

Empowering Young Minds: Exploring Social Development And Environmental Awareness Through Recycled Waste Crafts In Pandanlandung Village Children's Forum

Durratun Nashihah¹, Jessica Shearen¹, Kanila Putri², Julia Suryawati², Ilham Nur Hanifan Maulana¹, Chandra Dinata¹

¹Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Merdeka Malang

²Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Merdeka Malang

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ABSTRAK

Using recycled garbage craft activities, this study investigates how a Children's Forum in Pandanlandung Village affects the social development and environmental consciousness of children aged 4 to 17. Using direct observation, participant and facilitator interviews, and recording of produced works, data were gathered using a descriptive and qualitative approach. Children's social skills including cooperation, communication, and empathy which result from their involvement in practical recycling projects show significant increases. Apart from teaching youngsters on proper trash management and the need of environmental preservation, the activities promoted social connection, particularly after the COVID-19 outbreak. Children who turned trash into art developed agency, self-esteem, and responsibility toward their environment and society. This project shows how creatively minded educational programs could improve children's complete development and foster a sustainable culture. These results emphasize the need of similar programs in different settings and their ability to empower teenagers as active agents of change in building better, environmentally conscious communities..

Corresponding author email: durratun@unmer.ac.id



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1. INTRODUCTION

Social development in children's education has become an important element in shaping the character and abilities of the younger generation. Along with the times, especially in increasingly complex environmental issues such as waste management, education needs to adapt to provide the skills and social responsibilities needed by children. In Indonesia, the increasing accumulation of waste, especially plastic, threatens human health and damages the environment. Therefore, educational initiatives that focus on sustainability and waste management are urgent to be implemented at various levels of education [1, 2].

Waste recycling initiatives have two main functions: reducing waste and providing children with a beneficial learning experience regarding the importance of environmental management (Чупахина et al., 2022). Getting children involved in waste recycling craft activities not only introduces them to the creative process, but also instills social values. Early education on responsible waste management can shape a generation that cares more about sustainability [3]. Several studies show that the introduction of environmental education at an early age significantly improves children's understanding of social responsibility and global challenges related to the environment.

The establishment of the Children's Forum which focuses on waste recycling crafts in Pandanlandung Village shows a proactive strategy in social education, especially after the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many children are experiencing emotional isolation due to the pandemic, which requires activities to rebuild their social skills [4]. The forum provides space for creativity while encouraging the development of essential social skills such as cooperation, communication, and leadership that are much needed in an increasingly connected world [4]. Freire [6], emphasizes that social activities that involve children's active participation can drive significant social change, as well as highlight the importance of children in contributing to addressing local and global challenges.

This study aims to explore the impact of waste recycling crafts on children's social skills. Through participation in craft-making activities, children not only learn to appreciate material values, but also display creativity while fostering a sense of responsibility for sustainability. Involvement in these activities also provides opportunities for social interaction, which strengthens cooperation and problem-solving skills among peers, which are important aspects of their social development [7]. This research will examine the challenges and opportunities faced by Children's Forum in implementing this innovative educational program.

Educational initiatives that focus on waste management are essential in creating social bonds and promoting an environment that supports sustainable learning [8]. Through involvement in recycling craft activities, children not only understand waste management, but also absorb academic concepts related to the impact of their actions on the environment and society. This research contributes to the understanding of how artistic and creative activities, such as waste recycling, can be effective educational instruments. By integrating creative processes with educational goals, children gain skills essential for long-term success and become stewards who care about their communities and ecosystems. This research also offers techniques for the implementation of similar programs in various situations, expanding the reach and influence of these educational initiatives beyond Pandanlandung Village.

The approach taken in this study has its own uniqueness when compared to previous studies on social development and environmental awareness in children. Most previous studies have focused more on aspects of environmental education through theoretical teaching or using more formal methods in introducing recycling concepts to children [9,10]. However, this study emphasizes hands-on practice through waste recycling art activities, which provide opportunities for children to be actively and creatively involved in waste management. This activity not only teaches the concepts of sustainability and recycling, but also gives children hands-on experience in creating useful items from waste, introducing them to the importance of creativity in environmental conservation.

The innovation of this Children's Forum activity lies in a community-based approach that involves

children in interactive and collaborative social activities. In addition to teaching about waste management, this forum also provides a space for children to develop social skills such as cooperation, communication, and leadership in a fun and creative context. Another uniqueness is the integration of social and environmental activities in one container, which allows children to see the direct link between their actions in waste management and their impact on the environment around them. This approach also differs from similar programs in that it is designed to respond to the needs of children who are socially isolated due to the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing not only on the educational aspects of the environment but also on their social recovery. Through creative activities involving waste recycling, children are empowered to become agents of change in society, developing a sense of responsibility towards their environment and community.

This Children's Forum activity also provides high innovative value because it not only educates children about the importance of waste management, but also gives them the opportunity to work in teams, share ideas with each other, and solve problems together. Activities such as making crafts from plastic waste are very effective mediums to foster creativity and build confidence. By involving children in collaborative projects, they learn how to communicate effectively, negotiate, and give and receive feedback, which is crucial in their social development. This approach is particularly relevant to the need to mitigate the psychosocial impact caused by the pandemic, providing space for children to interact and create healthy social relationships.

As part of this research, the Children's Forum in Pandanlandung Village also showed how art-based activities can enrich children's education, improve fine motor skills, and provide opportunities for them to express themselves emotionally. This research is in line with the claim of Freire [6], who states that creative participation in education can encourage the development of critical awareness and reflective thinking in children. In addition, these activities also support research showing that involvement in art activities can increase children's confidence, as well as problem-solving skills that are very important in their developmental stages.

Overall, the success of the Children's Forum in Pandanlandung Village demonstrates the great potential of this community-based approach to positively impact children's social development, their creativity, and environmental awareness. This initiative opens up opportunities for the application of similar models in different communities facing similar challenges, especially in the post-pandemic context, which requires special attention to children's social and emotional well-being. Governments and educational institutions should support and invest more in projects that focus on developing creativity, social skills, and environmental awareness for future generations.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to examine the social development of children through waste recycling handicraft activities. The qualitative approach was chosen because of its ability to provide a deeper understanding of the social context surrounding the event. This approach allows researchers to analyze the norms, values, and interactions that affect children's behavior and social development. One of the main advantages of qualitative research is its flexibility in data collection, which allows researchers to adapt methodologies according to changing field conditions. The qualitative approach offers a comprehensive perspective by examining the

various interconnected aspects that affect the topic being researched. Along with this strategy, a descriptive method is used to provide a detailed and accurate picture of the observed phenomenon without changing the existing variables. This strategy aims to reveal real-world settings and emphasize the importance of detail in understanding children's social interactions.

To maintain the validity of the data, several steps are carried out systematically. Data triangulation is used by collecting data through a variety of techniques, including direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of children's handicrafts. By using these various methods, the results obtained can complement and verify each other, thus increasing the credibility of the findings. Observational data were collected through participatory observation, in which researchers participated in children's activities as active observers, to gain deeper insights into group dynamics and social interactions. In-depth interviews were conducted with children and facilitators to explore their experiences, especially related to the development of social skills and environmental awareness. Documentation of children's handicrafts was also used to complete the analysis and provide an overview of the level of children's involvement in the activity.

For data analysis, a descriptive qualitative methodology was used. The collected data was analyzed manually by identifying the main themes that emerged from children's social interactions, such as cooperation, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving [11]. In addition to manual analysis, researchers also use qualitative analysis software, such as NVivo, to assist in organizing and identifying patterns in the data. The use of this software allows researchers to group data and provide visual representations of emerging themes, providing a more systematic and structured approach to data analysis. The findings obtained were then presented in narrative form, showing the correlation between recycling handicraft activities and children's social development. This study aims to explain the impact of environment-oriented educational activities on the development of children's social skills and character, especially through community-based learning methods.

This research uses a case study design at the Pandanlandung Village Children's Forum, Wagir District, Malang Regency. This case study approach allows researchers to conduct an in-depth examination of group dynamics and social development in the context of a particular community. The study participants consisted of 30 to 40 children between the ages of 4 and 17 who were involved in a six-day waste recycling craft program. These activities include recyclable waste collection, material sorting, and crafting. The research location was deliberately chosen to ensure the diversity of socio-economic backgrounds among the participants, so as to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these activities impact children from different socio-economic strata.

The selection of participants is based on several criteria. First, the age range of the selected participants was between 4 to 17 years, which covered different stages of social development, allowing the study to cover a wide range of experiences. Second, children were selected based on their active involvement in Children's Forum and waste recycling craft activities. This ensures that the data collected is relevant to the research objectives because these children have first-hand experience with the activities observed. In addition, the selection of the research location, namely Pandanlandung Village, ensured a diversity of socio-economic backgrounds among the participants, which allowed the researcher to understand how the socio-economic background affected the children's involvement in the activity. The facilitators who led the activity were also interviewed to

get their perspectives on the implementation of the program and its impact on the participants.

Overall, this study combines the collection and analysis of qualitative data to explore the social development of children through waste recycling craft activities. The use of various data collection techniques, along with the application of descriptive and qualitative analysis approaches, ensures that the findings of this research are robust and comprehensive. The selection of participants from diverse socio-economic backgrounds increased the relevance and relevance of the findings, allowing the study to understand how these activities affected the social and environmental development of children from different groups.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Before holding the children's forum meeting, we conducted a survey at the forum location and had the opportunity to meet with Mrs. Merri Wulandari, as the instructor of the children's forum. The survey results revealed various problems related to children's social development after the COVID-19 pandemic. This children's forum activity was designed to support government programs in child development, considering that many children currently show a high tendency towards gadget use. The implementation of this activity is expected to be a solution for children who have been significantly affected in the psychosocial aspect due to the pandemic. Limitations in social interaction during the pandemic have caused a decrease in children's awareness of their surroundings. Therefore, through this activity, children are empowered to process waste into useful items, while increasing their self-confidence.



Figure 1. Survey and Interview of Children's Forum activities

This activity also plays an important role in encouraging children to collaborate, share ideas, and create solutions collectively in facing various challenges. By utilizing the waste available around them, children not only learn to protect the environment, but also develop a sense of empathy for others. In addition, this activity contributes to reducing the social impact caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The children's forum functions as a forum that supports the recovery process of children after the pandemic through the development of creativity that can provide benefits for their future.

In this activity, children aged 4 to 17 years gathered to learn and discuss the importance of proper waste management. The activity began with a warm welcome from members of the Real Work Lecture (KKN) team who explained the purpose of this forum, which is to create a generation that cares about the environment and is able to contribute to maintaining the cleanliness of the surrounding

environment. The socialization of waste management was attended by 30 children who were participants in the children's forum, and was delivered using easy-to-understand language so that it could be accessed by all participants.

The initial meeting activities concentrated on presenting information regarding different categories of waste, encompassing both organic and inorganic waste. Children were instructed to identify different categories of garbage commonly encountered in daily life, including food waste, plastic, paper, and metal. Children were encouraged to actively participate in an engaging presentation by providing examples of garbage they face at home or school. This method seeks to enhance their understanding that trash is not merely refuse, but also exerts a considerable influence on health and environmental hygiene.

The socialization activity on waste management in this children's forum effectively fostered an informative and enjoyable environment. Children acquired not only new knowledge but also invaluable experience in collaboration and participation in environmental conservation initiatives. This activity aims to empower youngsters as agents of change who are environmentally conscious and capable of inspiring others to uphold cleanliness and sustainability.



Figure 2. Socialization of waste sorting

The second meeting activity was on transforming plastic bottles into aesthetically pleasing hairpins, which is an engaging and beneficial endeavor within the children's forum. This exercise educates children on the significance of garbage management while providing them the opportunity to innovate and express themselves artistically. In light of the escalating issue of plastic waste, this initiative serves as a tangible measure to educate the youth on the significance of recycling and the innovative repurposing of discarded materials.

The youngsters were subsequently categorized into two age groups: the first group included those

aged 4 to 13 years, while the second group comprised individuals aged 14 to 17 years. Each group received a quantity of discarded plastic bottles, cutting implements including scissors and cutters, as well as supplementary materials such as heat guns, paint, adhesive, and beads. Prior to commencing the production process, the Real Work Lecture (KKN) team conducted a brief presentation on converting plastic bottles into aesthetically pleasing hairpins, showcasing examples of the completed products. The demonstration meticulously outlined the necessary stages, first with the cleaning of bottles, followed by cutting, creating flower petal patterns, painting, and culminating in the arrangement of these elements into flowers. This presentation is crucial for ensuring that children comprehend the procedure and can adhere to instructions effectively.



Figure 3. Process of making flower petal patterns

The third meeting activity involved painting flower petals with acrylic paint. This painting practice helps enhance children's concentration on creativity. Children may select acrylic paint in appealing hues based on their preferences. A brush is required to apply the paint uniformly on the surface of the cut bottle. Children may utilize a singular hue or amalgamate multiple hues to produce a captivating gradation effect. Following the painting process, it is essential to let the paint to dry for some minutes before advancing to the subsequent phase. This painting procedure provides youngsters with an opportunity to express their creativity, encouraging them to experiment with various patterns and approaches.

Children aged 4 to 13 are instructed in painting, enabling them to express their creativity not only on flower petals but also via their imaginative artwork. Group painting activities can enhance social connection among children. In this setting, kids acquire the ability to interact, exchange ideas, and offer feedback to one another, which are essential abilities for fostering interpersonal connections. This procedure enhances social connections and fosters the cultivation of empathy and proficient

communication abilities. Thus, painting not only serves as a means to hone creativity, but also as a platform for holistic social development. Research shows that involvement in art activities can contribute to increasing children's self-confidence and problem-solving skills, which are very important in their developmental stage. Therefore, the integration of painting activities in children's educational curriculum is highly recommended to support their overall growth.



Figure 4. The process of painting flower petals and attaching flower petals.

During the fourth meeting, participants engaged in the task of adhering flower petals and embellishing them with beads. This approach encompasses fine motor abilities and offers children a chance to express their ideas independently. This practice encourages youngsters to arrange flowers creatively, enhancing their self-confidence and personal happiness upon viewing the outcomes of their efforts.

Upon completion of the floral arrangements, the children affix their creation to the designated space. This activity functions both as a medium for creating artwork and as a catalyst for enhancing social interaction among children. This technique allows for collaboration, idea exchange, and mutual feedback, which are essential for cultivating social skills.



Figure 5. The result of flower clip work from plastic bottles

The findings of this exercise indicate that numerous youngsters may engage socially with their peers, fostering an environment conducive to healthy connections. Participation in artistic endeavors like these can enhance social connections and elevate communication abilities among children. Moreover, beading activities enhance cognitive development, since youngsters are required to make decisions regarding color, form, and arrangement, all of which foster critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. The practice of adhering flower petals and embellishing them with beads not only offers an enjoyable artistic experience but also functions as a mechanism to enhance children's social and emotional development. Consequently, the incorporation of artistic activities in children's education is crucial for fostering a comprehensive learning environment and facilitating their general development.



Figure 7. Group photo with the children's forum

Discussion

The initiatives executed within the Pandanlandung Village youngsters's Forum aimed to educate youngsters on waste management while also promoting their social development after the isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings from our engagement indicate that these programs successfully met the urgent demand for social interaction among children and facilitated their comprehensive development.

A notable result of the forum's initiatives is the empowering of youngsters via practical creative recycling projects. The conversion of waste materials into functional and aesthetically pleasing

objects, such as hairpins crafted from plastic bottles, exemplifies the notion of trash as a resource. This corresponds with the findings of Burky [1], which emphasize that creative activities might foster children's sense of action and responsibility toward their environment. Through active participation in the recycling process, children acquire knowledge of waste management while simultaneously cultivating practical skills and confidence in their capacity to innovate and positively impact their community.

The children's forum functioned as an essential platform for improving social interactions that had declined throughout the pandemic. During the many meetings, children participated in collaborative tasks that promoted cooperation, communication, and the exchange of ideas. Particularly, activities like painting flower petals and constructing crafts enabled youngsters to develop crucial social skills, including empathy, negotiation, and the sharing of feedback. These findings corroborate the research of Rasyid et al. [11], who underscore the significance of collaborative learning in fostering children's social competences.

Furthermore, the organized setting of the forum facilitated children's adept navigation of social dynamics, hence enhancing interpersonal relationships. As youngsters shifted from solitary chores to collaborative activities, they exhibited enhanced proficiency in cooperating towards shared objectives, which is essential for their social development.

Children acquired substantial knowledge regarding waste management and environmental protection through the forum's activities. The discourse regarding various waste categories and their effects on health and the environment fostered a sense of accountability among participants. Engaging young individuals is essential, since studies demonstrate that early education on environmental matters fosters enduring sustainable habits [12]. The affirmative reactions from children, acknowledging waste as an important issue, suggest that kids are starting to perceive themselves as environmental stewards and agents of change capable of actively fostering a cleaner and healthier community.

Artistic endeavors, including painting and creating, are essential to children's education, facilitating the development of fine motor skills, emotional expression, and self-esteem enhancement. The pleasurable aspects of these activities, along with educational elements, establish an engaged learning atmosphere in which children feel secure to explore and articulate themselves. Engagement in art-based initiatives has demonstrated the capacity to bolster children's self-confidence when they confront problems and observe the concrete outcomes of their endeavors. This component of the program corroborates Ahmad [13,14,15] claim that creative participation in education fosters the development of critical consciousness and reflective thinking.

The success of the Pandanlandung Village Children's Forum underscores the potential for analogous initiatives to significantly influence children's education and social development in other communities. Essential insights from this effort highlight the significance of cultivating an atmosphere that promotes creativity, cooperation, and active engagement in community matters. Programs should emphasize not only environmental education but also the incorporation of activities that foster social interaction and communication among children [16,17].

Furthermore, as children resume their routines following the epidemic, it is essential to sustain care for their psychosocial needs via organized platforms that promote engagement, creativity, and

environmental awareness. Local governments and educational institutions ought to invest in projects that effectively support children's developmental journeys [19].

In conclusion, the initiatives undertaken by the Children's Forum in Pandanlandung Village have produced substantial beneficial results for children's social development, creativity, and environmental consciousness. These initiatives exemplify holistic educational approaches by converting waste into art, promoting teamwork, and cultivating a feeling of responsibility, making them replicable in other situations. It is imperative to extend the scope of these programs to enable the next generation to become informed, involved, and responsible citizens [20,21].

4. CONCLUSION

The initiatives carried out by the Pandanlandung Village Children's Forum demonstrate the significant impact of creative recycling activities on children's social development, environmental awareness, and overall empowerment. By actively participating in transforming waste into functional art, children gained practical skills and experienced significant improvements in their self-esteem and confidence. The structured environment of the forum fostered vital social connections, enabling children to develop collaboration, empathy, and communication skills—essential qualities for their overall development. These activities were particularly effective in addressing the psychosocial challenges faced by children after the COVID-19 pandemic, offering them a chance to reconnect with peers and form new friendships in a supportive setting. The educational focus on waste management instilled a sense of environmental responsibility, encouraging children to see themselves as active stewards of their community.

The success of this initiative emphasizes the need for similar projects to be implemented in various communities, as they serve as powerful catalysts for promoting positive change. By continually investing in initiatives that combine creative expression with environmental education, we can nurture a new generation of informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. In conclusion, the Children's Forum initiatives serve as a model for how educational approaches can effectively address both social and environmental challenges while enhancing children's well-being. Policymakers, educators, and community leaders must recognize the value of such efforts and work to expand them, ensuring that all children have the opportunity to thrive in a nurturing and enriching environment. Looking ahead, it is recommended that similar initiatives be expanded to other regions, incorporating more diverse groups of children and integrating additional environmental education programs to further enhance their impact. Providing continuous support and resources for such programs can help sustain long-term social and environmental benefits. The difference observed before and after the activities is notable—before participating in the forum, many children struggled with social isolation and lacked awareness about environmental issues. However, after the program, there was a clear improvement in their social interactions, communication skills, and sense of responsibility towards their community and the environment, highlighting the transformative power of creative educational activities.

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