

## Teaching Kindness as Moral Virtue in Preschool Children: The Effectiveness of Picture-Storybook Reading and Hand-Puppet Storytelling

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**Abstract :** The aim of this study is to test the effectiveness of teaching kindness in preschool children by using several techniques. Kindness is a physical act or emotional support aimed to build or maintain relationships with others. Kindness is known to be essential in the development of moral reasoning to distinguish between the good and bad things. In this study, kindness is operationalized as several acts including helping friends, comforting sad friends, inviting friends to play, protecting others, sharing, saying hello, saying thank you, encouraging others, and apologizing. It is mentioned that kindness is crucial to be developed in preschool children because this is the time the children begin to interact with their social environment through play. Furthermore, preschool children's cognitive development makes them begin to represent the world with words, which then allows them to interact with others. On the other hand, preschool children egocentric thinking makes them still need to learn to consider another person's perspective. In relation to social interaction, preschool children need to be stimulated and assisted by adult to be able to pay attention to other and act with kindness toward them. On teaching kindness to children, the quality of interaction between children and their significant others is the key factor. It is known that preschool children learn about kindness by imitating adults on their two way interaction. Specifically, this study examines two types of teaching techniques that can be done by parents as a way to teach kindness, namely the picture-storybook reading and hand-puppet storytelling. These techniques were examined because both activities are easy to do and both also provide a model of behavior for the child based on the character in the story. To specifically examine those techniques effectiveness in teaching kindness, two studies were conducted. Study I involves 31 children aged 5-6 years old with picture-storybook reading technique, where the intervention is done by reading 8 picture books for 8 days. In study II, hand-puppet storytelling technique is examined to 32 children aged 3-5 years old. The treatments effectiveness are measured using an instrument in the form of nine colored cards that describe the behavior of kindness. Data analysis using Wilcoxon Signed-rank test shows a significant difference on the average score of kindness ( $p < 0.05$ ) before and after the intervention has been held. For daily observation, a 'kindness tree' and observation sheets are used which are filled out by the teacher. Two weeks after interventions, an improvement on all kindness behaviors measured is intact. The same result is also gained from both 'kindness tree' and observational sheets.

**Keywords :** kindness, moral teaching, storytelling, hand puppet

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