

## Environmental Saving Model in South Kalimantan in Children's Stories: Environmental Literacy from An Early Age

**Derri Ris Riana, Syaifuddin, Binar Kurniasari, Dara Windiyarti**

National Research and Innovation Agency

Jalan Gatot Subroto, Central Jakarta

derri.ris.riana@brin.go.id, syai007@brin.go.id, bina003@brin.go.id, dara.windiyarti@brin.go.id

**Abstract.** The urgency of saving the environment is urgently carried out at this time when the environmental crisis hits the South Kalimantan region. Ecological disasters due to the unwise management of natural resources show the impact of human treatment on nature. Concern for nature needs to be increased from an early age to increase knowledge and behavior in preserving nature. One of the media in increasing concern for nature is through reading materials in the form of children's stories. Through children's stories, concern for the environment can be increased by language that is aesthetically pleasing and close to the child so that environmental values are easily internalized without seeming patronizing. The problem is how the model of environmental conservation in the South Kalimantan region in children's stories. This study aims to explore environmental saving models in the South Kalimantan region in children's stories to improve environmental literacy from an early age. The method used is qualitative with an ecocritic approach. Ecocritics are used to analyze data on children's stories related to environmental rescue models. The primary sources used in this study are two children's story books entitled *Menyelusuri Tepian Pulau Kaget* by Drs. M. Yusransyah and *Aku, Pramuka*, and *Lingkungan Hidup* by Hardiansyah Asmail. The secondary data used are books, journals, and other references related to the research. The results showed that the environmental saving model seen in children's stories in South Kalimantan, among others, carried out bekantan conservation, protection of endemic animals in South Kalimantan; fostering biodiversity; and managing nature wisely. This research is expected to contribute to real practices of saving the environment, especially in Kalimantan Selatan.

Keywords: environmental conservation, children's stories, ecocritics

### 1 Introduction

Calls for saving the environment were done by various groups as a form of concern for the environmental crisis happened these days. The environmental movement is carried out to increase awareness of the importance of environmental sustainability to human survival. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was formed in 1972 as an effort to save the environment by building cooperation between nations to address the problems of deteriorating global, regional, and national environmental conditions (Directorate General of Trade Negotiations International, 2018). The Greenpeace organization originally formed in 1971 with regional offices in 41 countries has carried out environmental rescue campaigns. The missions were undertaken, that is to call for protecting biodiversity wealth in various forms; preventing pollution and abuse of the sea, land, air, and clean water; stopping the nuclear threat; and promoting peace, global disarmament, and nonviolent action (Greenpeace, 2022)

In South Kalimantan, an environmental rescue movement is also carried out to protect areas that are experiencing exploitation of natural resources, especially coal. *Wahana Lingkungan Hidup* (Walhi) South Kalimantan has made active efforts in protecting the Meratus Mountains as a life support in South

Kalimantan with the hashtag *#savemeratus*. Walhi has won a lawsuit against the Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources who has issued coal production permits in 2018 in Tabalong Regency, Balangan Regency, and Hulu Sungai Tengah Regency with an area of 5,908 Ha (WALHI Press Release, 2021). The environmental saving movement in South Kalimantan is also carried out in the form of publishing children's stories in the environmental series. Environmental awareness needs to be grown from an early age through children's stories that are close to children's daily lives so that they can cultivate concern for the environment with an aesthetically imaginative language so that it attracts interest and does not seem patronizing.

Based on this background, the problem of this research is a series of environmental saving models in South Kalimantan in the children's story of the environmental series. This study aims to explore environmental saving models in South Kalimantan in the children's story of the environmental series. In this case, South Kalimantan has distinctive environmental characteristics dominated by rivers, peatlands, and mountains, as well as biodiversity. This study explores environmental saving methods in the problem of environmental crisis in South Kalimantan through children's stories in South Kalimantan to improve environmental literacy from an early age.

Research related to children's stories in increasing ecological awareness has been carried out considering the importance of campaigning for concern for nature from an early age. Research related to the use of literature in learning to form ecological awareness from an early age has been carried out by (Budiharto & Ramadani, 2018); (Hafida, et al, 2020); and (Siregar, Masyunita, Meilani, Sri Martini, Purwanto, 2021). Research on the role of children's stories in increasing environmental awareness is contained in the writing (Thamrin, 2018); (Purbani, 2013); and (Bhalla, 2012). This study explores environmental saving models in the children's story of the environmental series in South Kalimantan.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

Children's literature is literature that is intended and read by children with the guidance and direction of adult members of society, while the writing is carried out by adults (Toha-Sarumpaet, 2010, p.2). McDowell gives a characteristic about children's literature, that is, it is usually shorter, tending to use actions that are active with dialogue and events rather than descriptions and introspections; the protagonist's child character; conventions are more widely used; the story develops with a clear moral cut scheme that is often avoided in adult stories; tends to be optimistic rather than depressive; child-oriented language; plots of a typical sequence; tends to talk at length about magic, fantasy, simplicity, and adventure (Lesnik-Oberstein, 1999, p.23). The existence of children's books has an important role in instilling the values of life in children. Children's books have several benefits, including filling time, building literacy, developing imagination, instilling general or special social behavior facing problems, or facing problems of discrimination (Hunt, 2005, p.10). In this case, the phenomenon of children's literature is often related to the worship of nature, the preservation of the environment, and the maintenance of the environment clean (Endraswara, 2016).

In the midst of an environmental crisis, efforts to increase ecological awareness are carried out, one of which is through the medium of children's stories. Children's stories are one the effective media in instilling concern for the environment from an early age because they play an important role in building environmental literacy (Purbani, 2013). Children literature contributes to efforts to save the environment by providing understanding and raising awareness regarding the importance of environmental conservation. It is this ecological awareness that needs to be instilled from an early age so that the introduction to the surrounding nature and the importance of caring for nature is more easily internalized along with the cognitive, social, and moral development of children. Children's literature not only provides an entertainment space but also ecological insight to children through imaginative images with an aesthetic language that corresponds to the world of children. Ecological insights, environmental ethics, and ecological awareness provided through literary works encourage values to be internalized through depiction through symbols, metaphors, stylistics, etc. (Dewi, 2016, p.22).

Studies that explore the relationship between man and the physical environment depicted in literary works are included in ecocritics. According to Rueckert, ecocritics is the application of ecological and ecological concepts to literature studies (Glotfelty, Cheryll, and Fromm, 1996, p.xx). Most ecocritic works share motivations about awareness of the limitations of nature, an age when there

were consequences of human actions undermining the basic life support systems of the earth (Glotfelty, Cheryll, and Fromm, 1996, p. xxii). Worsters asserts that literature can contribute to save the environment. Although it cannot make a change, literature can help in providing an understanding and awareness of global crises, especially the environment (Glotfelty, Cheryll, and Fromm, 1996, p. xxii). In line with Worsters' statement, Garrad stated that while it may not be qualified to contribute to the resolution of ecological problems, ecocritics can develop ecological literacy by describing the environmental threats facing the world today and possible solutions to overcome them (Garrad, 2004, p.5). The initial idea of ecocritics was originally aimed at saving the earth by carrying out a struggle to protect the biotic environment (Buell, 2005, p. 21). With the study of ecocritics in children's stories in South Kalimantan, it can explore environmental saving models in conserving biodiversity in South Kalimantan.

### 3 Method

This research is qualitative research with an ecocritic approach. Ecocritics are used to analyze data on children's stories related to environmental saving models. The primary data sources used in this study are children's stories contained in two children's storybooks in the environmental series entitled *Menyelusuri Tepian Pulau Kaget* by Drs.M. Yusransyah and *Aku, Pramuka, and The Environment* by Hardiansyah Asmail. *Menyelusuri Tepian Pulau Kaget* was published by Sasmita Utama in 2017, while the book *Aku, Pramuka, and The Environment* was published by Mitra Gama Widya in 2017. In addition to primary data sources, secondary sources used are books, journals, and other references related to children's stories and related to the role of environmental conservation.

Data analysis was carried out by reading all the children's stories contained in the two books *Menyelusuri Tepian Pulau Kaget* and *Aku, Pramuka, and Lingkungan Hidup*. Furthermore, data classification of children's stories with the theme of the environment was carried out. Repeated readings are carried out to gain an understanding of the problem of environmental saving models in the children's stories. Data analysis was carried out using ecocritic theory derived from Garrad's idea that ecocritics develop ecological literacy by increasing awareness of environmental threats and environmental saving solutions (Garrad, 2004, p. 5). The theory is used to explore environmental saving models in selected children's stories.

### 4 Results and Discussion

The children's story of the environmental series in the two books *Menyelusuri Tepian Pulau Kaget* dan *Aku, Pramuka, and Lingkungan Hidup* describes the model of saving the environment in South Kalimantan. The environmental saving model includes conserving bekantan, endemic animals of South Kalimantan which are used as mascots for the identity of Banjarmasin City; fostering biodiversity; and manage nature wisely.

#### **Conserving Bekantan in Children's Stories *Menyelusuri Tepian Pulau Kaget***

The children's story entitled *Menyelusuri Tepian Pulau Kaget* is included in the environmental series which is packaged as an effort to introduce the environment to children about the existence of the environment around them. This book tells the story of the journey of three high school students, namely Fitri, Ilham, and Mamat who were accompanied by their teacher, namely Mrs. Sarah to Kaget Island, which is a bekantan's nature reserve area. Bekantan is an endemic animal of South Kalimantan which is the mascot of Banjarmasin City. This animal, which has the scientific name *Nasalis Larvatus*, has the characteristics of being long-nosed and large and has reddish-brown hair. This child's story reveals an environmental introduction to the existence of bekantan in detail is explained the characteristics of body shape, food, as well as behaviors such as how to move, how to socialize, and how to respond to threats from the outside. Here's an overview of bekantan's behavior when responding to human presence.

"The nature of bekantan as it is today is indeed somewhat different from ten years ago. But the wild nature is still there. They still ran away as soon as they heard a human voice talking too loudly. However, if they hear a mediocre voice, they will not run away. Hearing the sound of the look

machine is also the case. If the look is run at high speed so that it makes a loud enough sound, bekantan will run around. Similarly to the presence of men, if a man gets too close to them, the proboscis will run away." (Yusransyah, 1997, p. 71)

In addition to reveal an introduction to bekantan, this child's story presents a model of saving bekantan environment. With its existence beginning to be threatened, bekantan was designated by the government as protected animals. Protection of bekantan as protected animals is carried out by creating a nature reserve area. In the story, it is depicted that Kaget Island is designated as a bekantan's nature reserve area to protect its population and maintain the habitat in the area. This area was formed to address various threats of environmental changes from outside that are disturbing. An overview of the existence of bekantan on the island of Kalimantan which is designated as a nature reserve area can be seen in the following quote.

From the nameplate on the edge of the island, I can get a little information about Kaget Island. The small island turned out to be a nature reserve area located in the Muara Sungai Barito which belongs to the Tabunganen District, Barito Kuala Regency. On the board, there is also a prohibition on carrying, damaging, or killing all the flora and fauna found on Kaget Island (Yusransyah, 1997, p.24).

In the quote, it is shown that Kaget Island is a nature reserve area located at the mouth of the Barito River, Barito Kuala Regency. As a nature reserve area, a marker is given in the form of an advisory board to maintain the sustainability of Kaget Island by not destroying the habitat by not damaging the plants and animals in it. The prohibition of carrying, damaging, and killing flora and fauna on Kaget Island is a model for saving the bekantan habitat on Kaget Island. Saving the environment of Kaget Island needs to be done with massive threat to its sustainability. In the story, there are changes in the environment due to the opening of wild rice fields. The author describes that the opening of these wild rice fields can damage bekantan habitat on Kaget Island which results in the move of bekantan to areas that are not included in the nature reserve area. An overview of environmental problems on Kaget Island can be seen in the following quote.

... Without being asked, I immediately answered Ilham's question, "If it is an environmental problem, you have witnessed the destruction of bekantan habitat due to the opening of wild rice fields by the people around Kaget Island. Although not too severe, the destruction of bekantan habitats can cause them to move to other areas that do not belong to the nature reserve area. If that event happens, you can certainly imagine the consequences." (p. 82)

Through *the story of Menyelusuri Tepian Pulau Kaget*, the author invites children to participate in getting to know and protect the environment, as well as improving environmental literacy from an early age. The invitation was expressly conveyed with straightforward language to form a character of love for the environment. In the story, it is shown that the author invites the younger generation to preserve the environment. The trip and observation to Kaget Island are one of the steps in introducing bekantan environment and forming a love for the environment. A statement describing the author's invitation for the younger generation to love the environment can be seen in the following quote.

"Yes. Therefore, as the younger generation, on your shoulders, the responsibility is to preserve the environment in the future. That's why study diligently and strive to get to know everything that is part of our living environment. I invite you here, to Kaget Island, for example, so that your knowledge and insights will be opened up," I said again. (Yusransyah, 1997, p.82)

The author of the children's story *Menyelusuri Tepian Pulau Kaget* introduced bekantan's environment, criticized the environmental problems of the Kaget Island nature reserve, and presented a model of saving bekantan environment. The environmental saving model is carried out through bekantan's conservation with the establishment of the Kaget Island nature reserve area, the determination of bekantan as protected animals, the prohibition of damaging the nature reserve area, and fostering an attitude of love for the environment from an early age.

### **Fostering Biodiversity in My Children's Stories, *Scouts, and the Environment***

The children's story *Aku, Pramuka, and the Environment* by Hardiansyah Asmail is included in the environmental series which aims to present environment and instill the importance of maintaining environmental harmony. This book invites to increase concern for nature with stories that are close to the world of children, namely stories about scouting activities. The book tells about the activities of scout figures aimed at improving insight and skills through various exercises and games. Environmental insights become the focus of storytelling by introducing the biodiversity that exists around the environment. The author expresses the real understanding and practice of scouting in the surrounding environment contributing to the saving of the environment.

The author describes that the effort of fostering biodiversity is displayed with various efforts, including knowledge, introduction, and maintenance of medicinal plants; cultivation of freshwater fish; bee keeping; and plant grafting. One example of growing biodiversity in this story is increasing insight into medicinal plants. Readers are invited to explore the benefits of each medicinal plant, such as the papaya tree, noni fruit, betel leaf, ginger, sand ginger, turmeric, galangal, aloe vera, celery, hibiscus, jasmine flower, beluntas leaf, and lime. The following is an explanation of the benefits of medicinal plants, namely noni fruit conveyed from the character of Kak Rusdi as the scout coach to the character of the scout members.

"That's right, noni fruit is also medicinally efficacious. If we have a high blood disease or an ulcer, we can drink the water of the fruit feeling ripe to treat it. The squeezed water of the fruit can also launch urine. The noni fruit can also be used as a medicine for shampooing so that the hair grows healthy and thrives." (Asmail, 1997, p.36)

The story introduces biodiversity, including plants that are classified as medicinal plants because they have properties in curing various diseases. In the quote, it is described that noni fruit has properties in treating high blood diseases and ulcers. The author points out that the cultivation of this medicinal plant can preserve useful plants in human life. In addition to adding environmental insights, knowledge about medicinal plants and their benefits, as well as how to maintain them, this can play a role as an environmental conservation.

### **Managing The Use of the Environment Wisely in Children's Stories *Aku, Pramuka, dan Lingkungan Hidup***

The Story of *Aku, Pramuka, dan Lingkungan Hidup* presents an environmental saving model in the form of an appeal to manage the use of the environment wisely through the prohibition of catching fish with tools that are not good for the environment. The prohibition of fishing with hazardous materials is expressed in the story through the depiction of the character Kak Rusdi in explaining the threat of fish existence due to fishing with dangerous sumps, for example, potassium/tuba poison, electric shock, and explosives. The description of the environmental damage deed is disclosed by the author in the following excerpt.

"Of course, you can. Especially now that fishing is often done arbitrarily. For example, it uses potassium or tubal poison, electric shock, and explosives, all of which are mass-killing. As a result, any kind of fish, no matter big or small, will die. Doesn't such a deed make the fish unable to breed? If people continue to do it, especially when it is done by many people in many places, isn't the result of the fish being endangered?" (Asmail, 1997:58)

The author criticizes environmental problems as a result of the use of these hazardous materials, namely the threat of environmental damage and fish extinction. Regulations related to the preservation of fishery resources have been in place, but ecological awareness to support regulation is to be continuously improved. The author calls for efforts to save the environment by using environmentally friendly materials in utilizing natural resources wisely.

Unwise management of natural resources encourages higher cases of environmental pollution. The problem of pollution is an environmental issue that is currently happened. Anthropocentric attitudes that consider that nature can be exploited for the fulfillment of human needs contribute to

environmental pollution conditions. The author presents a model of saving the environment by utilizing natural resources wisely so as not to cause ecological disasters and environmental pollution.

"Can we be as careful or as we please ourselves in taking advantage of the riches of nature?"

"Of course, you shouldn't. The use of natural wealth without calculation can cause problems, which may eventually lead to disasters. For example, the occurrence of environmental pollution and environmental destruction. What is meant by environmental pollution is the entry or inclusion of living things, substances, energy, and/or other components into the environment. It can also be said that environmental pollution is a change in the environmental order due to human activities or due to natural processes so that the quality of the environment becomes reduced or can no longer function according to its designation." (Asmail, 1997, p.15)

Environmental issues in the form of environmental pollution raised by the author are caused by the unwise management of natural resources. In this case, children's stories that reveal environmental saving models need to be revealed to grow environmental literacy from this age. If the cultivation of environmental care character starts from its roots, which is when children begin to grow and develop in getting to know the environment, it is expected to be able to increase human ecological awareness. Children's stories that contribute to efforts to increase ecological awareness are found in Thamrin's writings through children's stories in the picture book *The Secret Garden* arousing children's awareness of the environment (Thamrin, 2018). This research reveals an environmental rescue model in South Kalimantan in the children's story of the environmental series.

## 5 Conclusion

Children's stories are one the effective media in instilling an attitude of concern for the environment from an early age. In this paper, we revealed the model of saving the environment in South Kalimantan on the stories of children who developed in the region. In addition to arouse ecological awareness, this research is expected to contribute to real practices of saving the environment, especially in South Kalimantan through conserving bekantan; fostering biodiversity; and managing the environment wisely.

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