



BUILDING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS THROUGH MINI GARDENS AND RECYCLING OF CHILDREN'S WASTE IN RA AL-KHOIRIYAH

Indah Indasah

Universitas Pangeran Diponogoro Nganjuk
indasahindah1988@gmail.com

Abstract: Environmental awareness in early childhood is important because it helps instill a sense of love and responsibility for nature from an early age, forms a character that cares about the environment until adulthood, and becomes the foundation for the creation of a more sustainable future. By instilling this awareness, children will better understand the importance of maintaining the cleanliness and sustainability of the surrounding environment. Children play an important role in shaping a generation that cares about environmental sustainability. At an early age, their curiosity is very high and they tend to absorb information quickly. This is the right time to introduce the values of caring for nature and how they can play a role in protecting it. Instilling a sense of responsibility from a young age is very important so that children get used to doing simple things that have a positive impact on the environment. When they understand why taking care of nature is important, they will be motivated to act, even from small things. In addition, good habits such as throwing garbage in its place, saving water, and using energy wisely should also be formed early. This habit will become part of their lifestyle until adulthood and also support environmental conservation efforts.

Keywords: Environmental awareness, mini gardens, and waste recycling, RA Al-Khoiriyah

INTRODUCTION

Children's natural interest in the environment is the foundation of environmental education in early childhood. As our healthy environment is fraught with many challenges, it is important to instill sustainable practices and values from an early age. Most institutions consider the early childhood age range to include infants to 8-year-olds. Teaching environmental education to this age group provides a unique opportunity to shape children's attitudes and behaviors towards the environment from an early age.

This education also aims to foster a sense of wonder and appreciation for our planet. This is done by providing opportunities for children to feel the happiness of being close to nature and develop respect for all creatures. This approach is both cognitive and emotional, and combines knowledge and action.

Environmental Awareness is an action or attitude directed to understand the importance of a healthy, clean environment, and so on. Awareness in the environment can be seen from a person's behavior and actions in a situation where a person feels free from pressure (Amos, 2008). Efforts to take conscious actions are needed as a way of managing the environment by maintaining or improving the quality of the environment so that human needs are met properly.

Four factors affect environmental awareness. First, the factor of ignorance, based on curiosity. According to Amos (2008), consciousness can be interpreted as knowing. When a person is said to be unconscious, the person has no knowledge about the environment. So it

can be concluded that a person's ignorance can affect their environmental awareness. Second, the poverty factor; poverty is a state where a person cannot meet his needs. Population growth that is not balanced with growth will cause stress on the population.

Poverty is one of the sources of social problems because they are more focused on meeting needs rather than responding to environmental issues. Third, the humanitarian factor; Humanity means human or human qualities. Humans are intelligent beings who are able to choose what is right and wrong. If a person has a high sense of humanity then they will pay attention to things that can save many humans and not harm other humans. Therefore, a person with a high level of humanity will be more environmentally conscious so that they can protect the environment for the common good. Fourth, lifestyle factors: A person's lifestyle can have an effect on their level of awareness of the environment. If someone has a green lifestyle, then they will pay attention to what they are doing to the environment. Their interest will be focused on everything that is environmentally friendly and their opinions will also be in favor of saving the environment (Amos, 2008).

METHOD

The mentoring strategy consists of socialization, training, and mentoring. The socialization was aimed at school residents in RA Al-Khoiriyah with the aim of educating them about the importance of mini garden management and waste recycling. The mentoring is aimed at providing awareness of the importance of cleanliness in the school environment. The service activities will be carried out from July to September 10, 2025, with the following stages:

- 1 07 July 2025 Initial Socialization: Held a meeting with residents to explain the purpose of the program.
- 2 August 12, 2025 Data Collection: Surveyed to understand the condition.
- 3 August 19, 2025 Implementation of Waste Management
- 4 01 September 2025 Discussion Session: Discuss with residents to hear their experiences and challenges. Continuous Counseling Provides additional understanding to reinforce the importance of a healthy environment.
- 5 September 18, 2025 Final Evaluation: Conduct an evaluation of the entire program and its impact on the cleanliness of the school environment

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. School Mini Garden

The implementation of activities carried out at RA Al-Khoiriyah has a focus on activities to the reforestation work program by making mini gardens on school land that are not used. Realizing green schools needs to be supported by infrastructure facilities that reflect

environmental management efforts (Sulaeman, 2016). In addition to the use of the environment as a learning medium, school residents are also encouraged to develop efforts to improve environmental management and quality both inside and outside the school. (Amirullah, A., Madjid, S., & Ahmadin, A. 2020). Learning activities are no longer just knowledge exploration but at the same time looking for media for efforts to save the environment (Muzadi & Mutholingah, 2019). The implementation of this mini garden program is carried out in stages and structured to ensure optimal results and beautiful gardens that are beneficial to the school environment.

First, it starts with determining the area to be managed as a garden, adjusting to the needs of space and available land capacity. This step is very important to ensure that all plant elements can grow properly and are neatly organized. Second, community service activities were carried out to clean the remains of branches, pieces of wood, and paving fragments, as well as dispose of garbage in its place.

Third, sowing plant seeds, which is carried out using soil media enriched with compost from the rest of the burning of straw. This technique was chosen because straw has good nutritional content for seed growth, so it is hoped that plant seeds will grow healthy and fertile. Making a soil bed that functions as a place to plant seedlings. The making of beds is carried out according to the type of plant to be planted, so that the growth is more structured and neat. Planting of seedlings that have been sown into the prepared soil bed. Planting is done carefully so that the seedlings can grow well in the open field. Regular watering is done on a scheduled basis so that the plant can thrive and have a longer endurance. This routine maintenance also includes monitoring plant health, to ensure that plants grow optimally and increase students' knowledge of good farming practices.

Teachers and students of RA Al-Khoiriyah actively participated in the implementation of the mini garden making activities. Their involvement is not only limited to helping in the physical care of plants, such as watering and cleaning garden areas, but also helps develop students' knowledge of the importance of maintaining and preserving the environment. This process aims to provide a comprehensive learning experience, where students can see and understand the life cycle of plants firsthand, from the seedling planting stage, routine maintenance, to further plant care.

This activity is carried out periodically so that the students can continue to monitor the development of their plants and understand how growth and changes occur in plants. This activity was carried out together with PIAUD students of Pangeran Diponegoro Nganjuk University, who acted as companions and facilitators in the work program of making mini

gardens. On average, students stated that they felt happy and enthusiastic when participating in the activity. They see this involvement as an opportunity to learn while playing, as well as build closeness and cooperation with UPDN students.

Teachers and students participate in various activities, such as community service work cleaning weeds, watering plants, and keeping the garden neat and orderly. The results of interviews conducted with RA Al-Khoiriyah students show that they feel proud to be able to play a role in maintaining a mini garden that is part of their school environment. The students feel that the responsibility they carry towards this mini garden encourages them to continue to keep the garden in good condition. This has a positive impact on their character formation, especially in terms of discipline and responsibility.

The benefits of mini gardening in schools are as follows:

- a. Teaching responsibility: students learn to care regularly
- b. Concern for the environment: students understand the importance of plants and the green environment
- c. Motor skills: activities such as planting, watering and moving help hone children's motor skills
- d. Scientific observation: fostering curiosity and basic knowledge of science

2. Waste Recycling

Waste management in schools is essential to create a clean and healthy environment. A clean school environment has a positive impact on student health and increases the spirit of learning. Garbage that is allowed to accumulate not only spoils the scenery, but can also be a source of diseases that can endanger the health of school residents. Therefore, waste management in schools is a shared responsibility that must be carried out seriously.

In addition, good waste management can also provide environmental education to students. Schools have a strategic role in instilling good habits in students, one of which is through education on proper waste management. With the recycling and plastic waste reduction program, students can learn to care more about the environment from an early age. If waste in schools is not managed properly, this can have negative impacts, such as environmental pollution and health risks. Garbage that is allowed to accumulate can invite various pests, such as flies and rodents, which can spread diseases. In addition, soil and water pollution can also occur due to undecomposed waste, especially plastic waste.

A dirty environment also affects the quality of education in schools. Students will feel uncomfortable and distracted when studying in an environment full of garbage. This will

certainly reduce their concentration and enthusiasm for learning. On the contrary, a clean environment will support a better teaching and learning process.

3. Waste Management Solutions in Schools

To address this issue, schools can implement several measures, such as providing separate bins for organic and inorganic waste. In addition, schools can also create ****recycling**** programs and reduce the use of plastics, for example, by replacing single-use plastics with more environmentally friendly materials. These small steps can have a big impact on maintaining the cleanliness and health of the school environment.

CONCLUSION

School mini gardens and waste management in schools are crucial to maintain the health and comfort of students and support a better quality of education. With education and an effective waste management system, schools can be an example for the younger generation in maintaining cleanliness and environmental sustainability. Good waste management is not only the responsibility of the cleaners, but also all school residents.

Through this PKM program, students as participants get positive benefits, especially in understanding the importance of greening in the surrounding environment. Their involvement also encourages the growth of awareness of the importance of protecting the environment from an early age, instilling a love for nature, and increasing concern for the surrounding environment. Thus, these activities not only enrich students' knowledge, but also provide valuable lessons about positive values that will be useful for their future. It is hoped that through this program, students will be more encouraged to take care of the surrounding environment in order to create a more comfortable life and be wiser in their actions. Hopefully this reforestation program will continue to be successfully implemented and always maintained by all schools.

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