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Developing Picture Storybooks to Stimulate Independence in Children Aged 5-6 Years

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ABSTRACT

Independence is one of the key developmental aspects in early childhood, yet many children in early childhood education (ECE) institutions still rely heavily on adult assistance. This research tends to foster children's independence by picture storybooks. It focuses on developing high-quality and engaging picture storybooks to promote independence in 5–6-year-old children at TK Kemala Bhayangkari 16 in Palu City. This study employs a research and development (R&D) methodology based on the ADDIE model. The research process includes needs analysis, product design, validation by media and content experts, product revision, and limited trials with children in Group B. Research instruments include validation sheets, child independence observation sheets, and response questionnaires from teachers and children regarding the developed product. Validation results indicate that the picture storybook is highly feasible, with a 93% validation score across material, language, display, and presentation aspects, and it received very positive responses from teachers and children. Using picture storybooks in learning activities effectively stimulates children's independence in performing simple tasks with minimal assistance, such as tidying up items, washing hands, and completing assigned tasks. Practically, this validated medium provides a concrete tool for educators to reduce children's dependence on adults and offers a scalable model for broader implementation in similar ECE units.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Independence is one of the crucial aspects of development in early childhood because it is related to the child's capacity to take care of themselves, make simple choices, and be responsible for the tasks assigned (Aghniarrahmah et al., 2022). Children who are independent tend to be more ready to participate in learning activities and adjust to the social environment at school and at home (Parinduri et al., 2026). In the context of early childhood education, strengthening independence is the main goal of learning because it is in line with character formation and habituation of positive behavior from an early age (Desy et al., 2023). As a result, educators need to design a fun learning experience while giving children the opportunity to try, take initiative, and do tasks independently according to their developmental stages.

A number of studies show that the independence's development in children aged 5–6 years has often not reached the optimal stage, characterized by dependence on adult assistance in daily activities such as tidying up learning tools and eating independently (Zhintia et al., 2024). This is reinforced by the discoveries of Krismayanti et al., (2022) who stated that intervention through visual media is indispensable to overcome these functional barriers.

Children's independence that is not optimal is often caused by learning media that have not been specifically designed to stimulate these aspects, resulting in a gap between the demands of the early childhood education curriculum and classroom practice (Silahuddin, 2024). Derived from the observations and interviews outcomes that accomplished by researchers at Kemala Bhayangkari Kindergarten 16, Palu City, a similar phenomenon is shown; The high dependence of children on teachers and parents able to be seen from the child's inability to take off shoes, wash hands, and make simple decisions independently. These field findings are the basis for the urgency of conducting media development research to stimulate children's independence in the institution.

One alternative to stimulate independence is the use of picture storybooks that are arranged according to the characteristics and needs of early childhood development (Masruroh & Ramianti, 2022). Simple text and interesting illustrations are combined in a picture storybook so as to support children's understanding of storylines and imitate the behavior of the characters in it (Fuadah, 2022). Through stories that are close to children's lives, various situations that demand independence, such as taking care of themselves, helping others, and completing tasks without relying on adults—can be conveyed in a fun way (Rizkiyah, 2022).

A number of studies show that picture storybooks used systematically can increase children's independence in early childhood education (Sinamo & Herawati, 2023). However, many existing media are still general and have not specifically integrated indicators of independence that are in accordance with the local cultural context and the daily problems of children at school. The limitations of previous research often lie in narrative content that is less applicable, so that children only become passive listeners without the encouragement to practice self-help skills directly.

Based on this background, it is necessary to enhance learning media in the picture storybooks' form that are specifically designed to stimulate functional independence. The difference of this study lies in the modification of content that integrates specific daily situations in Kemala Bhayangkari 16 Kindergarten Palu City into the storyline, which has not

been found in other commercial storybooks. This media is expected to be an interesting alternative, easy for teachers to use, and relevant to children's reality. This research aims to enhance a decent and attractive picture storybook to stimulate the independence of children aged 5–6 years, as well as describe the feasibility and user response to the product. With this development, learning is expected to be more effective in instilling independence from an early age and strengthening learning practices in early childhood education (Safitri et al., 2025).

2. METHODS

This research development (R&D) employs the ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) model to bridge the gap between theoretical needs and practical solutions for child independence at Kemala Bhayangkari 16 Kindergarten, Palu City. The development procedure starts from identifying problems through observation and interviews, designing storyboards, realizing physical products that are expertly validated, to trials limited to Group B children as research subjects to observe real behavioral changes.

This research created a product in a picture story book form to stimulate the independence of children aged 5-6 years. The developed media in this research will be tested by a media expert and a language expert before finally being tested. Data collection was carried out through teacher response questionnaires, media and language validation sheets, and independence observation sheets that measured children's physical, social, and emotional dimensions. Data analysis was accomplished in a quantitative descriptive manner by calculating the percentage of eligibility scores, the effectiveness of children's independence through pre-test - post-test comparisons, as well as qualitative analysis of validators' suggestions and field notes to underlie narrative product improvement.

2.1. Indicators and data analysis

This research instrument was prepared based on the independence dimension which includes physical aspects (the ability to eat and wear one's own shoes), social aspects (tidying up toys and interacting politely), and emotional aspects (confidence in completing tasks). Media feasibility data from experts were analyzed descriptively quantitatively using the percentage formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{Actual score}}{\text{Ideal Score}} \times 100\%$$

Description:

Actual score = total score given by respondents

Ideal Score = number of items × highest score × number of respondents

The scores obtained are then converted into eligibility criteria which able to be seen in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Product eligibility percentage categories

Percentage (%)	Category
85% – 100%	Highly feasible
70% – 84%	Worthy
55% – 69%	Quite Decent
40% – 54%	Less Worthy
<40%	Not eligible

Furthermore, the effectiveness of the media was measured by comparing the increase in the percentage of children in the pre-test and post-test stages to determine the significance of changes in independence behavior after the intervention.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Needs Analysis (Analysis Stage)

The development of this media is based on the results of the identification of problems in Kemala Bhayangkari 16 Kindergarten through initial observation and interviews with classroom teachers. It was found that the level of independence of children aged 5-6 years still requires intensive stimulation, which can be seen from the behavior of children who still tend to rely on the help of teachers in simple activities, such as tidying up stationery, using school supplies, and completing daily tasks. If this situation is not addressed promptly, it may hinder the children's self-confidence and initiative in facing challenges at the next educational level (Sinansari & Hasibuan, 2021).

Further analysis shows that the limited availability of learning media that specifically focuses on stimulating independence is one of the constraints in the field. So far, the delivery of character values has been carried out more through conventional lecture methods that do not provide a concrete picture for children. Based on the analysis of these needs, a visual learning media that is interactive and close to the child's daily life is needed to facilitate the internalization of independent attitudes. The use of story media in character education is believed to be able to touch the affective aspects of children because the narrative conveyed is easier to receive emotionally than just verbal instructions (Lungka et al., 2025).

3.2 Visualization of picture storybook design

The product produced in this study is a picture story book designed as a medium for stimulating children's independence. The development of the book design began with the preparation of a storyboard that adapted the child's daily activities at school and then entered the stage of initial illustration, coloring and finally the addition of details. The book is designed with an ergonomic physical format for 5-6 year old, using a combination of contrasting colors and dominant illustrations to convey a message without relying entirely on text. The selection of visual media is based on the early childhood's characteristics which is in the phase of concrete thinking, where information is more easily absorbed through image representation than mere verbal instructions (Erlina et al., 2023).

The main concept in designing this book design focuses on the "character modeling" strategy which is adapted to the psychology of early childhood development. The main characters in the book are visualized as peers to create emotional and cognitive closeness, so that children can project themselves into the story. This character is shown explicitly performing various independent actions that are routine and applicative, ranging from making the bed after waking up in the morning, the ability to go to the toilet on their own (toilet training), to fine motor skills when wearing shoes without the help of an adult. This visualization aims for children to identify themselves personally with the character, which ultimately triggers an internal urge to imitate the positive behaviors displayed in their daily lives (Ika et al., 2025).

The story text is written in a concise, succinct, and communicative style to support children's early literacy skills without diverting their primary focus from the illustrations. The text is strategically placed to align with the illustrations' positioning so as not to disrupt the visual flow of the images; this allows children to follow the story's chronology simply by looking at the illustrations (See **Figure 1**). The dominance of illustrations in this medium is a

crucial factor, because for children in the pre-operational stage of development, pictures serve not merely as decoration but as the primary bridge for understanding social reality and the abstract concepts of values they are developing within their environment (Nurhayati et al., 2022).



Figure 1. Visualization of covers and sample pages of picture storybooks

The visualization in Figure 1 shows that each illustration is made in detail to illustrate the expression of the character's success when performing an independent task. This is intended to provide emotional reinforcement to children that independence is a fun and proud thing. This is in line with the opinion of Alfian et al., (2022) who stated that visually appealing learning media can increase children's intrinsic motivation to try new skills. This design has been adapted to early childhood aesthetic standards to ensure a high level of visual readability when used in the classroom learning process.

3.2 Product Eligibility (Expert Validation)

The validation stage is an important step to ensure that the picture story books developed meet quality standards as a pedagogically and technically appropriate learning media for early childhood education. The assessment is carried out by experts through instruments that include media and language aspects.

Validation by Media Experts

Media validation is carried out to test the visual quality and functionality of the product. The outcomes of the detailed assessment are displayed in **Table 2** below.

Table 2. Media expert validation results

No	Aspects	Assessment indicators	Value	%	Category
1	Instructional	The attractiveness of the display of media content	5	100%	Highly feasible
		The attractiveness of color unity	5	100%	Highly feasible
		Providing attractive images	4	80%	Worthy
		Suitability of text, font type and size	5	100%	Highly feasible
2	Display	Text quality	4	80%	Worthy
		Image quality, resolution of relevance to the material	5	100%	Highly feasible
		Design quality	5	100%	Highly feasible
		Layout	4	80%	Worthy
Average			93.00%	Highly feasible	

Based on Table 2, media experts gave an average score of 93% in the Very Feasible category. A perfect score (100%) was achieved in terms of attractiveness of appearance, color combination, font suitability, design quality, and image resolution. This shows that this storybook has a strong visual appeal, according to Nurhayati et al., (2024) is very important for early childhood because proper visual stimulation can increase children's absorption of the content of messages in the media. The harmonious color composition and design help children to stay focused during the storytelling process.

Validation by Linguists

Language validation is focused on readability, clarity of information, and the suitability of diction with the level of intellectual and cognitive development of children. The detailed results are displayed in the following Table 3.

Table 3. Linguist validation results

No	Aspects	Assessment indicators	Value	%	Category
1	Straightforward	Sentence structure accuracy	4	80%	Worthy
		To the effectiveness of sentences	5	100%	Highly feasible
2	Communicative	Standardization of terms	5	100%	Highly feasible
		The sentences used are clear and understood by the child	4	80%	Worthy
3	Dialogue and Interactive	Children's motivational abilities	5	100%	Highly feasible
		Children's Critical Thinking Ability	5	100%	Highly feasible
4	Compatibility with Early Childhood Development	Compatibility with the child's intellectual development	4	80%	Worthy
		Compatibility with the child's cognitive development	5	100%	Highly feasible
5	Conformity with language rules	Grammatical accuracy	4	80%	Worthy
		language accuracy in accordance with PUEBI	5	100%	Highly feasible
6	Use of terms and symbols	punctuation accuracy	5	100%	Highly feasible
Average			92.73%	Highly feasible	

Based on Table 3, linguists gave a score with an average of 92.73% which is in the Very Feasible category. The media is considered very strong in motivating children and stimulating critical thinking through interactive narratives (100%). This is correlated with the opinion of Baiq et al., (2025) who emphasized that language in children's literature must be simple but able to provoke imaginative dialogue. The effective use of sentences and conformity to the child's cognitive development (100%) ensures that the values of independence conveyed can be logically understood by children aged 5-6 years.

3.3 Implementation Results and User Response

After being declared feasible by experts, the picture storybook was implemented on children aged 5-6 years at Kemala Bhayangkari 16 Kindergarten to test its effectiveness in stimulating independence. The effectiveness of the media was measured by comparing the condition of the child before (pre-test) and after (post-test) and was given an intervention in the form of regular storybook reading. The results of the comparison are summarized in **Table 4** below.

Table 4. Average score of pre-test and post-test child independence

Children	pre-test	%	post-test	%	Percentage Increase
1	2.44	48.89	3.11	62.22	13.33
2	3	55.56	3.22	64.44	8.89
3	3	60.00	3.11	62.22	2.22
4	2	40.00	3.22	64.44	24.44
5	2	40.00	3.89	77.78	37.78
6	2.22	44.44	4.11	82.22	37.78
7	2	40.00	3.89	77.78	37.78
8	2.22	44.44	4.11	82.22	37.78
9	2.89	57.78	3.78	75.56	17.78
Average	2.40	47.90%	3.60	72.10%	24.20%

Derived from Table 4, there was an enhance in the average score of child independence by 24.20%. In the pre-test stage, the average child's independence score was 47.90%, and after being stimulated using picture storybooks, the score increased to 72.10% at the post-test stage. This figure presents that the use of storybook media has a positive impact on children's independence achievement at school. This is correlated with previous study that states that visual media that is thematically designed is able to change children's passive behavior to be more active and independent through repeated information reinforcement (Widiadnya & Wati, 2025).

Responses to the use of this media were collected through direct observation and questionnaires. The teacher stated that this picture storybook is practically used because the content is relevant to the child's daily activities at school. The practicality of the media in conveying character values strengthens the opinion that contextual story media makes it easier for educators to transfer moral values naturally without coercion (Ningrum et al., 2021).

In terms of research subjects, children showed responses in the form of increased focus and enthusiasm when listening to the storyline. The observed behavioral changes included the courage of children in trying independent activities, such as tidying up stationery after use and showing confidence when completing tasks without intensive help from teachers. The emergence of this spontaneous behavior proves that stimulation through characters in the story can trigger the child's internal impulse to imitate the success of the character, as well as

the function of story media in shaping children's self-efficacy from an early age (Nurhayati et al., 2024).

The outcomes of the study presented that the development of picture storybooks made a significant contribution to the stimulation of independence of children aged 5-6 years in Kemala Bhayangkari 16 Kindergarten. Visually and substantively, the books developed have met very high eligibility criteria, with an average media validation of 93% and language validation of 92.73%. This feasibility is a key factor that supports the effectiveness of media when implemented in the classroom (Safitri et al., 2025). This is strengthened by the opinion (Silahuddin, 2024) which states that learning media development products must meet high validity aspects in order to function as a reliable cognitive tool for children.

The high scores on the indicators of "children's motivational ability" (100%) and "children's critical thinking ability" (100%) in language validation indicate that interactive narratives in books are able to provoke children's emotional engagement. This is correlated with the principle of early childhood education that character learning will be more effective if it is delivered through a fun and non-doctrinal method (Nirmala & Muslim, 2023). Visualization of attractive images and high resolution (100%) in the media aspect also takes a part in maintaining children's attention, so that the message of independence that is abstract becomes more concrete and easy to understand by children in the pre-operational thinking phase. This is correlated with the view (Baiq et al., 2025) that early childhood requires concrete visual representations to understand complex concepts of value.

The increase of 24.20% cumulatively proves that picture storybooks are not just entertainment media, but a means of stimulation that can change children's dependent behavior to be more empowered. The positive response from teachers who stated the practicality of this media also strengthened the finding that storybooks designed based on real needs in schools have a higher usefulness than conventional media. The use of practical and relevant media has been proven to create a learning environment conducive to the development of children's socio-emotional aspects (Hidayah & Furnamasari, 2025). Thus, the integration between proper design, rigorous expert validation, and relevant content is the main formula in stimulating the optimal development of children's independence.

4. CONCLUSION

This study succeeded in developing a picture storybook media that is very feasible and effective to stimulate the independence of children aged 5-6 years, as evidenced by the validation score of media experts of 93% and linguists of 92.73%. The implementation of the product presented a marked enhance in independence from the initial score of 47.90% to 72.10%, which answered the research objective that storybooks with visual modeling methods were able to change children's dependent behavior. The difference of this development lies in the integration of a highly contextual storyline with daily activities at school and visual design that centers on strengthening children's self-efficacy through peer figures as independent behavioral models. Practically, this book is recommended to be used by early childhood educators as an alternative medium in character learning, while for future researchers, development can be focused on the use of interactive digital storybook technology to expand the range of stimulation of children's independence in the family environment.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest concerning this article's publication. Authors committed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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