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Fostering Environmental Awareness Through Humanistic Education for Elementary School Students at Alam Tangerang

Ma'as Shobirin¹, Muhammad Fauzan Muttaqin², Sarwi³, Sri Wardani⁴, Mukh Doyin⁵

¹Universitas Wahid Hasyim, Indonesia, ²Institut Daarul Quran Jakarta, Indonesia, ^{3,4,5}Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

*coresponding author: maas.shobirin@unwahas.ac.id

Abstract

This study focuses on promoting environmentally responsible behavior through humanistic education among fourth-grade students at SD Alam Tangerang. The research aims to analyze the effects of humanistic education on students' environmentally responsible behavior in their daily lives. A descriptive qualitative method was used, with data collection techniques including observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Data validation was carried out using source triangulation through interviews with the school principal, fourth-grade teachers, and three fourth-grade students, as well as technique triangulation, which included observation, interviews, and document analysis. The data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive approach, which involved data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The study's findings suggest that humanistic education should be implemented in elementary schools with a holistic and comprehensive approach. This education was essential for developing students' moral values, ethics, empathy, and environmental responsibility from an early age. Humanistic education places students at the center of the learning process, enabling them to develop critical thinking, creativity, and reflective skills. In practice, this approach should be integrated into the elementary school curriculum through intramural activities, such as teaching mathematics, the Indonesian language, and other subjects related to environmental issues, as well as extracurricular activities like tree planting and environmental campaigns.

Keywords: Humanistic education, Environmental Care Behavior, Primary School Students

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the main instruments in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors towards the environment (Varela-Candamio et al., 2018). Elementary

schools play a crucial role in establishing the foundation for environmentally caring behavior in students (Fortuna et al., 2023). Today, environmental issues have become a global concern (Kamil et al., 2019), with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and United Nations Environment Programme emphasizing the importance of environmental education as a means to create the awareness and actions necessary to address these problems (Sola, 2014). Environmental education is recognized as a key component of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in Goal 4: Quality Education, and Goal 13: Climate Action (Agbedahin, 2019).

In Indonesia, environmental issues are also of significant concern. Cases of deforestation, pollution, and climate change have had a substantial impact on society and the environment (Fahrizi et al., 2023). In this context, education in elementary schools plays an essential role in shaping an environmentally conscious generation. However, there are many challenges in effectively implementing environmental education at the elementary level, including the lack of integration of environmental values into the formal curriculum and the inadequate training of teachers in teaching environmental education. As awareness of the importance of environmental sustainability increases, the integration of humanistic education becomes relevant, as this approach emphasizes the development of moral, ethical, and empathetic aspects of individuals (Falcao et al., 2020; Uy et al., 2024).

Humanistic education is based on the fundamental principle that every individual has the potential to grow and develop positively (Odari, 2020), and education should address these aspects. One of the primary focuses of humanistic education is the development of empathy, responsibility, and concern for the surrounding environment (Bintang Kejora et al., 2021). By integrating humanistic education into the elementary school curriculum, it is hoped that students will not only gain knowledge but also develop an understanding and awareness of the importance of preserving the environment for the sustainability of human and natural life.

However, in practice, there are still challenges in integrating humanistic education into fostering environmentally caring behavior among elementary school students (Karmini et al., 2021; Nurafiati et al., 2021). Initial observations and interviews reveal a lack of environmentally caring behavior among students, such as littering, damaging school plants, neglecting their surroundings, and teachers' limited



understanding of the concept of humanistic education, as well as limited human resources. Therefore, in-depth research to explore the potential and challenges in fostering environmentally caring behavior through humanistic education among elementary school students is crucial.

The main issue in integrating humanistic education into fostering environmentally caring behavior among elementary school students (Karmini et al., 2021; Liao et al., 2022) is the lack of understanding of the humanistic education concept among educators, as well as resource limitations in its implementation. A curriculum that is heavily focused on academic achievement often neglects the aspect of developing moral attitudes and values in students (Dai et al., 2023). This can hinder efforts to integrate humanistic education into daily learning in elementary schools.

Humanistic education emphasizes the development of moral, ethical, and empathetic aspects of individuals (Chen et al., 2023), but in practice, there are still obstacles in transferring these concepts into concrete and relevant learning experiences for elementary school students. Therefore, in-depth research is needed to identify these gaps and find appropriate solutions to address them. In the context of integrating humanistic education into fostering environmentally caring behavior among elementary school students, the gap refers to the discrepancy between the concept of humanistic education, which emphasizes the development of empathy, responsibility, and concern (Javadi & Tahmasbi, 2020) for the environment, and its implementation in daily learning in elementary schools. The lack of understanding and skills among teachers in integrating humanistic education into learning is a significant barrier.

Although the concept of humanistic education is well-known and acknowledged for its importance, there is still a gap between theoretical understanding and practical implementation in the field. This can result in a lack of effectiveness in developing environmentally caring behavior in students. Society has high expectations of schools to teach moral and ethical values (Birhan et al., 2021) to the younger generation, but in practice, there are still challenges in integrating humanistic education into the elementary school curriculum.

Previous research has highlighted the importance of education in shaping environmentally caring attitudes and behaviors. For example, research by Varela-Candamio et al. (2018) shows that education is a primary instrument in developing



environmental awareness among students. Fortuna et al. (2023) also emphasize that elementary schools play a critical role in forming the foundation of environmentally caring attitudes in students. However, despite these studies highlighting the importance of environmental education, there remains a gap in the application of effective educational approaches to achieve this goal, particularly at the elementary level. Previous studies have tended to focus more on the cognitive aspects of environmental education, such as knowledge and understanding of environmental issues, but have paid less attention to humanistic approaches that emphasize the development of moral, ethical, and empathetic values.

The gap identified in this study is the lack of attention to the integration of humanistic educational approaches into environmental education in elementary schools. Humanistic education, which emphasizes the development of moral, ethical, and empathetic values, is an approach that has not been extensively explored in the context of environmental education in elementary schools. Humanistic educational theory, as proposed by figures such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, supports the importance of developing non-cognitive aspects in education, including in the context of environmental education.

This research brings novelty by exploring how a humanistic educational approach can be used to foster environmentally caring behavior in elementary school students. This is supported by humanistic theory, which emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to education, involving the emotional, moral, and social development of students, not just cognitive aspects. Therefore, this research is important in shaping environmentally caring attitudes from an early age, in building a generation with high environmental awareness, and in contributing to the development of both humanistic educational theory and environmental learning practices in elementary schools.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This approach was chosen because the research aims to describe and understand how humanistic education can influence the development of environmentally caring behavior in elementary school students. A descriptive design allows the researcher to observe, describe, and analyze the phenomena occurring deeply and holistically.



The research procedure involves several stages, beginning with the selection of elementary schools that have nature-based education programs, such as Sekolah Dasar Alam Tangerang. Subsequently, the researcher conducts direct observations in the school environment to identify the humanistic education practices being implemented and how students interact with their surroundings. Additionally, indepth interviews are conducted with teachers, the principal, and students to gain deeper insights into their perceptions of humanistic education and its impact on environmentally caring behavior.

The population in this study consists of all students at Sekolah Dasar Alam Tangerang, while the sample, selected purposively, comprises 4th-grade students who are considered mature enough to understand the concept of environmental care and capable of reflecting on their learning experiences. Other participants involved in the study include teachers directly involved in teaching humanistic education, as well as the student's parents, to gain perspectives from outside the school environment. The research instruments used include observation guides, interview guides, and documentation to collect relevant data. Data collection techniques employed are participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, such as syllabi, lesson plans (RPP), and student journals. The interviews in this study were generally unstructured and spontaneous to elicit the views and opinions of the participants (Creswell, 2015). Interviews were conducted with the principal, 3rd-grade teachers, and three 3rd-grade students. During the observation phase, the researcher conducted field observations for one month, with full observations carried out twice a week to directly observe the implementation of humanistic education in fostering environmentally caring behavior in the school. Documentation was used to gather data related to the research topic through texts, book notes, photos, book illustrations (Pingel, 2010), correspondence, curriculum studies, previous research, and archives related to media (Marczyk et al., 2010).

Data validation techniques included source triangulation through interviews with the principal, 4th-grade teachers, and three 4th-grade students, as well as technique triangulation using observations, interviews, and document studies to validate the data. For data analysis, the researcher employed the interactive data analysis technique developed by Miles and Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 2020). This analysis process involves three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction is carried out by selecting relevant



data and grouping information based on specific themes. Data display is conducted by organizing the reduced data into matrices or diagrams to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions are drawn by identifying patterns, relationships, and meanings that emerge from the analyzed data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Humanistic Education in Elementary Schools

Humanistic education has long been recognized as an effective approach to shaping empowered, empathetic, and critical-thinking individuals (Chasanah & Ningsih, 2023). The elementary school serves as the initial stage in a child's educational journey, where the foundations of personality and character begin to be built. In humanistic education, students are placed as the central subjects in the learning process (Asmah, 2022), with the primary goal of holistically developing their potential, both intellectually, emotionally, and socially. Humanistic education focuses on fostering empathy, responsibility, and care for the surrounding environment (Bintang Kejora et al., 2021). Based on observational results, the development of empathy has been implemented very well with a score of 95, responsibility has been well executed with a score of 85, and care for the surrounding environment has been very well executed with a score of 90, as illustrated in Figure 1 below:

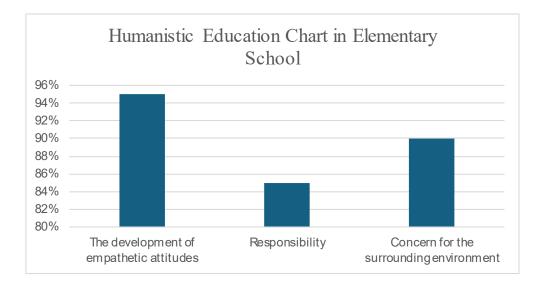


Figure 1. Humanistic Education Chart in Elementary School



The image above illustrates that the humanistic approach in the context of elementary schools is crucial, as this stage is when children begin to develop an understanding of themselves, the world around them, and how they interact with their environment (Fowers, 2018; Karmini et al., 2021). The elementary school phase is critical in shaping children's character and personality (Turdimurodov, 2021). Therefore, humanistic education is needed in elementary schools, focusing on developing children's personalities and characters (Leach, 2022), as well as building positive relationships between teachers and students.

Based on interviews with teachers and school principals, the implementation of humanistic education guides students not only to understand concepts of environmental care but also to identify, analyze, and seek solutions to environmental problems in their surroundings. In practice, humanistic education in elementary schools adopts various learning approaches that emphasize active student involvement in the learning process (Juuti et al., 2021; Könings et al., 2021).

According to interviews with teachers and school principals, during the learning activities, teachers use problem-based learning methods, where students are asked to investigate air pollution issues in their environment, identify the contributing factors, and design solutions to mitigate their negative impacts. This process not only enhances students' understanding of environmental issues but also provides them with the opportunity to experience the tangible effects of their actions on the environment. This problem-based learning approach gives students the chance to actively learn about environmental issues relevant to their daily lives (Purwanto et al., 2022; Top et al., 2017).

Through group discussions, collaborative projects, and other activities, students can learn from each other and inspire one another to take positive actions toward the environment. Besides the PBL approach, humanistic education in elementary schools also encourages the use of collaborative and reflective learning methods (Fenanlampir et al., 2021; Könings et al., 2021). Collaboration between students and teachers (Westheimer, 2017), as well as among students themselves, is considered important in building a deeper understanding of various environmental issues and in developing students' social skills (Leach, 2022; Malloy et al., 2015).

Interviews with teachers and students revealed that teachers have regularly encouraged students to reflect on their learning experiences, both individually



and in groups, to gain deeper insights into themselves, their learning experiences, and the impact of their actions on the environment. Through reflection, students can develop a more profound understanding of the values and attitudes (Harsan & Suyahman, 2020; Muttaqin et al., 2018) they hold regarding the environment and evaluate their contributions to environmental sustainability. Humanistic education in elementary schools needs to emphasize the importance of reflection as part of the learning process (Park et al., 2017; Zeliha, 2017).

Interviews with school principals indicate that some teachers do not yet have a sufficient understanding of humanistic education or the skills needed to implement it effectively. This suggests that there are challenges in implementing humanistic education in elementary schools, particularly in terms of the availability of adequate resources, including human resources, time, and facilities. Support from the school, parents, and the community is necessary to create an environment that supports humanistic learning (Mei-Ju et al., 2014). Another challenge in implementing humanistic education in elementary schools, as reported by school principals and teachers, is the overcrowded curriculum, which leaves little room for the development of students' character and personality. Adjustments to the curriculum are needed to allow more space for humanistic education.

Another challenge is the evaluation and measurement of learning outcomes. Humanistic education emphasizes the development of aspects of personality and character that are difficult to measure quantitatively. Therefore, a more holistic and qualitative evaluation approach is needed to assess students' learning outcomes in the context of humanistic education. Despite these challenges, it is important to recognize that humanistic education has great potential to shape individuals who are caring (Sri Rahayu & Akbar, 2017), empathetic, and responsible towards the environment (Westheimer, 2017). Through an approach that emphasizes the comprehensive development of individual potential and active student engagement in the learning process, humanistic education has proven to be an effective instrument in fostering environmentally conscious behavior among elementary school students.

Integration of Humanistic Education in Cultivating Environmentally Caring Behavior in Schools

The integration of humanistic education into the elementary school curriculum has become increasingly important in efforts to instill environmentally



caring behavior in students (Varela-Candamio et al., 2018). This integration aims to develop students' morals, ethics, and empathy. Based on observations, the development of students' morals has been implemented very well, with a score of 90, ethics development has also been carried out very well with a score of 90, and the development of empathy has been excellently implemented with a score of 95. This is illustrated in Figure 2 below:

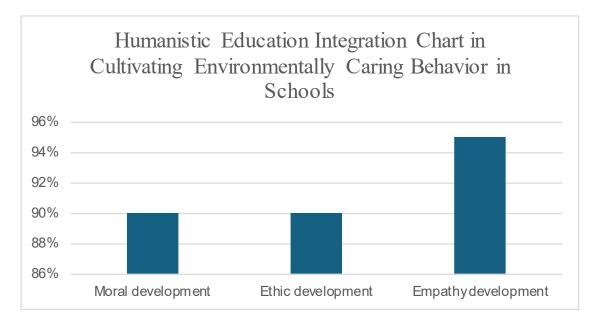


Figure 2. Humanistic Education Integration Chart in Cultivating Environmentally Caring Behavior in Schools

The above image illustrates that through this integration, students are able to develop morals, ethics, and empathy, thereby enhancing their critical, creative, and reflective thinking skills. Humanistic education positions students as the central subjects in the learning process, allowing them to engage directly in understanding and solving environmental issues (Amin et al., 2020).

Humanistic education fosters environmental awareness through both curricular and extracurricular activities at school (Wardhani, 2018). In the curriculum, environmental care is integrated into all subjects. According to interviews with teachers, during math lessons, students can learn concepts such as comparison, calculation, and estimation to understand the amount of energy or natural resources used in daily activities. Additionally, they can learn about sustainable consumption



and production patterns, as well as how to calculate the carbon footprint of their activities. In math lessons, students might be asked to calculate the impact of energy or natural resource use (Amjad et al., 2023). Thus, math lessons not only develop arithmetic skills but also serve as tools for understanding and addressing environmental challenges (Wardat et al., 2024).

Interviews with students revealed that writing essays in Indonesian language lessons helps them develop analytical thinking and strong arguments about environmental issues. They also learn to express their views and feelings about the environment through their writing. In these lessons, students may be asked to write essays about environmental issues or read stories that convey the importance of environmental stewardship (Ritonga et al., 2021). By reading stories that address environmental issues, students develop empathy for the characters and understand the impact of their actions on the environment (Sunassee et al., 2021). This integration of environmental awareness through humanistic education is applied similarly in other subjects.

In extracurricular activities, integration occurs through initiatives such as environmental activities, tree planting, or environmental campaigns (Rustamova, 2023). Students can directly experience the importance of environmental care and the positive impact of their actions. Interviews with teachers and students indicated that they have engaged in tree planting activities around Cipondoh Lake in Tangerang City, aiming to provide direct environmental benefits through increased vegetation and carbon absorption. These activities offer valuable learning experiences and effectively cultivate environmental awareness among students. They learn about the life cycle of plants, the process of photosynthesis, and the importance of biodiversity in maintaining ecosystem balance (Brandão et al., 2021). Additionally, through environmental campaigns, students learn to become agents of change within their communities (Vaughn, 2020). They gain insights into relevant environmental issues and explore ways to address these challenges. Extracurricular activities thus become an effective means of fostering student engagement in environmental protection.

The integration of humanistic education in fostering environmental awareness among students faces various challenges. According to interviews with school principals and teachers, these challenges include a lack of support from some teachers, who may not yet recognize the importance of environmental education and



remain focused on academic achievements, as well as an insufficient understanding of environmental issues and how to integrate them into the curriculum. Furthermore, as Wahyono et al. (2023) clarify, limited resources—whether in the form of time, teaching staff, or facilities—also hinder the implementation of environmental activities in schools.

To overcome these challenges, strong support is needed from various stakeholders, including the government, schools, teachers, and the community (Dai et al., 2023). The government should provide clear guidelines on the importance of environmental education in the primary school curriculum and offer financial and technical support to schools for implementing environmental activities. Schools and teachers need to enhance their understanding of environmental issues (Varela-Candamio et al., 2018) and how to integrate them into the curriculum, as well as provide support to students in carrying out environmental activities. Additionally, the community should actively participate in supporting environmental education in schools (Dai et al., 2023), both through involvement in environmental activities and by providing moral and material support.

The integration of humanistic education in fostering environmental awareness among students is applied through a holistic and comprehensive approach, placing students as the central subjects in the learning process. Students are directly involved in understanding and solving environmental issues, integrated into curricular activities such as math and Indonesian language lessons and other subjects related to environmental issues, as well as through extracurricular activities like tree planting and environmental campaigns. This approach enables students to become active agents of change in maintaining environmental sustainability and realizing the vision of sustainable development, which encompasses moral, ethical, empathetic, and environmental responsibility aspects from an early age.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that humanistic education must be implemented in elementary schools through a holistic and comprehensive approach. The importance of this education lies in its ability to develop moral, ethical, empathetic, and environmental responsibility aspects in students from an early age. Humanistic education places students at the center of the learning process, allowing them to



develop critical, creative, and reflective thinking skills. In practice, this approach should be integrated into the elementary school curriculum, both through intramural activities, such as teaching mathematics, Indonesian language, and other subjects linked to environmental issues, and through extracurricular activities like tree planting and environmental campaigns. The challenges faced in implementing humanistic education, such as a lack of support from some teachers and limited resources, require strong backing from various parties, including the government, schools, and the community. With such support, humanistic education can become an effective tool in fostering environmentally responsible behavior in elementary school students, which will ultimately have a positive impact on environmental sustainability.



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