement about the work made so that children can be neat in doing it. In last day, the students reflect on the results of their project by expressing their feelings through storytelling activities.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the project successfully aimed to enhance children's environmental awareness and encourage proactive measures to protect the environment over a 10-day period. Through a structured approach involving preparation, hands-on activities, and reflective discussions, children engaged in various tasks such as observing their surroundings, planting, and recycling. The involvement of parents and the facilitation by teachers played a crucial role in guiding the children through the learning process. By the end of the project, students not only gained knowledge about environmental issues but also developed practical skills and a sense of responsibility towards caring for the earth, culminating in a reflective storytelling session that allowed them to express their experiences and feelings about their contributions.

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