

# Teacher Strategies for Developing Environmental Care Attitudes in Early Childhood: A Literature Review

Tari<sup>1\*</sup>, Henny<sup>2</sup>, La Jeti<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Buton, Baubau, Indonesia

e-mail: \*<sup>1</sup>[tari00325@gmail.com](mailto:tari00325@gmail.com), <sup>2</sup>[heni88buton@gmail.com](mailto:heni88buton@gmail.com),

<sup>3</sup>[ljajeti@gmail.com](mailto:ljajeti@gmail.com)

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze teachers' strategies in developing environmental care attitudes among early childhood children through a literature review approach. The study reviewed 19 nationally accredited SINTA journal articles published between 2021 and 2026. The data were collected through a documentation study by identifying relevant articles using the keywords early childhood teachers' strategies, early childhood environmental education, and environmental care attitudes through Google Scholar. Data were analyzed using content analysis, which consisted of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the most dominant learning approaches were ecopedagogy and the contextual approach, each identified in eight articles, while two articles employed a learning-through-play approach and one article integrated both the contextual and ecopedagogy approaches. The most frequently applied instructional methods were the project method and habituation,

whereas the dominant instructional techniques consisted of hands-on practice and observation. Environment-based classroom management was also found to effectively support the development of environmental care attitudes among young children. The findings further reveal that learning strategies based on direct experiences are more effective in fostering environmental care attitudes than learning that relies solely on instructional approaches.

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### **Introduction**

Early childhood education is a fundamental stage in shaping children's character, values, and behaviors, all of which will influence their future lives (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). During this period, children experience the golden age, characterized by rapid development in cognitive, social-emotional, moral, and behavioral aspects, making it the most appropriate time to instill various positive character traits, one of which is environmental care (Henny, 2022; Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Environmental care attitudes need to be nurtured from an early age because various environmental issues, such as pollution, waste accumulation, flooding, and ecosystem degradation, continue to pose significant challenges in Indonesian society. Environmental education in early childhood is regarded as a preventive effort to build ecological awareness and environmentally responsible behavior from an early age (UNESCO, 2021).

A low level of environmental awareness is not only evident among the general public but is also reflected in the behavior of young children,

who are often not yet accustomed to maintaining environmental cleanliness, disposing of waste properly, or caring for plants within the school environment. In fact, young children possess a strong tendency to imitate the behaviors of those around them, making the development of positive habits highly dependent on the learning environment they experience every day. Therefore, appropriate learning strategies are required to ensure that environmental care values can be instilled effectively through meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences (Sastradiharja, 2024; UNESCO, 2020)

Early childhood teachers play a strategic role in developing environmental care attitudes among young children. Teachers function not only as instructors who deliver learning materials but also as facilitators, motivators, and role models in shaping children's behavior. The instructional strategies implemented by teachers help children understand the importance of protecting the environment through habituation activities, hands-on practice, environmental projects, and exploration of the natural surroundings. Learning experiences connected to children's real-life contexts are considered more effective in fostering environmental care attitudes than learning that relies solely on direct instruction (Haula et al., 2024; Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory explains that children's development is influenced by interactions between individuals and the various environments surrounding them, including the family, school, and community (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Purwanti, 2017). Within the

context of early childhood education, teachers are part of the microsystem and therefore exert a substantial influence on children's behavioral development. In addition, Piaget's cognitive development theory emphasizes that young children learn most effectively through concrete experiences and direct interaction with their environment (Piaget, 1964; Mulyani, 2021). Both theories suggest that experience-based and environment-based learning strategies are highly relevant for fostering environmental care attitudes in early childhood.

Environmental education in early childhood is not taught as a separate subject but is integrated into various learning activities that are appropriate to children's developmental characteristics. Activities such as caring for plants, sorting waste, maintaining classroom cleanliness, and utilizing natural materials as learning media represent effective forms of environmental education. The concept of ecopedagogy also emphasizes the importance of developing ecological awareness through learning experiences centered on children's interaction with the environment, thereby fostering environmentally responsible behavior in a sustainable manner (Kamil, 2026; Gadotti, 2010). Environmental education introduced from an early age has been shown to play a significant role in developing children's ecoliteracy, or ecological literacy (Anggraeni, 2025; Capra, 2007; Mahdalina, 2023).

Previous studies have demonstrated that teachers' strategies play an important role in developing environmental care attitudes among young children. Haula et al. (2024) explained that teachers can introduce

environmental literacy through interactive approaches such as storytelling, games, project-based activities, and hands-on learning experiences. Sarisawati et al. (2020) found that environmental care character education can be fostered through active learning integrated with school culture and children's daily activities. Furthermore, Utara (2024) reported that children's environmental awareness can be developed through playworld, STEM, green school approaches, and the use of environment-based learning media. Septianingrum et al. (2024) also stated that the implementation of environmental education in early childhood education institutions increases children's participation in maintaining and caring for their learning environment.

Although numerous studies have examined environmental education in early childhood, their findings remain fragmented, focusing on different aspects such as instructional methods, environmental education approaches, or the implementation of environmentally oriented school programs. To date, there remains a limited number of studies that specifically synthesize effective teacher strategies for developing environmental care attitudes among young children through a literature review. In fact, identifying the dominant instructional approaches, methods, teaching techniques, and classroom management strategies is essential as a foundation for developing more effective learning practices in early childhood education institutions.

Based on these issues, this study aims to analyze teachers' strategies for developing environmental care attitudes among young children

through a literature review approach. It is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of effective instructional strategies for fostering environmental care attitudes in early childhood, thereby serving as a valuable reference for teachers and researchers in developing environment-based learning practices in early childhood education institutions.

### Methods

This study employed a literature review method using a content analysis approach to identify and analyze teachers' strategies for developing environmental care attitudes among young children. The literature review method was used to examine and synthesize findings from relevant previous studies in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon (Alfarizi & Hermina, 2025; Snyder, 2019). Content analysis was applied to systematically identify patterns and themes emerging from the selected articles (Krippendorff, 2018; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

The data sources consisted of secondary data obtained from nationally accredited SINTA journal articles published between 2021 and 2026. Data collection was conducted through a documentation study by searching for scientific articles using Google Scholar. The keywords used in the article search included "early childhood teacher strategies," "early childhood environmental education," and "environmental care attitudes." The retrieved articles were subsequently screened based on the predetermined inclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria applied in this study were as follows: (1) the article discusses teachers' strategies for developing environmental care attitudes among young children; (2) the article was published in a nationally accredited SINTA journal between 2021 and 2026; (3) the article is written in the Indonesian language; and (4) the article is relevant to learning approaches, instructional methods, teaching techniques, or classroom management in early childhood environmental education. Based on the screening process, a total of 19 articles met the inclusion criteria and were selected as the data sources for this study.

**Table 1.** Article Selection Criteria

| Article Selection Criteria  | Description                                                                           |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Publication year            | 2021–2026                                                                             |
| Source type                 | Nationally accredited SINTA journals                                                  |
| Language Indonesian         | Language Indonesian                                                                   |
| Research topic              | Teachers' strategies for developing environmental care attitudes among young children |
| Search database             | Google Scholar                                                                        |
| Number of articles analyzed | 19 articles                                                                           |

Data were analyzed using a literature analysis worksheet focusing on four main aspects: learning approaches, instructional methods, teaching techniques, and classroom management. The analysis was conducted in three stages: data reduction to classify relevant research

findings, data presentation in the form of descriptive explanations and analytical tables, and conclusion drawing to identify the most effective instructional strategy patterns for developing environmental care attitudes among young children.

**Result and Discussions**

The analysis of 19 nationally accredited SINTA journal articles indicates that teachers' strategies for developing environmental care attitudes among young children are implemented through four main components: learning approaches, instructional methods, teaching techniques, and environment-based classroom management. These four components are interconnected in providing meaningful learning experiences that foster the sustainable development of children's environmental care attitudes. Based on the literature review, the learning approaches used by teachers to develop environmental care attitudes among young children are quite diverse. The most dominant approaches identified in the reviewed articles are the ecopedagogy approach and the contextual approach. Both approaches were selected because they effectively connect learning with children's real-life experiences.

**Table 2.** Analysis of Learning Approaches

| Learning Approach | Number of Articles | Characteristics               |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Ecopedagogy       | 8                  | Promotes ecological awareness |



| Learning Approach          | Number of Articles | Characteristics                                                  |
|----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Contextual                 | 8                  | Connects learning with real-life experiences                     |
| Learning through play      | 2                  | Educational activities based on play                             |
| Contextual and Ecopedagogy | 1                  | Integration of real-life experiences and environmental awareness |

Based on Table 2, the ecopedagogy and contextual approaches are the most dominant learning approaches used to develop environmental care attitudes among young children. The ecopedagogy approach emphasizes the importance of direct interaction between children and their environment as a means of fostering ecological awareness from an early age. Through this approach, children not only acquire knowledge about the environment but also participate in various activities related to environmental conservation.

Meanwhile, the contextual approach helps children understand the importance of protecting the environment through activities closely related to their daily lives. Learning connected to children's real-life experiences is considered more effective because it aligns with the developmental characteristics of young children, who learn best through concrete experiences.

These findings are consistent with Piaget's cognitive development theory, which explains that young children learn most effectively through concrete experiences and direct interaction with their environment (Mulyani, 2021). Furthermore, Haula et al. (2024) explained that environmental literacy education for young children is more effective when implemented through interactive and experience-based activities. Therefore, learning approaches that provide children with authentic experiences have proven to be more effective in fostering environmental care attitudes from an early age.

Instructional methods also play a significant role in helping children understand environmental concepts in simple and enjoyable ways. Based on the analysis of the reviewed articles, the most frequently employed instructional methods are the project method and habituation. In addition, several studies also utilized demonstration and storytelling as strategies for instilling environmental care values.

**Table 3.** Analysis of Instructional Methods

| Instructional Method | Characteristics                                           |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Project              | Children actively participate in environmental activities |
| Habituation          | Implemented routinely and repeatedly                      |
| Demonstration        | Teachers provide direct examples                          |
| Storytelling         | Instilling values through stories                         |

Based on Table 3, the project method provides children with opportunities to participate directly in activities related to the environment. Project-based activities enable children to gain concrete

learning experiences, making it easier for them to understand the importance of environmental conservation. Through activities that actively involve children, learning becomes more meaningful and enjoyable. This finding is consistent with the Project Approach, which emphasizes children's active participation in learning through authentic experiences that enhance both conceptual understanding and social skills (Katz & Chard, 2000).

Meanwhile, the habituation method is implemented by consistently and repeatedly encouraging environmentally responsible behaviors in children's daily school activities. Continuous habituation helps children develop positive behaviors that gradually become part of their everyday habits. Demonstration and storytelling are also employed as alternative methods to introduce environmental care values in ways that are simple and easily understood by young children. The consistent practice of positive behaviors has likewise been recognized as an effective strategy for character development in early childhood (Lickona, 2013).

These findings are consistent with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which explains that children learn through observing and imitating the behaviors demonstrated by people around them. Teachers' role modeling in maintaining and caring for the environment is therefore one of the key factors contributing to the successful development of environmental care attitudes among young children. Similarly, Septianingrum et al. (2024) found that the integration of environmental education into classroom learning increases children's

participation in environmental conservation from an early age.

The teaching techniques employed in environmental education are intended to provide concrete learning experiences that correspond to the developmental characteristics of young children. The analysis indicates that hands-on practice and observation are the most dominant teaching techniques used in environment-based learning.

Table 4. Analysis of Teaching Techniques

| Teaching Technique  | Function                                |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Hands-on practice   | Provides authentic learning experiences |
| Observation         | Develops curiosity                      |
| Exploration         | Encourages active learning              |
| Question-and-answer | Enhances children's understanding       |

Based on Table 4, hands-on practice is an effective teaching technique for helping children understand environmental concepts through direct experience. Experience-based learning (*learning by doing*) is considered more effective in helping children understand concepts than learning based solely on theoretical instruction (Dewey, 1938). Children more easily understand the importance of protecting the environment when they are directly involved in learning activities. Observation also provides opportunities for children to examine various environmental phenomena, thereby fostering curiosity and environmental awareness.

Furthermore, exploration and question-and-answer techniques help children develop critical thinking skills and understand the

relationship between humans and the environment. Because young children's learning characteristics are concrete and exploratory, experience-based teaching techniques are particularly appropriate for environmental education. These findings support Piaget's theory, which states that learning involving concrete experiences is more easily understood by young children than learning that relies solely on verbal explanations or direct instruction (Mulyani, 2021).

Environment-based classroom management is another important strategy supporting the success of environmental education in early childhood. A clean, comfortable, and exploration-friendly learning environment creates more meaningful learning experiences for children. A sustainably designed learning environment is also recognized as one of the essential indicators of successful environmental education implementation in early childhood settings (UNESCO, 2020).

Teachers can establish a learning environment that promotes environmental care attitudes by involving children actively in maintaining the cleanliness and organization of their classrooms. Environment-based classroom management can also be implemented by utilizing the surrounding environment as a learning resource, enabling children to better understand the importance of environmental conservation.

These findings support Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory, which explains that children's behavioral development is strongly influenced by the environments in which they interact on a daily basis (Purwanti,

2017). A positively designed learning environment provides optimal stimulation for developing environmental care attitudes among young children. Overall, the findings indicate that teachers' strategies for developing environmental care attitudes among young children are more effective when implemented through experience-based learning. The integration of ecopedagogy and contextual approaches, project and habituation methods, hands-on practice and observation techniques, and environment-based classroom management provides meaningful learning experiences for children.

Instructional strategies that actively involve children not only help them understand the importance of protecting the environment but also foster positive habits that can be applied in their daily lives. Teachers play a role not only as providers of information but also as facilitators who create learning environments that support the sustainable development of environmental care attitudes.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the analysis of 19 nationally accredited SINTA journal articles, it can be concluded that teachers' strategies for developing environmental care attitudes among young children are more effective when implemented through experience-based learning that integrates learning approaches, instructional methods, teaching techniques, and environment-based classroom management. The ecopedagogy and contextual approaches emerged as the most dominant approaches because they effectively connect learning with children's real-life

experiences. In addition, the project method and habituation, together with hands-on practice and observation techniques, have proven to provide meaningful learning experiences and effectively support the development of environmental care attitudes among young children. The findings indicate that the successful development of environmental care attitudes in early childhood is influenced not only by the learning content but also by children's active participation in various environment-related activities and the teacher's role in creating a supportive and enjoyable learning environment. Therefore, early childhood teachers are expected to consistently integrate environmental education into various learning activities so that environmental care attitudes can gradually develop into positive habits in children's daily lives.

This study recommends that future research examine the effectiveness of specific learning approaches or instructional methods in early childhood environmental education through experimental research, classroom action research, or field studies conducted across various early childhood education institutions. In this way, the development of environment-based instructional strategies can be carried out in a more comprehensive and sustainable manner.

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