

Designing Interactive Illustrated Fable Storybook About Anger Management for Children Aged 6-8 Years

Faye Alicia, Ellis Melini*, Brian Alvin Hananto, Eston Kamelang Mauleti

Visual Communication Design Study Program, Faculty of Design, Universitas Pelita Harapan, INDONESIA

*Corresponding author

Article Info:

Submitted: May 27, 2025

Reviewed: December 03, 2025

Accepted: February 06, 2026

Corresponding Author:

Ellis Melini

Visual Communication Design
Study Program, Faculty of Design,
Universitas Pelita Harapan,
Jl. M.H. Thamrin Boulevard,
Kelapa Dua, Tangerang, Banten,
INDONESIA

Email:

ellis.melini@uph.edu

Abstract

Childhood is an important period where parents have the opportunity to teach many things, one of which is anger management for the development of a child's emotional intelligence. However, the limited media available for parents to teach this independently at home presents its own challenges. In child counseling practice, counselors use various non-digital physical tools to maximize children's sensory involvement through images, colors, and interactivity. This approach can also be applied to a more familiar medium, such as an interactive fable illustration storybook equipped with parental guidance. The design process was carried out using the Design Thinking method and involved collaboration with a child counselor to ensure the project's relevance and effectiveness. Prototype testing with the target audience showed that children gained a better understanding of how to manage and express anger, while parents found the book relevant and useful as a tool to open discussions with their children. This project demonstrates that the topic of anger management can be introduced in an enjoyable way through interactive visual media that supports involvement from both children and parents.

Keywords: anger management, interactive book, illustration, fable story.

Abstrak

Perancangan Buku Ilustrasi Cerita Fabel Interaktif Tentang Pengelolaan Emosi Marah untuk Anak Usia 6-8 Tahun

Masa anak-anak adalah periode penting di mana orang tua memiliki kesempatan untuk mengajarkan banyak hal, salah satunya mengenai pengelolaan emosi marah untuk perkembangan kecerdasan emosi anak. Namun terbatasnya media yang tersedia bagi orang tua dalam mengajarkan hal ini secara mandiri di rumah menjadi tantangan tersendiri. Dalam praktik konseling anak, konselor menggunakan berbagai macam alat-alat fisik non-digital untuk memaksimalkan keterlibatan sensorik anak melalui gambar, warna, dan interaktivitas. Hal tersebut dapat juga diaplikasikan ke dalam media yang lebih familiar di kalangan umum, yaitu buku ilustrasi cerita fabel interaktif yang dilengkapi dengan panduan untuk orang tua. Proses perancangan dilakukan menggunakan metode Design Thinking serta melibatkan kolaborasi dengan konselor anak untuk memastikan relevansi dan efektivitas karya. Pengujian prototype buku kepada target market menunjukkan bahwa anak merasa terbantu memahami dan mengekspresikan emosi marah, sementara orang tua menilai buku ini relevan dan bermanfaat sebagai media untuk membuka ruang diskusi dengan anak. Perancangan ini menunjukkan bahwa topik pengelolaan emosi marah dapat dikenalkan secara menyenangkan melalui media visual interaktif yang mendukung keterlibatan anak dan orang tua.

Kata kunci: pengelolaan emosi marah, buku interaktif, ilustrasi, cerita fabel.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license.



Introduction

Feeling angry is a natural human experience, as anger is one of the basic emotions shared by all people. However, the frontal cortex of a child's brain is not yet fully developed, which makes it difficult for children to regulate their emotions. As a result, children tend to act out aggressively when they feel angry, because they have not yet fully learned how to express their emotions using words. Over time, as a child's brain matures, they will gradually become better at managing anger, especially when they are raised by parents who can also regulate anger in a positive way (Fauziah, 2023). The development of children's emotions in early childhood, particularly negative emotions, is strongly shaped by parental involvement. Parents serve as the primary educators and influencers in emotional management by guiding, supporting, and responding to their children's emotional experiences. Through supportive and responsive parenting practices, parents help children regulate emotions and develop emotional understanding (Muthmainah, Ningrum, & Christianti, 2023).

In a direct interview session with child counselor Lina Arief, M.Th., she outlined three essential steps in helping children manage anger: accept, aware, and action. Accept means allowing children to feel their anger. Aware involves teaching them to understand, monitor, and recognize their emotions. Action focuses on guiding them to express their anger in a healthy way. These three approaches are commonly used by child counselors during therapy and counseling sessions, supported by various tools and interactive activities that help facilitate the process. Most of the tools used are still physical, non-digital media such as toys, books, and paper-based materials, as seen in Figure 1. This approach aims to minimize children's dependence on electronic devices while promoting active participation, creativity, and direct involvement during the sessions. However, these tools remain limited in terms of availability, accessibility, and cost, creating even greater challenges for parents. Many parents may lack proper understanding of how to respond to their children's emotions, and some might feel unwilling or hesitant to bring their child to counseling. This highlights the importance of providing parents with the accessible resources to support their children in learning how to regulate emotions at home.



Figure 1. Counseling tools

Ideally, parents should pay attention to and begin teaching emotional intelligence to their children before the age of 9, as by this age, children are expected to be able to express, respond to, and regulate their emotions. According to Suriadi and Yuliani (2006) as cited in Dewi et al. (2020), by the age of 9 children are generally capable of expressing and concealing their emotions more effectively, as well as responding to the emotions of others. They are also able to manage negative emotions and understand what makes them feel sad, scared, or angry, allowing them to better adapt to these emotional experiences.

Among the stages of human development, Crijns (as cited in Adriana, 2008) identified a phase known as the fairytale stage, which occurs between the ages of 5 and 8. During this time, children begin to engage in cooperative play, perform constructive actions, and develop awareness of their surroundings. However, they are still strongly influenced by their own subjective views, making them especially fond of fairytales. One popular type of fairytale among children is the fable, a fictional story featuring animals as the main characters. Fables can serve as an engaging medium for character education in the learning environment. A personification approach can be applied in fable illustrations, where animals are portrayed acting like humans to convey moral values in an engaging, simple, and easily understood way for children. Having animals as the main characters is also in line with the findings of Sanjaya & Streit (2023), that children—especially in Indonesia—need a learning medium that can educate and help them appreciate nature, especially plants and animals.

Illustrations are not simply decorative; they serve an essential role in visualizing the narrative, representing key objects and events in the story, and enriching the reader's overall experience (Prasetyo, 2014).

Picture storybooks function as learning media that integrate written text with visual illustrations in a complementary way. Visual media serve as effective instructional tools by presenting ideas and factual information through a combination of words and images, helping to make abstract concepts more concrete and easier to understand. The use of image-based media encourages learners to actively engage with the material rather than merely receiving information passively, as interactive elements allow students to participate more fully in the learning process. Visual learning media, including picture storybooks, have been shown to enhance students' conceptual understanding and interest in learning (Berliani & Utama, 2025).

Based on those considerations, this research aims to support parents in teaching anger management to 6–8 year-old children, by adapting the “accept, aware, and action” principles, as applied by counselor Lina Arief, M.Th. The ‘aware’ principle is implemented through the inclusion of a brief notes for parents; ‘accept’ is reflected in the learning presented through the illustrated fable storybook; and ‘action’ is expressed through activities and interactive elements designed to help children practice expressing their emotions in a healthy way. This project was developed in collaboration with Lina Arief, M.Th., Counselor, to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the final design, making it both valid and relevant.

Methods

This study employs a descriptive method with a qualitative approach, applying the Design Thinking methodology developed by the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford to develop an interactive book aimed at helping children manage anger. Design thinking is a popular innovation method that emphasizes user experience. It focuses on developing creative solutions through intensive collaboration between end users, team members, and other relevant stakeholders. (Minet et al., 2024). It consists of five stages: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. The process begins with the empathize stage, which aims to understand users by observing, interacting with them, and immersing in their experiences to gain deeper insight into their needs. This is followed by the define stage, where the design team summarizes and analyzes the findings to establish a clear user-centered point of view that becomes the focus of the design. The ideate stage involves exploring a wide range of possible solutions by generating many ideas through various creative techniques. In the prototype stage, selected ideas are transformed into simple and low-cost physical models that allow team members and other related parties to interact with and evaluate potential solutions. Finally, the testing stage evaluates the refined prototypes with real users through observation and feedback to further improve the solutions so that they better align with user needs (Gwangwava, 2021). The implementation of these five stages is explained in more detail through Figure 2.

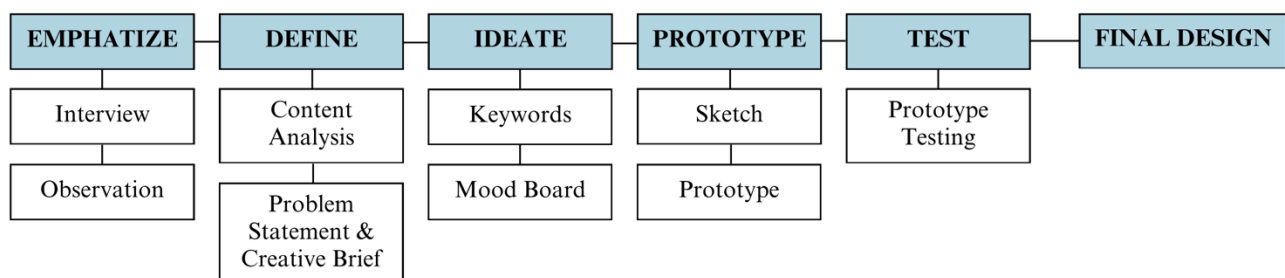


Figure 2. Research flowchart

Results and Discussion

Interview

An interview was held with Mrs. Lina Arief, M.Th., a child and adolescent counselor, who is also the content writer of the book. She explained that managing anger in children is crucial because anger is often the first emotion they express and can mask deeper feelings like sadness or fear. Therefore, teaching children to recognize, accept, and express anger in healthy ways should begin as early as when they are able to communicate. Mrs. Lina highlighted three key steps in this process: helping children become aware of their emotions (aware), allowing them to experience those emotions without suppression (accept), and guiding them to express their feelings in a healthy manner (action). In her counseling practice, she uses play-based approaches such as puppets, figurines, and crafts, which are supported by both local and international counseling modules. She also pointed out that parenting style plays a significant role in shaping a child's ability to manage emotions. Since parents are children's first role models, it is essential that they demonstrate healthy emotional behavior. Mrs. Lina emphasized the importance of a preventive approach, where parents introduce emotional expression early by naming emotions and modeling appropriate ways to express them. According to her, storytelling is a powerful method since children naturally relate to stories. A major challenge, according to her, is that many parents struggle with emotional expression themselves, making it difficult to teach their children. For this reason, parents must first learn to understand and manage their own emotions. Lastly, she mentioned that one of the biggest challenges in teaching anger management

to children is making the learning process enjoyable. Children learn best when the methods used are fun, such as through play and storytelling. Therefore, it is important for both parents and counselors to use media and approaches that align with the child's world.

Observation

Observing the counseling tools in Mrs. Lina Arief's counseling room provided useful information about the types of media that support children in understanding and managing their emotions. The observation also showed how these tools are organized, the characteristics that make them effective, and how they can be adapted to meet the individual needs of children based on age and emotional challenges. It was noted that all tools used in the counseling room were physical, non-digital materials designed to enhance children's sensory engagement. These tools included 3D toys, figurines, puppets, paper, picture books, writing and coloring tools, craft supplies, cards, puzzles, sand, clay, and many others in a wide variety of themes, visuals, shapes, and sizes, as shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Counseling room and tools

Most of the tools were colorful and illustrated, as children are more easily stimulated by visual elements. The tools were also interactive, allowing children to actively participate in the counseling process. Even simple materials like blank paper and drawing tools enabled children to express their thoughts and emotions. This information forms a key foundation for determining how interactive media can be applied in the design of the storybook. By incorporating elements that allow children to engage directly with the content, such as drawing, writing, or completing related activities, the learning process is expected to become more engaging and meaningful.

Content Analysis

The story follows the journey of Bubu, a bear who often feels angry when things don't go his way. With the help of Zizi the bee, Bubu learns to recognize his feelings of anger, understand what causes them, and discover positive ways to manage his emotions. The content of the book, initially provided by the counselor in the form of a rough, text-heavy draft, was analyzed using the descriptive coding method of content analysis. Descriptive coding is a qualitative data analysis method that assigns labels or markers to segments of data to summarize the basic topic of a passage, typically using a short word or phrase that captures the essence of the content (Saldaña, 2021). Through this method, the narrative structure

can be simplified and organized by identifying central themes and refining the content format. A portion of this coding process is presented in table format to visually map out the storyline and topic distribution across the book. Table 1 shows an example of how the manuscript was analyzed.

Table 1. Example of Book Content Analysis

Page	Script/Content	Character	Visual	Interactivity Description (if any)	Parents' Note (if any)
3-4	<i>Aku marah ketika segala sesuatu tidak sesuai dengan keinginanku. Aku merasa marah ketika aku harus terus-menerus belajar padahal aku ingin bermain.</i>	Bubu	Bubu is studying but his mind (using thought cloud) is thinking about games	Peek a boo (the thought cloud when opened will display Bubu's thoughts about playing games)	-
25-26	<i>Yuk ikuti cara Bubu menenangkan amarah menggunakan teknik pernapasan! Tunjuk angka secara berurutan sambil mengikuti petunjuk, setiap instruksi dilakukan dalam empat hitungan. Ulangi sekitar lima kali sampai kamu perlahan merasa lebih tenang!</i>	Zizi	Zizi's text box and illustration of the breathing technique steps on Bubu's classroom chalkboard	Participation (children participate in breathing practice)	<i>Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa emosi yang berbeda dapat dikaitkan dengan pola pernapasan yang berbeda. Saat kita marah, napas sering kali menjadi lebih cepat dan pendek, tubuh juga ikut menegang. Terkadang tanpa sadar kita juga akan menahan napas sejenak. Seiring waktu, hal tersebut dapat menyebabkan sakit kepala, kecemasan dan tidak dapat mengontrol diri. Namun, memperlambat ritme napas, terutama hembusan napas, dapat membantu kita untuk menjadi lebih tenang.</i>

Problem Statement and Creative Brief

Three key problem statements and their corresponding solutions were identified for this design. First, since the book addresses topics that may be new to children, it is essential to create visuals that effectively capture and sustain their attention. Second, because the target audience includes both boys and girls, the visuals must be inclusive and appealing to all genders. Lastly, to maximize the potential of interactive elements, it is necessary to integrate features that meaningfully support and enhance the story content.

Drawing from the problem statements, solutions and analyzed data, the creative brief was developed to guide the visual and interactive design process. The creative brief is a document that outlines the goals and requirements of a design project by addressing fundamental questions summarized in the 4W+1H framework. The creative brief is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Creative brief

Who	- Visual target: children aged 6–8 years - Buyer target: parents - Economic background: middle to upper class - Cultural background: inclusive (Indonesia) - Gender: unisex
What	An interactive illustrated book introducing the emotion of anger to children, combining a children's fable, interactive activities, and practical guidance for parents. The scope of the project includes research, design, and production processes.
Why	To provide practical tools for parents in teaching anger management by designing a book for children aged 6–8, using storytelling and interactive activities supported by engaging visual elements.
Where	The book will be distributed through general bookstores in the children's section and via online platforms.
How	- Translating materials and activities into visuals/illustrations - Using child-friendly typography - Designing a layout that combines storytelling, activities, and brief guides for parents

Keywords

The visual direction of this project is guided by three keywords that help shape its overall tone and style: gentle, charming, and imaginary. The word gentle conveys a sense of calmness, kindness, and carefulness (Oxford, 2024). This is reflected in the visuals through the creation of expressive yet soft characters, the use of calming colors, and delicate details that

Storyboard

After finalizing the characters, the storyboard creation began based on the book content analysis. Storyboard sketches were made to map the story flow visually and textually across pages, providing an overall composition overview. Interactive elements identified during content analysis were marked in the sketches before detailing. Finally, color blocking was applied to ensure color balance and palette consistency throughout the book. The storyboard process can be seen in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Storyboard

Coloring

After the color blocking stage in the storyboard was completed, the illustration coloring process continued with detailed refinement on each page. Colors were chosen to closely resemble real-life subjects and objects, maintaining a sense of familiarity for children. The process began with base coloring, where each element was filled with flat, even tones to establish a strong visual foundation. This was followed by the addition of shadows, lighting, and soft textures to create depth, atmosphere, and cohesion across the illustrations. Finally, outlines were refined to align with light and shadow direction, enhancing the clarity and dimensionality of each form. Small details were also added as needed to enrich the visual storytelling. Figure 7 shows a sample of the coloring process.



Figure 7. Coloring process

Typography

Typography in children’s books plays a crucial role in supporting readability and ensuring a comfortable reading experience, especially for children aged 6 to 8 who are gaining fluency in reading. Therefore, font selection must prioritize high legibility, child-friendly letterforms, and a style that matches the tone of the story. To align with the visual keywords gentle, charming, and imaginary, the chosen fonts should convey a soft, friendly, and playful impression. Key considerations include using sans-serif fonts with simple shapes, rounded counters, no sharp edges, and a large x-height to help children easily recognize letters.

Three different fonts are used to differentiate the narration by Bubu, Zizi, and the parent’s guide, adding contrast between each text type, as shown in Figure 8. Bubu’s narration uses Sniglet Regular, a rounded, playful font that complements Bubu’s soft, rounded character design. Zizi’s text uses Gaegu Regular, a handwritten-style font with slightly irregular letters that feel expressive, cheerful, and lively to match Zizi’s curious and talkative personality as the active narrator. The parents’ note uses Poppins Regular, a clean, balanced sans-serif font with geometric shapes that ensures clarity and professionalism while remaining friendly.

Sniglet Regular ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 0123456789.,/;&-+=()?!"	Gaegu Regular ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 0123456789.,/;&-+=()?!"	Poppins Regular ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 0123456789.,/;&-+=()?!"
---	---	---

Figure 8. Fonts

Book Prototype

At this stage, the book prototype presents a preliminary design in which the overall layout and concept are clearly visible, although not all illustration details have been fully finalized. The pages that are currently available have been printed using standard materials, allowing for practical and cost-effective testing. This book prototype is produced at full, real size to accurately represent the final book dimensions. The mechanisms for the interactive elements have been implemented and are functioning as intended, providing a realistic user experience. This stage is crucial for evaluating both the visual and interactive aspects before moving forward with the final production. Some documentation of the book prototype is shown in Figure 9.



Figure 9. Book prototype

Prototype Testing

Two children within the target age range, along with their parents and under the guidance of a counselor, tested and interacted with the book prototype, as shown in Figure 10. They gave positive feedback on the visual elements, story content, and activities. The children found the illustrations appealing, easy to understand, and visually pleasant, with clear character shapes and expressions. They also felt the text was easy to read and comprehend, with comfortable font size, type, and color. The interactive parts were enjoyable and easy to follow. One child particularly liked the part where the main character walks away when angry, while the other preferred the anger speedometer section. After reading, they reported a better understanding of managing anger and expressed that it's okay to feel angry and express it appropriately. In the same way, parents found the book's content clear and relevant to their children's daily experiences. They agreed the book effectively prepares and supports children in managing their emotions, and that the stories were well-targeted to open meaningful discussions. The design, font size, and activities were considered engaging and suitable for children. The book was also seen as an effective interactive tool, allowing children to read with parental accompaniment, helping to strengthen the parent-child bond through quality moments and conversations.

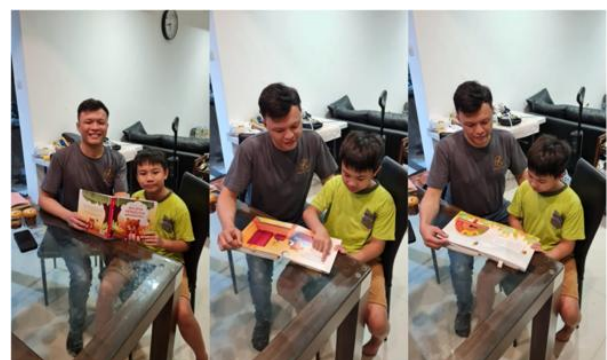


Figure 10. Prototype testing

This testing also served to evaluate the effectiveness of the interactive elements within the book, revealing areas where improvements were needed. As a result, several interactive features and mechanism were revised to enhance user engagement and usability. In addition to these changes, revisions were made to the script and illustrations to better align with the intended learning outcomes and visual appeal. Therefore, these adjustments led to notable changes from the initial script and storyboard, ensuring a more refined and effective final product.

Final Design

The final mockup is a full-color physical interactive book measuring 20.6 x 21 x 3.2 cm, consisting of 22 spreads (44 pages) printed using UV printing technology. The book features a matte hardcover and includes a wipe-clean marker for

children's activities, as shown in Figure 11. Pages are printed on superfine eggshell paper, with certain pages that require marker use coated in glossy lamination to allow for easy erasing. Pages from the final book mockup are shown in Figure 12.



Figure 11. Book cover

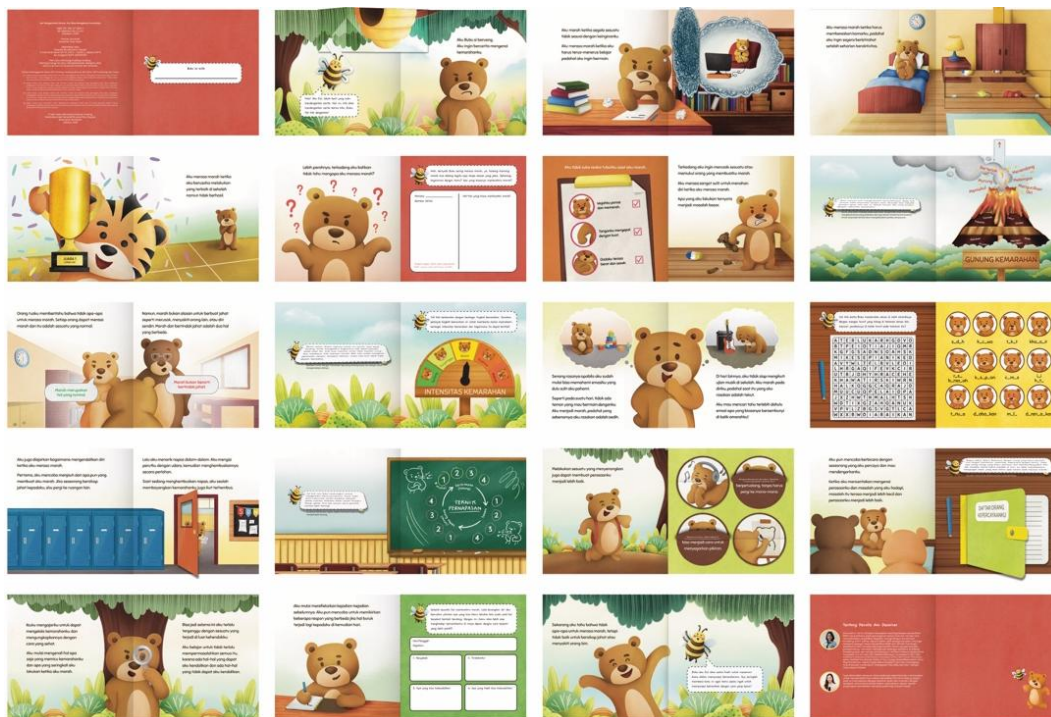


Figure 12. Book pages

Conclusion

In conclusion, the design of this interactive fable storybook aims to provide a practical solution for parents in teaching children aged 6 to 8 how to manage anger emotions. Given the limited media available to parents at home, this book is designed with interactive elements that actively engage children, making the learning process more enjoyable and appealing. Collaboration with a child counselor during development ensures that the approach aligns with children's emotional developmental needs. Throughout the design process, it became clear that creating a book for children requires careful and detailed attention to ensure every element functions well and serves its purpose. The Design Thinking method from the Hasso Plattner Institute proved effective in guiding the project from the initial stages through design and testing to achieve the best possible outcome. This project demonstrates that a typically serious topic like emotional management can be presented in a more fun and understandable way through illustrations and interactive elements that encourage interaction between children and parents. However, one of the biggest challenges was ensuring that the interactive elements remain relevant to the content. If not, they risk becoming mere decoration that adds no value or even disrupts the story and confuses the message. Therefore, each interactive element must be carefully selected to support effective understanding and a meaningful experience for children.

Acknowledgement

This paper was written based on a research funded by Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat Universitas Pelita Harapan (LPPM UPH), research number P-015-S-FD/XII/2024. The authors sincerely thank LPPM UPH and all parties that supported the process.

References

- Adriana, I. (2008). Memahami Pola Perkembangan Bahasa Anak Dalam Konteks Pendidikan. *Tadris: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 3(1). <https://ejournal.iainmadura.ac.id/index.php/tadris/article/view/229>
- Berliani, E., & Utama, C. (2025). The Effectiveness of Picture Storybooks in Increasing Elementary School Students' Interest in Reading. *Proceeding of The International Conference of Research Innovation and Technology on Elementary Education (ICRITEE) II 2025*. https://conference.um.ac.id/index.php/pses/article/download/10495/4315?__cf_chl_tk=Zlvejxm19M9k9HIK9OAuEoTMXMLgHi239.AMnjwIQ_o-1767799431-1.0.1.1-JkQD9Y7XfofmZU2H.8Q5WQHDBelmlb1NRrmBpmzTVM
- Dewi, M. P., Neviyarni, & Irdamurni. (2020). Perkembangan Bahasa, Emosi, dan Sosial Anak Usia Sekolah Dasar. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 7(1). <https://dx.doi.org/10.30659/pendas.7.1.1-11>
- Fauziah, A. (2023). *Mengelola Kemarahan Anak Secara Konstruktif*. DP3AK Provinsi Jawa Timur. <https://dp3ak.jatimprov.go.id/berita/link/231>
- Gwangwava, N. (2021). Learning Design Thinking Through a Hands-On Learning Model. *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (IJITLHE)*2(1). <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJITLHE.20210101.oa4>
- Hwang, J.; Lee, Y.; Kim, S.-H. (2024). The Relative Contribution of Facial and Body Information to the Perception of Cuteness. *Behavioral Sciences*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14010068>
- Minet, A., Wentzel, D., Raff, S., & Garbas, J. (2024). Design thinking in physical and virtual environments: Conceptual foundations, qualitative analysis, and practical implications. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 207. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2024.123596>
- Muthmainah, Ningrum. E.S.C., Christianti, M. (2023). Parental Engagement in Emotional Regulation: A Case Study of Kindergarten Children in Yogyakarta. *Golden Age: Jurnal Ilmiah Tumbuh Kembang Anak Usia Dini*, 8 (4), 261-271. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jga.2023.84-06>
- Oxford. (2024). *Oxford Learners Dictionaries*. <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com>
- Prasetyo, Y. A. (2014). Ilustrasi Buku Cerita Fabel Sebagai Media Pendidikan Karakter Anak. *Arty: Jurnal Seni Rupa*, 3(1). <https://journal.unnes.ac.id/sju/arti/article/view/4024>
- Saldaña, J. (2021). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 4th Ed. SAGE Publications
- Sanjaya, I., & Streit, A. K. (2023). Buku Ensiklopedia Flora dan Fauna di Hutan Tropis Indonesia untuk Anak Usia 10-12 Tahun. *Jurnal Desain Komunikasi Visual Nirmana*, 23 (2). 67-78. <https://doi.org/10.9744/nirmana.23.2.67-78>