

CHALLENGES OF PARENTS IN FOSTERING ENVIRONMENTAL CARE CHARACTER THROUGH FAMILY-BASED WASTE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AMONG YOUNG CHILDREN

Article Information

E-ISSN : 3089- 9869

Volume 2 Issue 2

Pages 79–87

Author Information

Yunira Yunda Riswanti

yundakusnandar@gmail.com

Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Al-Azami Cianjur

Eva Manfaatin Kartadinata

bundava28@gmail.com

Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Al-Azami Cianjur

Ika Rustika Zainah

ik4rustika@gmail.com

Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Al-Azami Cianjur

Abstract

Environmental awareness in early childhood is often introduced at school, but daily habits at home do not always support the same values. This gap makes the role of parents important, especially in guiding children through simple household practices related to waste. This study aims to describe the problems faced by parents in cultivating environmental care character through family-based waste handling habits in early childhood. This research used a descriptive qualitative approach at Ma'arif Kindergarten, Kertajadi Village, Cidaun District, Cianjur Regency. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation involving parents, teachers, and the school principal. The data were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, while validity was strengthened through source and technique triangulation. The findings show that parents have introduced children to cleanliness habits, such as throwing waste in the bin and keeping the house tidy. However, several problems remain, including limited parental understanding of waste sorting, inconsistent role modelling, limited facilities at home, low child involvement in waste handling, and weak continuity between school and family habits. This study concludes that environmental care character in early childhood requires consistent parental guidance, practical facilities, and stronger cooperation between school and family.

Keywords: *Home Ecological Habits; Child Eco-Literacy; Daily Role Modelling; Sustainable Routines; School-Home Partnership*

INTRODUCTION

Environmental issues are becoming increasingly relevant to children's daily lives, particularly through simple habits they observe every day. Household waste, plastic use, littering practices, and the lack of waste separation have become part of children's experiences from an early age. At this stage, children are not yet able to fully understand the abstract consequences of environmental degradation. However, they are capable of imitating adult behavior through examples, guidance, and repeated habituation. Therefore, the development of environmental care character should begin with concrete

activities that are closely related to children's everyday experiences so that such behaviors become part of their daily routines.

Environmental care character is not solely the responsibility of schools; families also play a crucial role as the primary educational environment for children. Children develop their earliest habits through interactions with their parents at home. In character education, the process of behavior formation does not stop at introducing values but must continue through understanding, implementation, habituation, cultural integration, and internalization in daily life (Afriana & Hidayat, 2022). In the context of early childhood, such habituation can be fostered through simple activities, such as disposing of waste properly, separating organic and inorganic waste, reducing the use of single-use products, and reusing items that still have value (Hamdan Ridwan et al., 2025). Through these activities, children not only learn to maintain environmental cleanliness but also develop responsibility and environmental awareness from an early age.

Previous studies have demonstrated that waste management activities contribute positively to children's character development. Lailia et al. (2025) found that waste management activities enhanced discipline and responsibility among young children. Kartikasari (2024) reported that family-based waste management helps children understand different types of waste, recognize the benefits of organic waste, and develop habits that discourage littering. Furthermore, Oktavia (2022) emphasized that parents serve as role models, motivators, and facilitators in fostering environmental care character among children. These findings indicate that families and waste management practices play a strategic role in supporting character education in early childhood.

Nevertheless, existing studies have primarily focused on parental roles in general, the effectiveness of waste management activities, or environmental habituation programs implemented in schools. Research specifically examining the challenges faced by parents in establishing family-based waste management habits remains limited. In practice, parents may encounter various obstacles, including limited knowledge of waste separation, inconsistency in modeling environmentally responsible behavior, inadequate waste-sorting facilities at home, family time constraints, and a lack of alignment between environmental practices promoted at school and those practiced at home. These challenges may hinder the internalization of environmental care character in young children, which relies heavily on consistent and continuous habituation within their immediate environment.

Based on the discussion above, a research gap exists regarding the limited understanding of the actual challenges parents face in fostering environmental care character through family-based waste management practices. Therefore, this study aims to describe the problems encountered by parents in cultivating environmental care character through family-based waste management habituation among young children. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the obstacles experienced by parents, the forms of waste management practices implemented at home, and the efforts that can support family involvement in developing environmental care character from an early age. Accordingly, this study is

expected to contribute to the literature on family-based character education and provide practical insights for parents and early childhood education institutions in developing more effective environmental care habituation programs.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design (Naamy, 2019). This approach was selected because the study focused on exploring the problems, experiences, and practices of parents in fostering environmental care character among young children through family-based waste management habituation. The study was not intended to examine causal relationships among variables but rather to provide an in-depth description of parental roles, the challenges they encounter, and the waste management practices implemented within the family environment.

The study was conducted at TK Ma'arif, Kertajadi Village, Cidaun District, Cianjur Regency. The site was selected because the institution actively promotes character-building activities for young children and provides an appropriate setting for examining the continuity between environmental education at school and habituation practices at home. Participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in children's environmental care education. The participants consisted of parents of enrolled children, classroom teachers, and the school principal. Parents served as the primary data sources because the study focused on family-related challenges in fostering waste management habits among children. Teachers and the principal were included as supporting informants to provide information regarding environmental care programs at school and the relationship between school and family practices.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation (Abdussamad, 2021). Observations were conducted to examine environmental care behaviors demonstrated by children at school, such as disposing of waste properly, maintaining classroom cleanliness, and recognizing basic types of waste. Interviews with parents were conducted to explore household waste management practices, forms of parental modeling, challenges encountered, and children's involvement in simple activities such as disposing of, sorting, and organizing waste. Interviews with teachers and the principal aimed to identify school programs and habituation activities related to environmental care character development. Documentation was used to complement the data through photographs of activities, school records, habituation schedules, and other relevant documents. The data collection process was carried out sequentially, beginning with observations, followed by interviews, and finally documentation to support and verify the findings obtained from the previous stages.

The primary research instrument was the researcher, supported by observation guides, interview guides, and documentation sheets. The observation guide was developed based on indicators of environmental care behavior in early childhood, including proper waste disposal, maintaining environmental cleanliness, recognizing basic waste categories, and following teachers' or parents'

instructions related to cleanliness activities. The interview guide focused on exploring parents' roles as role models, mentors, motivators, and facilitators, as well as identifying specific challenges encountered in implementing family-based waste management practices.

Data were analyzed through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved selecting information relevant to the research focus, particularly data related to parental challenges, waste management habituation practices, and school support. Data were then presented in a narrative form to clearly illustrate relationships among findings. Conclusions were drawn after comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation.

To ensure data trustworthiness, source triangulation and technique triangulation were employed. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from parents, teachers, and the school principal. Technique triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from observations, interviews, and documentation. In addition, the researcher continuously cross-checked data from different sources and methods to enhance the credibility, consistency, and trustworthiness of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that parents' roles in fostering environmental care character among early childhood learners at TK Ma'arif, Kertajadi Village, Cidaun District, Cianjur Regency, have not been implemented uniformly. Some parents have habituated children to dispose of waste properly, clean up food leftovers, and organize their surroundings after playing. However, these practices remain primarily focused on cleanliness rather than on structured waste management. Children generally understand that waste should be thrown into a trash bin, yet not all of them are accustomed to distinguishing between organic and inorganic waste at home.

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings

Findings Aspect	Main Findings
Parental understanding	Parents understand the importance of cleanliness but have limited knowledge of waste sorting and waste management practices.
Parental role modeling	Children are more likely to follow environmentally responsible behaviors when parents provide direct examples.
Household facilities	Some families do not provide separate waste bins or simple facilities that support waste management learning.
Child involvement	Children participate in waste disposal activities but are rarely involved in waste sorting or recycling practices.
Consistency of habituation	Environmental habits are not consistently implemented due to parents' workload and unstable family routines.
School–family relationship	Schools introduce environmental care behaviors, but reinforcement at home is not always continuous.

As presented in Table 1, the findings reveal that environmental care character development among young children is influenced by interrelated factors, including parental understanding, role modeling, household facilities, child participation, habituation consistency, and collaboration between schools and families. These findings suggest that environmental education in early childhood requires a comprehensive approach that extends beyond classroom activities and becomes integrated into everyday family practices.

The first finding indicates that parental understanding remains at a basic level. Environmental care is commonly interpreted as maintaining cleanliness, sweeping the yard, and disposing of waste properly. Although such understanding provides an important foundation, it does not necessarily encourage systematic waste management practices within the household. Young children need opportunities to learn through direct experiences, such as distinguishing organic and inorganic waste, reusing recyclable materials, and reducing unnecessary disposal of useful items. This finding suggests that strengthening environmental literacy among parents is essential for promoting more meaningful environmental learning experiences at home.

The second finding relates to parental role modeling. Children tend to imitate environmentally responsible behaviors when they observe their parents practicing such behaviors consistently. When parents dispose of waste properly, clean household surroundings, and encourage children to organize their belongings after activities, children gradually perceive these actions as normal family routines. This finding supports previous studies emphasizing the importance of parental influence in character development. However, the present study demonstrates that role modeling becomes most effective when accompanied by consistent guidance and repeated reinforcement within daily family interactions.

The third finding concerns the availability of household facilities that support environmental learning. Several families reported having only one waste bin, limiting opportunities for children to learn waste separation practices. Since young children learn most effectively through concrete experiences, the absence of visual and practical facilities reduces opportunities for environmental learning at home. Simple resources such as separate waste bins, illustrated labels, and containers for recyclable materials may support children's understanding of waste categories. Therefore, household facilities represent an important practical factor in developing environmental care habits among young children.

The fourth finding shows that children's involvement in waste management activities remains relatively limited. Most children are encouraged to dispose of waste properly, yet only a few participate in sorting, collecting, or reusing recyclable materials. Direct participation is particularly important during early childhood because character development is strengthened through repeated actions and hands-on experiences. Children who actively engage in environmental activities have greater

opportunities to develop responsibility and environmental awareness. This finding highlights the importance of experiential learning approaches that position children as active participants rather than passive recipients of instructions.

The fifth finding concerns the consistency of environmental habituation within families. Although many parents reported encouraging environmentally responsible behavior, these practices were not always implemented regularly. Work obligations, limited time availability, and established family routines often reduced opportunities for parental involvement in environmental education activities. In some situations, parents preferred completing household tasks themselves rather than involving children because doing so was considered more efficient. As a result, environmental learning opportunities were sometimes reduced, limiting the development of stable and sustainable environmental habits among children.

The sixth finding reveals that environmental care behaviors introduced at school are not always reinforced within the home environment. Teachers regularly encourage children to dispose of waste properly, maintain classroom cleanliness, and organize learning materials after use. Nevertheless, similar practices are not consistently continued by all families. This inconsistency may reduce the effectiveness of environmental character education because children receive different behavioral expectations across settings. Consequently, stronger communication and collaboration between schools and families are necessary to ensure continuity in children's environmental learning experiences.

Compared with previous studies, this research offers a more specific focus on the practical challenges experienced by parents when implementing family-based waste management habituation. While earlier studies mainly emphasized parental roles, environmental programs, or educational outcomes, the present study highlights the everyday barriers encountered during implementation. These barriers include limited environmental literacy, inadequate facilities, inconsistent routines, and restricted child participation. Accordingly, the novelty of this study lies in its identification of practical family-level obstacles that affect the development of environmental care character among young children.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that environmental character development is influenced not only by parental intentions but also by contextual factors surrounding family life. Parents may possess positive attitudes toward environmental education, yet implementation is often constrained by resources, routines, and competing responsibilities. This finding broadens the discussion of environmental character education beyond individual motivation alone. The study therefore contributes a multidimensional perspective that emphasizes the interaction between parental knowledge, family practices, and environmental learning opportunities.

From a practical perspective, the findings indicate that environmental character education should involve stronger partnerships between schools and families. Schools may support parents

through environmental literacy programs, practical guidance, and family-oriented activities that encourage waste management practices at home. At the same time, parents need accessible strategies that fit their daily routines and available resources. These efforts may help create more sustainable environmental learning experiences and strengthen children's environmental care character from an early age.

The strength of this study lies in its focus on parental challenges in implementing family-based waste management habituation. Unlike many studies that focus primarily on children's behaviors or school programs, this research examines the realities experienced by families as the primary context of character development. By identifying practical barriers within households, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of why environmental habituation may not always be successfully implemented. This perspective offers valuable insights for improving environmental character education in both family and educational settings.

Nevertheless, the study is limited to a single early childhood education institution in Kertajadi Village, Cidaun District, Cianjur Regency. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalized to all educational institutions or family contexts. In addition, the study did not quantitatively measure changes in children's environmental behavior over time. Future studies may involve a larger number of participants and include mixed-methods approaches to obtain broader evidence. Such research would contribute to a deeper understanding of both parental challenges and the effectiveness of environmental character development programs.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the challenges faced by parents in fostering environmental care character among young children through family-based waste management habituation are associated with several key factors. Although parents generally understand the importance of maintaining cleanliness, their understanding of structured waste management practices, such as separating organic and inorganic waste, reducing plastic waste, and reusing recyclable materials, has not yet become a consistent family habit. Parents have performed their roles as role models, mentors, motivators, and facilitators; however, these roles have not been implemented consistently due to time constraints, unstable family routines, limited waste-sorting facilities at home, and insufficient continuity between school and family environmental education practices. These findings indicate that the successful development of environmental care character in early childhood is strongly influenced by the consistency of waste management practices implemented within daily family life.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the challenges experienced by parents in cultivating environmental care habits through family-based waste management practices. Rather than merely discussing the importance of environmental care character or the effectiveness of waste management activities for young children, this study positions the family as the primary setting for habit formation.

The originality of the study is reflected in its effort to identify and map the obstacles encountered by parents in their everyday practices, highlighting that waste management habituation should not be viewed solely as a school responsibility but also as an integral part of parenting, role modeling, and family culture. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasized school-based programs or character development outcomes, this study reveals practical family-level factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation of environmental care habituation.

The scientific contribution of this study lies in strengthening the body of knowledge on family-based character education in early childhood. The findings expand current understanding by demonstrating that environmental care character cannot be effectively developed through advice or occasional activities alone but must be nurtured through small, repeated actions practiced within the home environment. Academically, this study provides a foundation for developing environmental care habituation models that actively involve parents, teachers, and children in a continuous and collaborative process. Furthermore, the findings reinforce the perspective that the family serves as a critical educational environment for the internalization of environmental values during early childhood.

The implications of this study are relevant to environmental sustainability, community awareness, and family culture. From an environmental perspective, habituating children to sort and manage waste from an early age helps introduce environmentally responsible behavior in practical ways. From a societal perspective, family involvement can strengthen collective awareness that effective waste management begins at home. From a cultural perspective, the findings encourage the development of family habits that promote cleanliness, orderliness, and responsibility toward the surrounding environment. Economically, reusing materials and reducing waste can teach children the value of resource conservation and responsible consumption from an early age. Therefore, this study contributes both practical and scholarly insights to the promotion of environmental care character education through active family participation. Based on these findings, schools and parents should strengthen their collaboration in designing sustainable waste management habituation programs, while future research should involve broader populations and mixed-methods approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of environmental behavior development among young children.

REFERENCES.

- Abdussamad, Z. (2021). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. CV. Syakir Media Press.
- Afriana, S., & Hidayat, N. (2022). Internalisasi nilai keagamaan dalam menanamkan karakter peduli lingkungan. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 6(2), 1914–1921. <https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v6i2.2246>
- Afwanni, T., Alim, R. N., & Cholimah, N. (2024). The role of parenting in cultivating environmental attitudes in early childhood in digital era. *JPUD: Jurnal Pendidikan Usia Dini*, 18(2), 389–397. <https://doi.org/10.21009/jpud.v18i2.46213>

- Darfin, S. A., & Saputra, E. E. (2025). Pelayanan bimbingan dan konseling anak usia dini di TK Jaya Purnama Bulukumba. *Arus Jurnal Pendidikan*, 5(2), 91–97.
- Hamdan Ridwan, E., Rohmatin, A., Aditia Putra, N., Rachman, N. F., Insani, S. F., & Ramadhani, N. (2025). Upaya peningkatan kesadaran masyarakat terhadap pengelolaan sampah melalui program edukasi visual di Desa Buniwangi. *Karya Nyata: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 2(3), 144–153. <https://doi.org/10.62951/karyanyata.v2i3.2160>
- Husain, I. A., Saputra, E. E., Parisu, C. Z. L., Sisi, L., & Saqjuddin, S. (2025). Program restoratif untuk meningkatkan keterampilan sosial anak usia dini di daerah tertinggal. *Jurnal Abdi Masyarakat dan Pemberdayaan Inovatif*, 1(2), 38–48.
- Juwairiyah, A., Parisu, C. Z. L., Sisi, L., & Saputra, E. E. (2024). Analisis literasi digital para guru tingkat pendidikan sekolah dasar. *Innovative: Journal of Social Science Research*, 4(1), 12811–12819.
- Kartikasari, G. (2024). Penanaman sikap peduli lingkungan pada anak usia dini melalui manajemen sampah keluarga. *Awladuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini*, 2(2), 208–216. <https://doi.org/10.61159/awladuna.v2i02.297>
- Lailia, N., Wijayanti, R., & Rahayunita, C. I. (2025). Pembentukan karakter disiplin dan tanggung jawab anak usia dini melalui kegiatan pengelolaan sampah. *Pedagogi: Jurnal Anak Usia Dini dan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 11(2), 167–179. <https://doi.org/10.30651/pedagogi.v11i2.26811>
- Naamy, N. (2019). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif: Dasar-Dasar & Aplikasinya* (Winengan, Ed.). Sanabil dan Pusat Penelitian dan Publikasi Ilmiah LP2M UIN Mataram.
- Oktavia, A. S. (2022). *Peran orang tua dalam menanamkan karakter peduli lingkungan pada anak usia dini di TK Mardiswini Desa Tabunan Baru Kecamatan Tegalombo Kabupaten Pacitan* [Skripsi, Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo]. <https://eprints.umpo.ac.id/id/eprint/8634>
- Permatasari, S. J., Saputra, E. E., & Sarah, S. (2025). Mengembangkan imajinasi anak usia dini melalui kegiatan melukis dengan media alam. *Sulawesi Tenggara Educational Journal*, 5(1), 442–450.
- Saputra, E. E. (2025). The impact of Montessori based learning on early childhood cognitive and social development. *Jurnal E-MAS (Edukasi dan Pembelajaran Anak Usia Dini)*, 1(1), 13–22.
- Saputra, E. E., & Parisu, C. Z. L. (2025). The role of social psychology in individual cognitive and social development. *Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education*, 1(1), 44–55.
- Zikriana, S., Indrawadi, J., Montessori, M., & Isnarmi, I. (2023). Implementasi habituasi kegiatan cinta lingkungan dalam membentuk karakter peduli lingkungan. *Journal of Education, Cultural and Politics*, 3(1), 121–132. <https://doi.org/10.24036/jecco.v3i1.134>