

## Development of Fable Picture Storybooks as a Learning Medium to Promote Anti-Bullying in Early Elementary Education

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Received: 05 May 2025

Accepted: 29 May 2025

Published: 02 June 2025

**Abstract: Development of Fable Picture Storybooks as Learning Medium to Promote Anti-Bullying in Early Elementary Education. Objectives:** This study aims to develop a picture storybook that is valid, practical, and effective as an anti-bullying learning medium for elementary school students. **Methods:** The research employed a development approach (Research and Development) using the ADDIE model, which consists of five stages: analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation. The participants in this study were first-grade students from SD N Giwangan and SD Muhammadiyah Sambisari. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and observations. **Findings:** The developed anti-bullying fable picture storybook was evaluated by experts and received high feasibility ratings: 92.5% from media experts (very feasible), 96% from content experts (very feasible), and 83% from instructional experts (feasible). Additionally, teacher assessments yielded an average score of 49 out of a possible 50, with a feasibility percentage of 98% (very feasible). A significant improvement in students' understanding of bullying including its definition, forms, and consequences was observed after using the storybook. This is supported by an increase in the average pre-test score ( $M = 65.20$ ) to the post-test score ( $M = 82.75$ ). **Conclusion:** The anti-bullying picture storybook developed in this study is an effective educational tool and holds strong potential for integration into bullying prevention efforts in elementary schools. It offers an engaging and interactive alternative learning resource that supports schools in fostering a safer and more supportive learning environment for all students.

**Keywords:** picture storybook, learning media, anti-bullying, elementary school.

### To cite this article:

Ulfah, A., Saraswati, P. A., & Adityas, M. T. (2025). Development of Fable Picture Storybooks as a Learning Medium to Promote Anti-Bullying in Early Elementary Education. *Jurnal Pendidikan Progresif*, 15(2), 1173-1187. doi: 10.23960/jpp.v15i2.pp1173-1187.

## ■ INTRODUCTION

Effective learning in schools is inseparable from the creation of a safe, supportive, and enjoyable environment, one that is free from all forms of violence. This imperative has been reinforced by Indonesia's Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology through Regulation No. 46 of 2023, which mandates the prevention and management of violence within educational settings. However, despite this

regulatory framework, incidents of violence, particularly bullying, remain widespread and deeply concerning across schools.

Bullying is a persistent and multifaceted problem rooted in a combination of systemic, familial, and individual factors. Contributing causes include inadequate parental supervision, insufficient school-based interventions, and weak institutional mechanisms for early detection and prevention (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Zych

et al., 2019; Vikneswaran et al., 2021). Ironically, while schools are intended to nurture social and cognitive development, they can become environments where peer violence is normalized. Bullying, especially when it emerges during childhood, is a form of psychological and sometimes physical abuse with long-term repercussions. Beyond immediate physical harm, victims often experience emotional distress such as anxiety, social withdrawal, chronic stress, and in extreme cases, suicidal ideation (Zhao et al., 2023). Sustained victimization may derail developmental progress, leading to enduring mental health conditions like depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, and in some cases, can even result in the internalization of aggression, turning victims into future perpetrators (Alisheva & Mandal, 2023; Gura & Sodolevska, 2024).

Despite the growing visibility of anti-bullying initiatives, traditional school interventions such as awareness posters, occasional seminars, and short-term workshops often fall short of achieving meaningful, lasting behavioral change. These approaches tend to be top-down, didactic, and disconnected from students' daily experiences. Moreover, they rarely evoke the emotional engagement necessary to cultivate empathy, particularly among younger children who are still developing their cognitive and moral reasoning (Smith et al., 2012). Once these programs end, their impact often fades, and their messages may be dismissed as irrelevant or forgettable.

In contrast, story-based learning, particularly through fables, offers a more engaging and developmentally appropriate alternative. Fables embed moral lessons and social dilemmas within narrative structures that children can more easily understand and internalize. Their allegorical nature allows sensitive topics like bullying to be addressed indirectly, reducing resistance while encouraging introspection. As Paley (2004) notes, when children interact with stories featuring anthropomorphic characters, they often project

their own emotions and experiences onto the narrative, promoting empathy and moral reflection without triggering defensiveness.

Picture storybooks designed for early elementary learners further enhance this potential by aligning with the developmental stages of young children. The combination of vivid illustrations and compelling narratives creates an immersive experience that supports comprehension and emotional resonance. Such books do more than instruct. They serve as dialogic tools that invite children to explore social norms and behaviors within a safe imaginative space (Nikolajeva, 2014). When integrated into regular classroom activities, fable picture books can provide consistent, low-pressure opportunities to revisit and reinforce anti-bullying values.

A recent case reported by the Women and Child Empowerment, Population Control, and Family Planning Agency (DP3AP2KB) of Yogyakarta in 2024 underscores the urgent need for more effective strategies. In this case, a student endured severe bullying, including forced submersion and physical assault, from first through third grade, ultimately requiring hospitalization. This tragedy highlights the failure of traditional interventions to detect and disrupt harmful behaviors before they escalate, reinforcing the need for tools that not only inform but transform how children understand and respond to social harm.

Observations and interviews conducted between August and November 2024 in several elementary schools across Yogyakarta further reveal the prevalence of bullying, especially in verbal forms. Students frequently use demeaning nicknames or mock each other by referencing parents' names, a practice often seen as harmless joking. Many perpetrators are unaware that their behavior constitutes bullying, and victims frequently choose to remain silent. In lower grades, physical bullying such as hijab-pulling, arm-grabbing, or slapping remains common.

In response, schools have introduced several anti-bullying initiatives, including poster campaigns, outdoor events, and biannual workshops in collaboration with agencies like KPAI Yogyakarta. Teachers also strive to model respectful behavior and incorporate moral education into daily lessons. For more serious incidents, school leaders involve parents in conflict resolution efforts. However, despite these measures, bullying continues to resurface, signaling the need for more proactive and engaging interventions.

One promising strategy is to embed anti-bullying education into everyday learning practices, fostering consistent awareness and empathy over time (Fraguas et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2023). Teachers are encouraged to use collaborative learning and interactive teaching tools. Studies by Putri and Wathon (2024) highlight how interactive media can improve empathy, peer relationships, and students' ability to respond constructively to conflict. Clinical psychologist Wayne Fleisig notes that picture books can serve as a gentle entry point for discussing sensitive topics; the visuals capture children's attention and reduce defensiveness, facilitating deeper conversations (Roberts, 2018).

In addition to enhancing reading motivation and comprehension, picture-based storybooks help children move from concrete to abstract thinking, thereby supporting cognitive development (Halim et al., 2019; Al-Barakat & AlAli, 2025; Vitalia & Sari, 2024; Wu & Amzah, 2023). By combining engaging imagery with meaningful narratives, fable picture books provide young learners with an accessible, relatable, and impactful means of understanding and internalizing anti-bullying messages from an early age.

## ■ METHOD

This study involved first-grade students from two primary schools in Yogyakarta: SD

Negeri Giwangan and SD Muhammadiyah Sambisari. First-grade students were chosen because this stage is critical for the development of prosocial values such as empathy and anti-bullying behavior. To ensure a full representation of perspectives within this group, the study used a saturated sampling technique. In this context, saturated sampling involved including all accessible first-grade students from the selected schools, resulting in a total of 41 participants: 27 from SD Negeri Giwangan and 14 from SD Muhammadiyah Sambisari. Saturated sampling was chosen for both methodological and ethical reasons. In bounded populations where the aim is depth rather than generalization, including all eligible participants minimizes sampling bias and enhances data richness (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). This is particularly important in studies involving young children, where individual differences in cognitive and emotional development can significantly affect how they interpret media and moral lessons (Pianta, 2003).

The intervention in this research, a fable-based picture storybook aimed at promoting anti-bullying values, required observation of student engagement across an entire learning community. By including all students, the researcher could identify both common responses and unique variations in how the material was received. This aligns with the principle of maximum variation in qualitative-oriented educational research, where understanding the full range of reactions within a specific setting is more valuable than working with a randomized subset (Patton, 2015).

## Research Design and Procedure

This research followed a Research and Development (R&D) design aimed at producing and validating educational media. As defined by Borg and Gall (in Sugiyono, 2021), the R&D method involves systematic steps for developing educational products and testing their effectiveness. Specifically, this study utilized the

ADDIE model, comprising five sequential stages: *Analyze*, *Design*, *Develop*, *Implement*, and *Evaluate* (Branch, 2009). The model's structured yet adaptable framework makes it suitable for diverse instructional development contexts (Risal et al., 2022).

The *Analyze* phase focused on identifying students' needs and contextual factors influencing bullying behaviors in schools. Classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with both teachers and students were conducted to gather comprehensive data. Observations explored interpersonal interactions, teacher-student communication, group dynamics, and behavioral signs of exclusion, intimidation, or peer domination. Teacher interviews addressed the frequency and types of bullying encountered, current intervention strategies, and the perceived effectiveness of instructional tools. Teachers also shared their experiences in integrating social values into learning, as well as constraints in doing so. Student interviews used child-friendly language and visual prompts to explore their understanding of bullying, their responses to it, and the kinds of stories and characters that engaged them. These insights informed the emotional, cognitive, and narrative design of the media. Researchers also examined developmental factors, learning preferences, and social behaviors to ensure the storybook would be age-appropriate. A curriculum analysis ensured alignment with national education standards, especially in character education and early moral development.

In the *Design* phase, the research team developed a detailed blueprint for the picture storybook. This included defining the theme, creating characters, outlining anti-bullying content, and designing supporting visuals. The creative direction was informed by educational goals and psychological considerations. Animal characters were selected because fables featuring anthropomorphic animals help children relate to

moral issues without feeling directly confronted (Nikolajeva, 2014). The themes reflected common bullying experiences identified during the *Analyze* phase, such as exclusion from play, name-calling, and physical threats. Each character had symbolic meaning; for example, a timid rabbit represented vulnerable children, while a loud rooster represented aggressors. The story emphasized empathy, fairness, and standing up against harm. The plot and characters were developed to support emotional engagement and critical thinking. A storyboard was produced to align illustrations and text, while instruments for data collection such as questionnaires and interview guides were also prepared.

The *Develop* phase transformed the design plan into a tangible prototype. This phase involved two primary activities: crafting the physical design of the printed storybook and composing the storyline with embedded anti-bullying messages. Upon completion of the first draft, the product underwent expert validation by three categories of reviewers: media specialists, subject matter experts, and instructional design experts. Their feedback informed the necessary revisions to improve the product's quality and ensure its suitability for classroom use.

Following development, the *Implementation* phase introduced the revised storybook into classroom settings to evaluate its effectiveness in promoting anti-bullying awareness and behavioral change. This process involved two stages: a small-group trial and a large-group application. The small-group trial engaged six to eight students from one target school and served as a formative evaluation to identify practical challenges in delivery, student comprehension, and engagement. Researchers observed how students responded to the narrative, visuals, and moral lessons, focusing on verbal and non-verbal cues, interpretation of the message, and post-reading discussions. The large-group application included all 41 first-grade students from both schools and

functioned as a summative evaluation, allowing assessment of the intervention's broader classroom integration and impact on collective behavior. Each phase involved three storytelling sessions over one week, with each session lasting about 35 to 40 minutes to match students' attention spans and class routines. The interactive read-aloud approach invited students to comment on character actions, anticipate story developments, and connect scenarios to their own lives. In the small-group phase, the researcher led the sessions to control intervention variables, while in the large-group stage, the classroom teacher facilitated the sessions under researcher guidance to ensure contextual relevance and integration into regular character education (Nikolajeva, 2014; Patton, 2015).

The final stage, *Evaluation*, was conducted continuously throughout the development process. Formative evaluation took place after each phase to refine the product based on user feedback and expert input. This cyclical process ensured that the storybook would ultimately serve as a relevant, engaging, and pedagogically sound tool to address bullying in early elementary education.

### Research Instruments

The study utilized three main instruments: questionnaires, interview guides, and observation sheets. Questionnaires were designed to gather both expert and user evaluations of the media's quality and feasibility. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, was employed in the expert and teacher assessments.

The development of the expert and teacher questionnaires was grounded in an adaptation process informed by validated instruments from prior studies, ensuring both theoretical rigor and contextual relevance. The media expert questionnaire contained 16 items grouped under three core indicators: content relevance, visual

design, and practical usability. This instrument was adapted from the frameworks proposed by Zuhriyyatul et al. (2022) and Erica & Sukmawarti (2021). The adaptation process involved analyzing the structure and item phrasing of the original instruments, followed by modifications to reflect the specific characteristics of a fable-based picture storybook intended for early primary learners. Items were reworded for clarity, aligned with the visual and interactive features of the media, and reviewed for redundancy or cultural inappropriateness.

Similarly, the subject matter expert questionnaire comprised 15 items addressing five evaluative dimensions: thematic suitability, content relevance, factual accuracy, visual appeal, and developmental appropriateness. This instrument was refined from the rubric developed by Millenia (2023), with adjustments made to ensure alignment with the anti-bullying focus of the storybook. For instance, indicators related to value education, moral messaging, and age-appropriate language were emphasized to capture the educational depth of the material.

The instructional design expert questionnaire, adapted from instruments created by Hasan M. et al. (2021), consisted of 12 items. These were mapped to indicators such as learning goal alignment, visual effectiveness, instructional clarity, and age suitability. The adaptation process entailed reviewing each original item against the ADDIE model's design and development criteria, then rephrasing them to reflect the unique structure of narrative-based media. All adapted instruments underwent expert review for face and content validity, ensuring that each item was both theoretically grounded and practically applicable to the target context of early childhood moral education through illustrated fables.

To capture students' responses to the storybook, a Guttman scale was used with binary response options such as yes-no and true-false. This format was selected for its appropriateness

for young learners, who often engage more easily with simplified choices (Sugiyono, 2021). The student feedback form contained ten items aligned with seven key indicators: color appeal, font readability, image quality, relevance to learning, knowledge enhancement, language clarity, and overall practicality. These indicators assessed both visual and educational aspects of the storybook, ensuring its suitability for the cognitive and emotional development of early-grade students.

To gain deeper insights into participants' experiences, semi-structured interview guides were developed for both students and teachers. Student interviews explored their understanding of bullying, emotional reactions to story events, interpretation of character actions, and the influence of the story on their peer interactions. Students were encouraged to reflect on which parts of the story they remembered most and how the narrative affected their thoughts and behavior. Teacher interviews focused on common bullying incidents in their classrooms, current character education strategies, and their use of storytelling or visual media. Teachers also evaluated the storybook's relevance, accuracy, and integration potential, while offering feedback on its language, cultural fit, and visual presentation.

Observation sheets documented real-time classroom behavior during storybook sessions. Student behavior was monitored for attention, engagement, emotional and verbal reactions, and interactions with peers. Observers also recorded signs of empathy, cooperation, and moral reflection. Teacher facilitation was assessed by observing questioning techniques, discussion management, and reinforcement of moral lessons. To maintain consistency and reliability, two trained observers conducted the classroom observations. Prior to data collection, they completed a training session to standardize observation criteria and improve inter-rater agreement. Observational findings were triangulated with interview data and

questionnaire results to form a comprehensive evaluation of the storybook's impact.

This study applied a mixed-methods approach to analyze both quantitative and qualitative data collected during the development and implementation phases. Quantitative data from student questionnaires were processed using descriptive statistics. Scores were calculated to determine the percentage for each assessed aspect, offering a general view of students' perceptions regarding the storybook's visual and educational features. Meanwhile, qualitative data derived from interviews, observations, and document reviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis framework as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis followed six structured steps: familiarizing with the data through repeated reading, generating initial codes, identifying potential themes, refining and reviewing those themes, naming the final themes, and producing a coherent narrative. This method allowed the researchers to interpret the underlying meaning within the responses of students and teachers and to construct a comprehensive understanding of their lived experiences with the media.

Observation data were examined thematically, emphasizing behavioral indicators such as attentiveness, empathy, classroom participation, and peer interaction. Observers noted emotional reactions and verbal contributions during storybook sessions. These observations were later cross-checked with interview responses to verify recurring behavioral patterns. To enhance the validity of the qualitative data, the study employed extended observation periods, consistent documentation by two trained observers, and triangulation across multiple data sources. Peer debriefing was also conducted to critically assess coding accuracy and reduce interpretive bias. Additionally, the qualitative analysis followed the procedure outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which includes

three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, non-essential information was removed, and key points were coded. In the display phase, findings were organized in visual formats such as thematic maps. Finally, conclusions were drawn and validated against original data. This comprehensive and layered analysis process ensured that the findings genuinely reflected the classroom realities and participants' perspectives.

The feasibility of a storybook product can be categorized into five levels. A product achieving 90-100% is considered highly feasible and requires no revisions. If the feasibility percentage is 75-89%, the product is still deemed feasible with no revisions needed. However, if the percentage falls between 65-74%, the product is rated as moderately feasible, indicating that some revisions are necessary. For products with a percentage of 55-64%, the feasibility is less feasible, meaning revisions are definitely required. Finally, a product that only reaches 0-54% is categorized as not feasible and demands significant revisions.

## ■ RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The development of the anti-bullying fable picture book followed the ADDIE instructional design model, comprising five systematic and iterative phases: Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate.

### Analyze

The initial stage involved a comprehensive needs assessment, analysis of student characteristics, and curriculum alignment. The needs analysis aimed to explore the extent of bullying behaviors in early primary education. Interviews with first-grade teachers at SD Negeri Giwangan and SD Muhammadiyah Sambisari revealed that verbal bullying was a persistent issue in classrooms. Although physical bullying was also reported, it tended to be less severe. These

incidents typically occurred during recess and occasionally during learning activities. Both schools had attempted to address bullying through awareness posters; however, these efforts lacked sufficient impact, largely due to the oversimplified visual presentation, which failed to engage young learners effectively.

This highlights a critical need for age-appropriate, engaging educational media that meaningfully communicate anti-bullying messages. Piaget's cognitive development theory indicates that children aged 7 to 12 are in the concrete operational stage, wherein learning is most effective when supported by tangible or relatable contexts (Halim et al., 2019). In this developmental stage, storybooks, especially those incorporating real-life experiences through fables, can serve as valuable tools for bridging concrete understanding and abstract reasoning. Accordingly, the picture book developed in this study was designed for use with Grade 1 students (Phase A), aligning with the Bahasa Indonesia curriculum, specifically Chapter 6, "Temanku Berbeda" (My Friend is Different), which focuses on the theme of "Respecting Differences". The intended learning outcome was to enhance students' listening comprehension, foster interest in oral narratives, and encourage understanding of messages conveyed through spoken or read-aloud texts in communicative situations.

### Design

In the design phase, the research team developed a storyboard to visualize the storyline and plan the integration of text and images. Key elements, such as character design, narrative flow, and visual representation, were laid out in this blueprint. Illustrations were crafted using Procreate, while Adobe InDesign was used for page layout and overall formatting. The book was structured into several components: cover, table of contents, character profiles, main narrative, reflection questions, and an author's note.



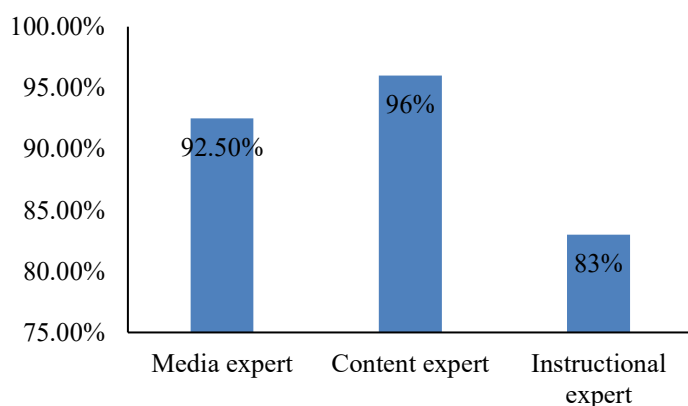
Produced in a board book format with a hardcover size of 19 cm x 25.4 cm, the physical product was intentionally designed for durability and repeated classroom use. Figure 1 below shows the cover of the picture book.



**Figure 1.** Cover of the pictures book

## Develop

At this stage, the prototype underwent expert validation to assess its feasibility. Three experts, specializing in media, subject content, and instructional design, were consulted. The media expert assigned a score of 74 across 16 indicators, with 10 indicators rated as “very feasible” (score 5) and 6 rated as “feasible” (score 4). This yielded a total feasibility percentage of 92.5%. The content expert provided a score of 72, resulting in a 96% feasibility rating, with 12 indicators rated at 5 and 3 at 4. Meanwhile, the instructional expert rated the book at 83%, with a total score of 50. Collectively, these evaluations positioned the picture book in the “Highly Feasible” category. Figure 2 illustrates these expert evaluation results.



**Figure 2.** Expert evaluation scores

The content expert’s rating was the highest, with a 96% feasibility score, indicating strong alignment between the book’s content and the cognitive development level of first-grade students. On average, the three experts rated the book at 90.5% feasibility. Table 1 presents a detailed breakdown of the evaluation outcomes.

The media expert emphasized that the use of picture storybooks supports cognitive development in early-grade students, particularly those in the concrete operational stage. The combination of vivid imagery and contextual narrative helps students transition from tangible

experiences to abstract understanding. As supported by Halim (2019), visually engaging content promotes more effective internalization of knowledge and values. The full-color illustrations employed in the book were carefully designed to maintain children’s attention and stimulate sustained interest (Radjak et al., 2024). Additionally, the interplay of imagery and narrative enhances comprehension, reinforcing key anti-bullying themes (Apriatin et al., 2021). When visuals are used purposefully, they improve both attention and long-term memory retention (Paramita et al., 2022). A sample color illustration from the book is presented in Figure 3.



**Table 1.** Expert evaluation scores

No	Evaluation Type	Score	Category
1	Media expert	92.50%	Highly Feasible
2	Content expert	96%	Highly Feasible
3	Instructional expert	83%	Feasible
Total		271.5	
Average		90.5% (Highly Feasible)	



**Figure 3.** Sample color illustration from the picture book

The high evaluation score from the content expert reflected not only the storybook's alignment with the curriculum and its coherent narrative but also its capacity to engage young readers through emotionally resonant storytelling. The storyline was recognized for presenting age-appropriate moral lessons within an engaging structure that both entertained and educated. A key strength of the storybook was its deliberate departure from typical character choices. Instead of common domestic or farm animals, the story featured a kiwi bird from New Zealand and a pheasant from China. This choice introduced a fresh dimension to local children's literature and allowed for deeper thematic exploration. These non-traditional characters supported the delivery of culturally rich content and symbolized the value of diversity.

The use of Kiwi and Pheasant served several pedagogical functions. The kiwi, seemingly plain and disadvantaged with its dull feathers and inability to fly, revealed qualities of

courage and empathy throughout the story. This character challenged surface-level judgments and highlighted the importance of inner strengths. Koss (2015) emphasizes that diverse and non-stereotypical characters help dismantle biased narratives and support a richer understanding of individuality. Similarly, the pheasant, though visually striking and confident, encountered self-doubt and vulnerability. This contrast added emotional complexity and supported the development of empathy. As noted by Moulton et al. (2011), characters who face social or emotional challenges make it easier for children to connect with unfamiliar experiences, while Nikolajeva (2013) argues that picture books can effectively stimulate moral and emotional engagement through multimodal elements.

The storybook also integrated guided reflection questions at the end of each section, encouraging students to engage with key themes such as kindness, inclusion, and fairness. These were designed not as comprehension checks but

as prompts for thoughtful dialogue, consistent with Alexander (2008) concept of dialogic pedagogy. Classroom discussions following the readings enabled children to connect the narrative to their own lives, reinforcing social-emotional learning. Teachers observed that students became more sensitive to exclusion and injustice, often referencing the story in real classroom interactions. These observations support the view that the storybook contributed meaningfully to character education, encouraging not just understanding but the internalization of prosocial behavior (Burhanuddin et al., 2022; Lickona, 2004). The storybook characters are depicted in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Storybook characters

The instructional expert categorized the book as Feasible, highlighting that the content

effectively illustrated examples of bullying, presented logical consequences, and embedded positive character-building messages. The inclusion of post-reading reflection questions further supported comprehension and value reinforcement. These prompts were designed to help students internalize the lessons and demonstrate prosocial behaviors, such as empathy, mutual respect, and tolerance, both in and out of school. Incorporating such values into accessible storylines makes picture books especially effective for moral education (Mamikat & Pratama, 2025). Stories found in books do more than entertain—they play a key role in helping children learn how to relate to others. Through narratives, young readers are introduced to lessons about right and wrong, how to manage their feelings, and what is considered acceptable in different cultures. These early reading experiences shape how they view and interact with people from various backgrounds as they grow up (Alonge, 2024). The illustrated examples of the impact of bullying can be seen in Figure 5.

### Implement

Following refinements informed by media, content, and instructional design experts, the anti-bullying fable picture book was evaluated by teachers from SD Negeri Giwangan and SD Muhammadiyah Sambisari. Their assessments yielded an impressive average score of 49 out of



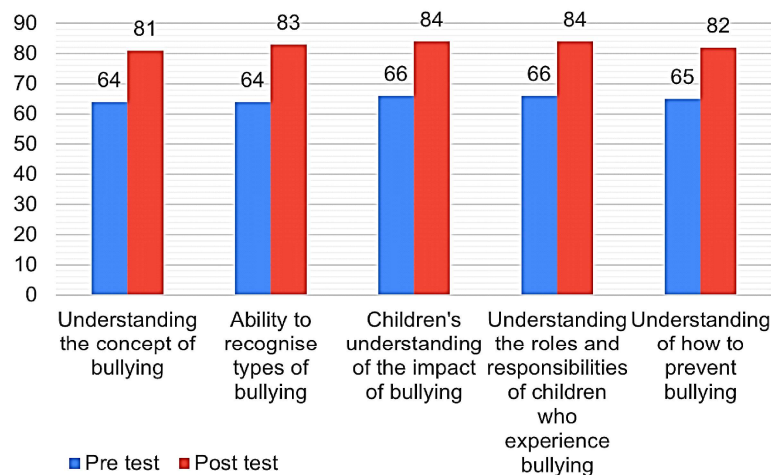
**Figure 5.** The impact of bullying and cultivating empathy

50, translating to a 98 percent feasibility rating. Teachers categorized the book as Highly Feasible for classroom use, citing its age-appropriate vocabulary, vivid illustrations, and emotionally engaging narrative as particularly effective for Grade 1 students. These evaluations reflect the importance of visual clarity and simple yet meaningful language in literacy materials, as emphasized by Mawardah and Rambe (2024), who highlight that such features significantly aid comprehension and memory retention among early learners.

The revised book was then implemented in two classroom sessions per school. Each session consisted of an interactive storytelling phase, a class discussion, and a guided reflection using thought-provoking questions. These questions, such as “How do you think Kiwi felt when others ignored her?” and “What could you do if you saw someone being treated unfairly?” encouraged students to examine emotional experiences and ethical decisions. Teachers reported that students responded enthusiastically, offering reflective comments that demonstrated an understanding of kindness, fairness, and empathy. This structured dialogue aligns with Alexander’s

(2008) dialogic pedagogy, which advocates for using discussion and shared inquiry to foster deeper moral reasoning in young learners.

The quantitative findings presented in Figure 6 further affirm the effectiveness of the storybook in enhancing students’ conceptual understanding of bullying. A clear improvement is observed across all five measured categories between the pre-test and post-test results. Students’ understanding of the concept of bullying increased from 64 to 81, their ability to recognize types of bullying rose from 66 to 83, and their comprehension of bullying’s impact improved from 66 to 84. Likewise, their understanding of the roles and responsibilities of children who experience bullying increased from 65 to 84, while their knowledge of how to prevent bullying grew from 65 to 82. These gains indicate that the storybook successfully facilitated deeper cognitive and emotional engagement with the topic. The integration of narrative and visual elements not only captured students’ attention but also enabled them to internalize key messages about empathy and proactive behavior in addressing bullying.



**Figure 6.** Students’ conceptual understanding of bullying

Qualitatively, students expressed empathy toward Kiwi and connected her experiences with their own. As noted by Kucirkova (2019), picture

books act as “empathy engines,” enabling children to safely explore complex social and emotional themes. These outcomes are consistent with

studies by Brigham et al. (2020) and Herlina and Yusuf (2023), who found that storybooks, especially when paired with adult-led reflection, enhance children's empathy, prosocial behavior, and capacity to recognize and respond to social injustices.

Students' responses from classroom interviews further highlighted the storybook's impact. "I liked Kiwi the most," said Arif (pseudonym), a first-grade student. "Even though he couldn't fly, he was brave and helped his friend. I want to be like him." Another student, Naya (pseudonym), added, "I felt sad when Pheasant got hurt, but I was happy Kiwi helped him. Now I know that being different is okay. We have to be nice to each other." These remarks affirm the storybook's success in fostering empathy and delivering its anti-bullying message in a way that resonated with young learners.

### **Evaluate**

Evaluation was conducted at multiple stages to ensure that the book's design and content were both pedagogically sound and developmentally appropriate. Expert input helped sharpen the clarity of visual storytelling, refine the alignment with anti-bullying learning objectives, and ensure cultural sensitivity in character and setting design. Teachers played a crucial role in assessing classroom feasibility, while students provided authentic feedback on engagement and comprehension.

The evaluation process revealed that the book filled a notable gap in available teaching materials particularly those designed to foster social-emotional learning in early primary grades. Traditional anti-bullying programs often target older students or rely heavily on didactic instruction. In contrast, this project demonstrated that carefully constructed story-based media can convey values such as empathy, respect, and fairness in ways that resonate with younger audiences.

These findings align with earlier research advocating for the use of narrative as a tool for values education. Studies by Lickona (2004) and Nikolajeva (2013) have shown that stories especially those embedded with moral dilemmas can cultivate character strengths when paired with meaningful dialogue. The picture book format enhances this potential by offering visual anchors that help children interpret emotional cues and social dynamics. In addition to the measurable gains in knowledge, qualitative feedback from students revealed deeper engagement with the story's characters and themes. The book's narrative presented through relatable scenarios and visually dynamic characters enabled students to connect emotionally with the content. Many expressed empathy toward the victimized characters and demonstrated an improved ability to identify bullying behavior. This response indicates that the combination of storytelling and illustration can support not only cognitive but also affective learning outcomes. As Kucirkova (2019) notes, the immersive nature of picture books can foster moral reflection and social-emotional growth by offering a safe and age-appropriate context to explore sensitive issues like bullying.

### **CONCLUSION**

This development study successfully produced an anti-bullying-themed picture book that has been validated for its visual appeal, developmental appropriateness, and pedagogical effectiveness in early primary education. Through a systematic process of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation, the book was refined to meet the cognitive and emotional needs of young learners. Field implementation showed that the book significantly improved students' understanding of bullying, including its forms, consequences, and appropriate responses. Beyond knowledge acquisition, students also demonstrated growth in empathy, increased willingness to report bullying, and more reflective



social behavior. The integration of reflection questions and class discussions played a crucial role in deepening students' understanding, helping them connect the story to their own experiences. The story's emotional narrative and visual storytelling supported both comprehension and affective engagement, affirming the dual role of picture books as tools for both instruction and character development.

A noteworthy element of the book is its use of culturally diverse characters, a kiwi from New Zealand and a pheasant from China, as metaphors for uniqueness and difference. While these characters are unfamiliar within the Indonesian context, students in Yogyakarta responded positively, engaging with the story's message of inclusion and diversity. This indicates that when culturally foreign elements are framed within accessible, meaningful narratives, they can enrich local moral education rather than hinder it. Furthermore, the book not only resonates with victims and bystanders but also holds potential for shifting the behavior of students who may exhibit bullying tendencies. By presenting characters who reflect on their harmful actions and seek to make amends, the story invites young readers to consider the emotional impact of bullying from multiple perspectives. This reflective approach allows children to internalize moral lessons without direct confrontation or blame, encouraging them to adopt more empathetic and prosocial behavior. Ultimately, this picture book stands as a valuable contribution to anti-bullying efforts and character education, offering a culturally adaptable, emotionally resonant tool to foster respectful, inclusive, and empathetic classroom communities.

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