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Exploring Teacher Creativity in Storytelling for Promoting Spiritual and Moral Development in Preschool Children

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Abstract

This study examines the role of teacher creativity in promoting the spiritual and moral development of preschool children through storytelling. It explores how teachers creatively design and deliver stories to instill values and engage children in reflective activities. A qualitative approach was employed, involving interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis with three preschool teachers, each having over five years of experience. The study also included three children. Findings reveal that teacher creativity in crafting age-appropriate stories, using multimedia tools and physical props, and facilitating reflective discussions significantly enhances children's understanding of moral values such as honesty, empathy, and responsibility, alongside spiritual themes like gratitude and compassion. These creative strategies captured children's attention and supported emotional expression. The study concludes that fostering creativity in storytelling is essential for nurturing emotional intelligence, ethical behavior, and holistic development in early childhood education.

Keywords

Exploring, Creativity, Spiritual and Moral, Teacher and Children

1. Introduction

Kindergarten education is a critical stage in a child's development, laying the foundation for lifelong learning by focusing not only on cognitive skills but also on emotional, moral, and spiritual growth. While much attention has been given

to cognitive development, the role of teacher creativity in storytelling for promoting spiritual and moral development has received less focus. Storytelling has long been recognized as an effective tool for enhancing early literacy and stimulating imagination, yet its potential in shaping children's moral and spiritual outlooks remains underexplored (Buleyko, 2025; Eaude, 2025).

Teacher creativity in storytelling is essential, as it goes beyond simply telling a story to involve crafting narratives that deeply engage children and encourage reflection on moral and spiritual values. However, the specific ways in which teachers can use storytelling creatively to instill values like empathy, responsibility, and respect in young children are still not fully understood (Tan, 2022; Fisher & Williams, 2012).

Storytelling also plays a significant role in developing linguistic intelligence, providing children with exposure to new vocabulary and helping them express their thoughts in a fun, engaging way (Lee, 2023). Moreover, Kusnilawati et al. (2018) suggest that storytelling helps children internalize moral principles by incorporating stories with values such as responsibility and compassion. Teachers who integrate creative methods like voice intonation, body language, and culturally relevant content are better able to capture children's attention and promote positive behavior (Hansen, 2005; Holmes et al., 2019).

This research seeks to address the gap in understanding by examining how teachers creatively use storytelling to promote children's spiritual and moral development. By exploring teacher practices, this study aims to provide insights into the impact of creative storytelling on shaping children's values and behavior, which can help inform future educational strategies in early childhood education (James & Brookfield, 2014; Shevchenko et al., 2019).

2. Problem Background

Creativity in teaching plays a crucial role in motivating student learning, with the ultimate goal of improving education quality. Education helps individuals grow their potential to face challenges and achieve lifelong progress. Without it, society would not progress beyond past generations. Creativity is essential for problem-solving, as it allows individuals to address issues effectively and ethically (Kettler et al., 2018). As the educational landscape evolves, teaching methods must adapt, focusing on creating an environment where students can learn optimally (Oktaviani & Wulandari, 2019). In this context, preschool education is fundamental in promoting holistic child development, encompassing physical, emotional, intellectual, and social growth.

Preschool education serves as a foundation for a child's overall development, focusing on their emotional, spiritual, and intellectual growth before transitioning to higher education levels. The National Preschool Standard Curriculum 2017 emphasizes providing a safe and stimulating learning environment for children aged 4 to 6 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2017). Teachers play a significant role in shaping the next generation, and it is essential for them to be aware of the respon-

sibilities they hold. As agents of change in education, they must continuously improve their teaching methods to cater to diverse needs (Ambotang, 2018). Storytelling is a highly effective method in preschool education, as it captures children's attention and fosters imagination. It helps children understand concepts through engaging narratives while also teaching them moral values. The use of storytelling, including voice intonation, body language, and appropriate tools, enhances children's learning experiences (Mohd Nazri et al., 2019). Moreover, selecting quality reading materials with moral teachings plays a significant role in shaping children's character and guiding them towards becoming responsible individuals (Atikah et al., 2018). In this way, storytelling becomes a tool not only for cognitive development but also for instilling values and ethics from an early age.

3. Problem Statement

Education should aim not only to enhance students' academic intelligence but also to develop excellent character traits. Character education teaches children positive habits, as well as the difference between right and wrong, helping them understand rules and behave appropriately. Character is shaped through behaviors practiced within families and society, significantly impacting a child's psychological development. Positive behaviors become part of daily routines and influence their character development throughout life. One effective method for teaching moral values and religious ethics is through storytelling activities. When the story topics are relevant to children's daily lives, they can easily understand and absorb the values being conveyed. Storytelling combines both oral and written language, requiring creativity from teachers in creating engaging teaching materials. This approach ensures that children are attentive, enjoying the learning process, and able to apply the lessons taught.

According to Mahyuddin et al. (2021) and Bohari et al., the role of educators and caregivers goes beyond simply delivering information. They are responsible for shaping the attitudes, values, and ethics of children while serving as role models for both students and society. Storytelling in preschools is an effective way to impart these values, helping children develop character according to accepted social norms (Othman et al., 2022).

4. Objectives

1) To identify the creativity of teachers in creating stories that stimulate values and morals for the spiritual development of children in preschool.

2) To identify the creativity of teachers in storytelling activities using creative aids for the spiritual development of children in preschool.

3) To identify the creativity of teachers in storytelling activities in fostering reflection activities for the spiritual development of children in preschool.

5. Research Questions

1) What is the creativity of teachers in creating stories to stimulate values and

morals in children?

2) What is the creativity of teachers in storytelling activities using creative aids to shape the spiritual development of children?

3) What reflection activities do teachers use to shape the spiritual development of children?

6. Literature Review

6.1. Teacher Creativity in Creating Stories That Stimulate Values and Morals

In preschool education, teachers must use various approaches, methods, techniques, and activities that align with the children's abilities and interests to make learning more meaningful. The stories provided should be engaging and have a positive impact on the children. These stories need to contain valuable morals and messages. Storytelling activities help develop language and communication skills, fostering creativity and innovation in children when facing challenges. This approach builds their self-confidence. Additionally, Dian (2019) emphasizes that teachers must carefully select stories that offer numerous moral values, stimulating children's values and morals. The theme of the story should be simple, appealing, and age-appropriate, with language that is easy to understand, incorporating repetition of words and short sentences. Repetition encourages children to memorize and expand their vocabulary. Moreover, the story should stimulate children's minds and foster creativity, especially when teachers involve children in dramatic storytelling. Characters in the story should be role models, and the story itself should have universal qualities (Elsa Hana Muhammad, 2018; Phillips & Khosravi, 2000; Holmes et al., 2019).

6.2. Teacher Creativity in Storytelling Activities Using Creative Teaching Aids

One of the most important elements in determining the success of teaching and learning is the use of teaching aids, which spark students' curiosity and enhance and invigorate the learning process. The teaching and learning process is closely linked to Teaching Aids (TAs). TAs are educational tools used to achieve learning objectives. The purpose of these aids is to make learning objectives easier to attain (Saifuddin & Muhammad Idham, 2017; Janius et al., 2024). Furthermore, TAs are defined as any tools or materials used by teachers to support them in delivering lessons. TAs encompass everything that can be seen, heard, touched, read, spoken, smelled, or otherwise engaged with (Isa & Ma'arof, 2018). Recent research highlights that the integration of creative and interactive teaching aids in storytelling activities plays a crucial role in enhancing student engagement and the retention of values and moral lessons. By using a variety of media, including digital tools, visual aids, and hands-on materials, teachers can effectively capture students' attention and foster a deeper understanding of the story's themes. For instance, the use of multimedia, such as videos or interactive story apps, can create an immer-

sive experience that encourages active participation and critical thinking (Lee, 2023). Moreover, teachers' innovative use of educational games and visual storytelling can help students internalize complex moral concepts in a more accessible and enjoyable way (Hassan & Cheong, 2024). The incorporation of creative teaching aids also provides a more dynamic learning environment, where students are encouraged to interact with the material in multiple ways, thus promoting a deeper connection to the story's messages (Ng & Lai, 2025). This approach not only fosters creativity but also nurtures essential cognitive and emotional skills in students, ensuring the story's moral impact extends beyond the classroom.

6.3. Teacher Creativity in Storytelling Activities to Foster Reflection

Reflection activities in teaching and learning play a crucial role in helping teachers assess whether their lessons are being understood and appreciated by students, enabling them to achieve a sense of empathy. Reflection allows students to engage in self-introspection regarding the teaching and learning experiences shared with the teacher and classmates. This process involves evaluating their learning, summarizing key takeaways, and offering suggestions for self-improvement (Hamzah et al., 2018). Reflection aids teachers in self-assessment concerning the learning activities they have conducted, focusing on planning, execution, and student outcomes. It begins with identifying classroom issues and reviewing results from other research studies. Moreover, teachers' creative approaches in storytelling, such as incorporating reflective questions and discussions, enable students to critically engage with the story, fostering deeper emotional connections and moral development (Zainuddin & Tan, 2023). These reflective practices enhance the overall learning experience and encourage continuous growth.

7. Research Methodology

This study aims to explore the creativity of preschool teachers in using storytelling as a tool to foster the spiritual and moral development of preschool children. The research will employ a qualitative research design to provide in-depth insights into teachers' storytelling techniques, the use of creative teaching aids, and the incorporation of reflective practices in preschool settings. By focusing on the lived experiences and perceptions of preschool teachers, this methodology will explore the nuanced ways in which storytelling can influence children's moral and spiritual growth.

7.1. Research Design

The study will utilize a case study approach to explore the practices of a select group of preschool teachers. A longitudinal approach will be applied, where data will be collected over a period of several months to observe how teachers adapt and refine their storytelling techniques throughout the study. This approach will allow for a rich, contextually grounded exploration of teacher creativity and its

impact on children's development.

7.2. Participants and Sampling

Purposive sampling will be used to select a group of preschool teachers with at least five years of experience in early childhood education and storytelling practices. The study will involve 3 preschool teachers in the Kota Kinabalu area. The selection will aim for diversity in terms of teaching backgrounds, and types of educational settings (e.g., private, public, bilingual, or religious schools) to capture a wide range of perspectives on storytelling practices. In addition, snowball sampling will be used to identify additional teachers who may be willing to participate based on recommendations from initial participants. This approach will allow the study to access a network of teachers who may have valuable insights into using storytelling for spiritual and moral development.

7.3. Data Collection Methods

In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews will be the primary method for gathering data. Each teacher will be interviewed individually, using a semi-structured interview guide that allows for flexibility while ensuring consistent themes across all interviews. The interviews will explore the following areas:

1) The teacher's experiences and perceptions of storytelling as a tool for promoting moral and spiritual development.

2) Creative methods employed in crafting stories to reflect values and morals.

3) The use of creative teaching aids and their role in enhancing the storytelling experience.

4) The role of reflection activities following storytelling sessions and how teachers encourage children to internalize moral lessons.

5) Interviews will be conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the study period to track any changes or adaptations in storytelling practices over time. Each interview will last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, with sessions recorded and transcribed for analysis.

7.4. Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected from interviews, observations, reflection journals, and documents will be analyzed using thematic analysis. This method will allow for the identification of recurring themes and patterns across the data. The analysis process will involve the following steps:

1) Data Familiarization: The researcher will begin by reading and re-reading interview transcripts, observation notes, and reflection journals to familiarize themselves with the data.

2) Initial Coding: The data will be coded using both deductive (based on existing research themes) and inductive (emerging from the data) coding strategies. Codes will reflect key aspects of storytelling, teacher creativity, use of teaching

aids, and reflective activities.

3) Theme Development: The coded data will be grouped into themes that align with the research objectives, such as:

- Teacher creativity in crafting stories.
- The role of creative teaching aids in enhancing storytelling.
- Reflection activities and their impact on moral and spiritual development.

4) Constant Comparison: Throughout the analysis, a constant comparison technique will be used to compare new data with existing codes, ensuring that the analysis remains grounded in the data.

5) Interpretation: The final themes will be interpreted in relation to the research questions, linking them to broader theoretical frameworks of creativity, storytelling, and moral development in early childhood education.

8. Research Findings

8.1. Qualitative Study Respondents

Three preschool teachers from different kindergartens in the Kota Kinabalu area, Sabah, participated in the study. All respondents are female and have over three years of teaching experience. The teachers' backgrounds, including names (coded for confidentiality), gender, age, and educational qualifications.

8.2. Teacher Creativity in Storytelling Activities

The study reveals that teachers in Kota Kinabalu use creative methods in storytelling to promote values and morals for the spiritual development of children. Through interviews, three main themes emerged: creativity in creating stories that stimulate values and morals, using creative teaching aids in storytelling, and fostering reflection in storytelling activities.

8.3. Identifying Teacher Creativity in Storytelling

The findings show that some teachers create their own stories to instill values and morals. Teachers like Umi Nadirah emphasized using specific themes such as "myself", "wildlife", and "plants" to introduce values to children. Fauziah and Anita also agreed on the importance of using themes to convey values.

Teachers ensure that the stories are age-appropriate and interesting for children. For instance, Fauziah stated that stories must match children's age and interest levels. Umi Nadirah added that the story should be engaging and include moral lessons. All teachers agreed on using characters in stories to help children understand the moral messages. Teachers like Anita shared that they incorporate elements from local folklore to connect children with the culture of Sabah and Sarawak. All respondents use teaching aids like visuals and big books to enhance the stories and moral lessons.

When asked how they evaluate the long-term impact of storytelling on children's spiritual development, Umi Nadirah and Fauziah mentioned that repeated exposure to stories helps children internalize values. Anita emphasized that sto-

rytelling plays a crucial role in shaping children's spiritual growth by teaching them good behavior and values. The research findings highlight the importance of teacher creativity in storytelling as a key factor in fostering moral and spiritual development in young children. Despite some teachers rarely creating their own stories, many still use storytelling effectively to promote values and morality.

8.4. Teacher Creativity in Storytelling Using Creative Teaching Aids for Spiritual Development in Preschool

The study found that using Creative Teaching Aids (CTAs) increases children's interest, focus, and involvement in classroom activities. Teachers reported using technology, such as laptops and projectors, to present stories. Umi Nadirah and Anita explained:

"…we usually use technology like laptops and projectors. Children learn through watching, listening to music, and animations, which improve their understanding and creativity."

"Typically, we use TV to show videos. We ask children to watch, understand, and retell the story. This technology helps stimulate values and morals as children cooperate and remain focused."

However, Fauziah mentioned that she rarely uses technology and prefers children's storybooks, as she feels technology can sometimes hinder understanding.

Teachers also incorporate physical props, such as dolls, to help convey the story. Umi Nadirah and Fauziah shared:

"…we use props like dolls, allowing children to act out characters or follow the storyline."

"We focus on voice intonations or use puppets to make the story engaging."

Anita emphasized using video displays to enhance children's focus and understanding, beyond just reading books.

When asked how teachers convey moral values, they highlighted the importance of voice tone, facial expressions, and props. Umi Nadirah stated:

"We use voice intonations and facial expressions to convey emotions. Props help children engage more deeply with the story."

Teachers also involve children in the creative process. Fauziah and Umi Nadirah explained:

"We involve children in role-playing to help them understand the moral lessons better."

Anita shared her experience of involving children in creating representations of the Kaaba, helping them better understand its significance.

To balance creativity and moral lessons, Fauziah emphasized:

"We ensure every story conveys positive values for children to emulate."

When asked how teachers assess the effectiveness of CTAs, all three teachers agreed that they evaluate children's cooperation, understanding, and application of what they've learned. They confirmed that when children grasp and apply the values taught, the objectives are met. The findings highlight that teacher creativity using CTAs plays a crucial role in children's spiritual development. The use of

technology, props, and active involvement helps children better understand moral lessons and values while maintaining a balance between creativity and spiritual education.

8.5. Teacher Creativity in Storytelling to Foster Reflective Activities for the Spiritual Development of Preschool Children

The study shows that teacher creativity in using storytelling to foster reflective activities is crucial for the spiritual development of children. While some teachers may not prioritize reflection, it is an important practice. During interviews, teachers were asked if they actively involve children in reflection sessions after storytelling and how they motivate children to share their thoughts and feelings. Fauziah stated:

"If the story is sad, for example, and the children see our sad facial expressions, they will also feel sad. We motivate children to share their feelings and thoughts to help them understand, and the teacher plays an important role in ensuring children receive the message from the story."

Anita and Umi Nadirah shared similar views:

"Yes, Q&A is important in the reflection session. We tell the story and then ask questions to check their understanding."

"We involve them actively at the end of the lesson or story, where the teacher asks, 'What did you understand from the story?' and 'Was it good or bad to do this?' As teachers, we must model good values, and we should respect the children, just as they must respect us."

When asked about unique or creative reflection activities after storytelling, Umi Nadirah described the following:

"One reflection activity involves Q&A: asking children what they understood from the story. Another method is having a child briefly summarize what they learned from the story. Finally, the teacher can show a character and ask the child what would happen if they made a mistake and what would happen if they did something good."

Fauziah added:

"For example, after telling a story about teamwork, we ask what cooperation looks like and how it works. Then, the children might demonstrate by working together to arrange tables."

In guiding children to reflect on the values or morals learned from the story, teachers use several strategies. Umi Nadirah explained:

"First, teachers need to find an age-appropriate story with good moral values. Then, prepare the props and conduct Q&A sessions. Once everything is ready, reward children when they provide the correct answers, so they know they understood the lesson."

Fauziah and Anita offered different approaches:

"After storytelling, we ask the children about teamwork and how to demonstrate cooperation, and then they might show it, like arranging tables together."

"After teaching about proper behavior, we ask the children questions like, 'How

should we behave with parents or teachers?' and 'Should we raise our voices to them?' We ask these questions repeatedly, and the next day, we check if they've applied these lessons at home."

The study also identified challenges teachers face in engaging children. Anita pointed out:

"There are challenges because if we are not firm, children lose focus. Using creative teaching aids helps, as children are drawn to interesting visuals."

Fauziah and Umi Nadirah shared their challenges:

"If children are not interested in the story, they stop listening. They can only focus for about three minutes, and teachers need to manage the class carefully."

"Sometimes, children are too shy to participate, but we try to involve them by giving them simple roles."

When asked how teachers adapt and plan reflection activities according to the needs of children, Umi Nadirah stated:

"The planning depends on the children's level. Teachers need to understand pedagogy and theories to prepare an effective lesson plan. If the class is large, we divide them into groups, ensuring each group gets proper attention. Teachers should also make notes on what worked well and what needs improvement."

Fauziah and Anita also emphasized the importance of adapting to children's needs:

"Teachers need to be clever in organizing activities to ensure children understand and stay engaged."

"After learning today, we revisit it the next day to reinforce the lesson and check for understanding."

The study also explored whether teachers use specific questions to stimulate reflective thinking on spiritual matters. Anita responded:

"Yes, we ask daily about proper manners, like whether children recite a prayer before entering the bathroom. We ask repeatedly to help them remember."

Fauziah emphasized:

"For spiritual stories, we ask about the proper prayer before meals or entering the bathroom."

Umi Nadirah noted that:

"Since not all children share the same religious background, teachers need to play a role in teaching respect for other religions and explain why it's important. Then we ask children how to behave respectfully with their parents, siblings, friends, and teachers."

Finally, when asked how teachers evaluate the effectiveness of reflection activities, the respondents shared:

"We follow the learning steps and objectives, then check if the goals were achieved. If the objectives are met, we are satisfied. If not, we revise the strategy and teaching approach."

Anita and Fauziah added:

"For example, I teach prayers and turn them into songs. Children remember

and learn better through repetition."

"The effectiveness is reflected in how interested children are and how they behave. We assess whether the objectives for spiritual development were achieved based on their actions."

The study highlights that while reflection activities are crucial, some teachers still find it challenging to engage children fully. However, they continue to seek creative strategies and tools to ensure children are engaged, understand the lessons, and develop spiritual and moral values.

8.6. Coding Analysis for Teacher's Creativity in Storytelling with Children's

Figure 1 shows that storytelling is an effective tool for fostering moral lessons and long-term behavior change in children. It provides a framework for understanding values, often through creative methods such as role play, questions, and reflection (Scheuer et al., 2014). Teachers' creativity, including the use of dolls, puppets, and other teaching aids, enhances the impact of storytelling by making the lessons more engaging and relatable. These creative aids, such as laptops and projectors, further support storytelling and create a more interactive experience for children (Buckley & Waring, 2013). Incorporating visuals and summaries into the storytelling process helps reinforce concepts, enhancing children's learning and emotional development. The long-term effects of storytelling are evident in how children cooperate and develop socially and emotionally through shared experiences. Teachers can assess the impact of storytelling through feedback and reflections on the lessons' moral lessons. Creative storytelling methods, including the use of visual aids and creative teacher involvement, have been shown to boost children's engagement and retention. This process encourages children to connect emotionally with the material, making storytelling a key educational tool in shaping their behavior and moral understanding.

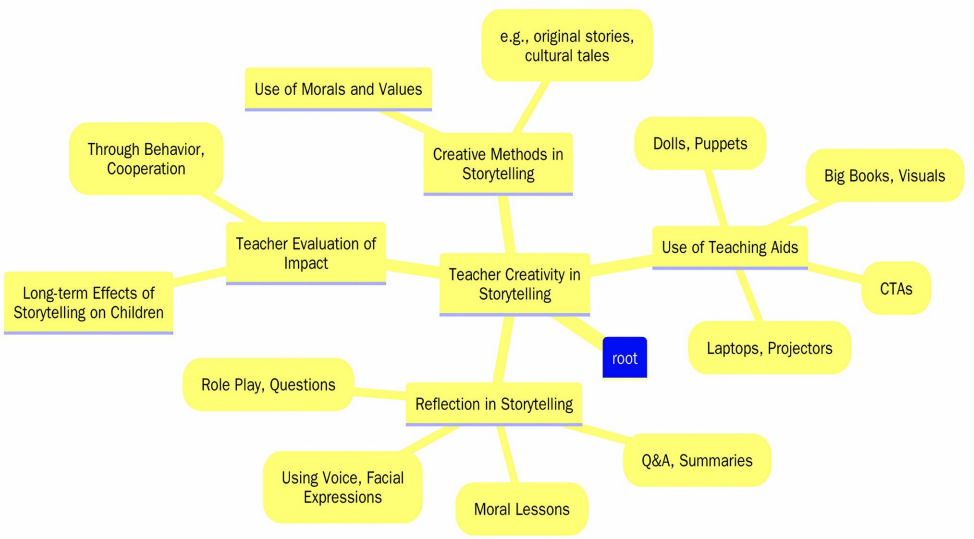

Figure 1. Coding analysis for teacher's creativity in storytelling with children's.

8.7. Thematic Analyse for Teacher's Creativity in Storytelling with Children's

Figure 2 shows that storytelling plays a pivotal role in fostering emotional and reflective learning among children. By employing creative methods such as age-appropriate stories and incorporating local folklore, educators can create a culturally relevant and engaging environment for young learners. These approaches help establish a connection to the material, encouraging children to reflect on their emotions, experiences, and morals. The use of storytelling, paired with physical props and creative teaching aids, enhances the engagement and retention of knowledge, fostering deeper emotional engagement in the learning process (Detkova & Sanochkina, 2021; Simamba, 2021; Bulson, 2020). Additionally, storytelling can significantly influence children's spiritual development, behavioral changes, and long-term emotional well-being. The integration of moral lessons through stories not only instills positive behavior but also nurtures the child's emotional intelligence, enabling them to make sense of their inner world and the world around them. Reflective activities, such as child involvement in storytelling, amplify these effects by encouraging self-awareness and empathy. Moreover, technology use in storytelling has emerged as an innovative tool, further enriching the experience and making it more interactive (Trachtman, 2014; Gesundheit, 2012).

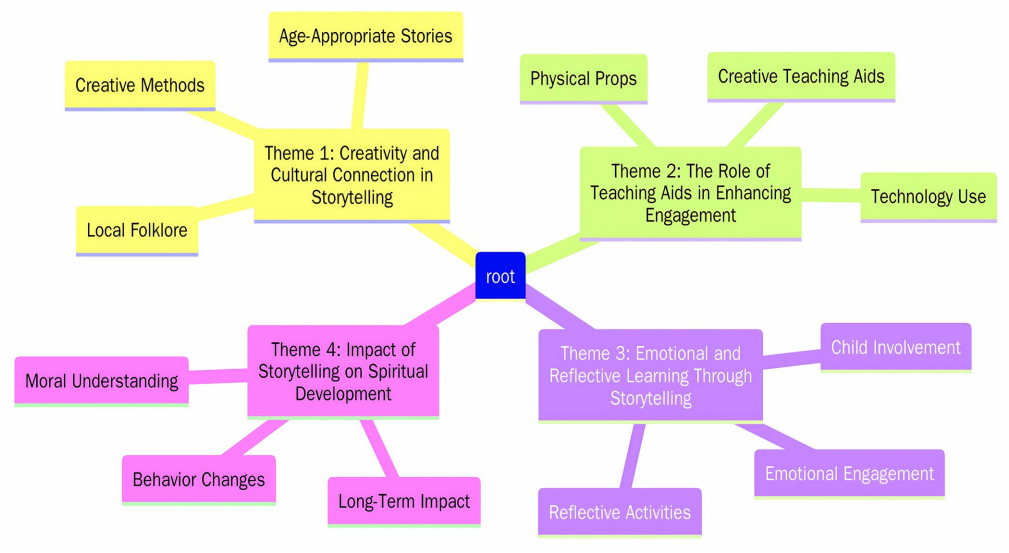

Figure 2. Thematic analysis for teacher's creativity in storytelling with children's.

9. Discussion

9.1. Teacher Creativity in Storytelling for the Spiritual and Moral Development of Preschool Children

This study explores the pivotal role of teacher creativity in storytelling as a means to foster holistic development in preschool children, with particular emphasis on nurturing both spiritual awareness and moral reasoning. Based on qualitative interviews with preschool educators in the Kota Kinabalu region, the research iden-

tifies three interrelated dimensions of creative practice that contribute meaningfully to children's spiritual and moral growth such as the crafting of stories that embed spiritual and ethical values, the use of imaginative teaching aids to enhance engagement and comprehension, and the integration of reflective activities that help children internalize and apply the lessons learned.

Teacher creativity in storytelling is not merely a strategy for maintaining attention; it is a transformative tool that enables children to connect emotionally and cognitively with abstract concepts such as kindness, empathy, gratitude, and fairness. Stories that are intentionally designed to highlight spiritual values such as reverence for life, inner peace, and a sense of belonging alongside moral principles such as honesty, responsibility, and respect serve as foundational experiences for young learners. When these stories are culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate, they become powerful vehicles for shaping children's character and worldview.

The study reveals that without creative storytelling approaches, children may struggle to remain engaged, which in turn limits their ability to absorb and reflect on key spiritual and moral messages (Janius et al., 2023). Creativity in this context involves more than artistic flair; it encompasses the thoughtful selection of themes, the imaginative use of language, and the strategic incorporation of sensory elements that make stories vivid and relatable. For example, using puppetry, visual props, and role-play allows children to see, hear, and act out the values being taught, thereby reinforcing their understanding through experiential learning.

Equally important are the reflective activities that follow storytelling sessions. These include guided discussions, emotion-based questioning, and simple journaling or drawing exercises that encourage children to express what they felt, understood, and learned. Such activities help bridge the gap between narrative and personal meaning, prompting children to consider how the story's values relate to their own lives. This reflective process is essential for developing both spiritual insight and moral judgment, as it cultivates self-awareness, empathy, and ethical decision-making.

The findings advocate for a dynamic and intentional approach to storytelling, where teachers continuously refine their methods to ensure that both spiritual and moral dimensions are addressed in a balanced and impactful way. Techniques such as expressive voice modulation, culturally resonant narratives, and interactive dialogue are not just performance tools; they are mechanisms for deepening children's emotional connection to the story and enhancing their capacity for value formation. Teachers who vary their tone, facial expressions, and pacing can make stories more immersive, while those who incorporate local cultural elements can make the values more relevant and accessible.

Ultimately, teacher creativity in storytelling must be viewed as a core competency in early childhood education, especially when the goal is to nurture well-rounded individuals who possess both spiritual depth and moral integrity. By

thoughtfully designing stories, employing engaging teaching aids, and facilitating meaningful reflection, educators can create a learning environment that supports the holistic development of preschool children. This approach aligns with contemporary educational goals that emphasize character education, emotional literacy, and spiritual well-being as integral components of early learning (Buleyko, 2025; Eaude, 2025).

9.2. Teacher Creativity in Creating Stories that Stimulate Values and Morals for the Spiritual Development of Preschool Children

The study highlights how preschool teachers in the Kota Kinabalu area, Sabah, creatively craft their own stories to nurture both moral and spiritual development in young children. These teacher-generated stories are often inspired by real-life experiences, local environments, and traditional folk narratives, which are then adapted to be developmentally appropriate, engaging, and meaningful for preschool learners. Importantly, these stories are intentionally designed to embed clear moral lessons such as honesty, kindness, fairness, and responsibility alongside spiritual values like gratitude, compassion, and a sense of connectedness (Rasmini & Karta, 2021; Rahiem, 2021).

Moral development is emphasized through the deliberate inclusion of ethical dilemmas, character choices, and consequences within the stories. For example, a story may depict a character who learns the importance of telling the truth or helping a friend in need, allowing children to observe and reflect on right and wrong behavior in a safe and imaginative context. These narratives provide concrete examples of moral reasoning and ethical conduct, which are essential for shaping children's understanding of social norms and personal responsibility.

At the same time, spiritual development is supported through themes that encourage inner reflection, empathy, and a sense of wonder about the world. Stories may explore ideas such as the beauty of nature, the importance of family bonds, or the value of forgiveness concepts that help children develop a deeper sense of meaning and emotional awareness. By integrating both moral and spiritual dimensions into storytelling, teachers create a holistic learning experience that supports the formation of character and conscience. The use of creative and personalized stories makes these values more accessible and relatable, as children can see themselves in the characters and situations presented. This relevance to their daily lives enhances comprehension and encourages the internalization of the values being taught (Harris, 2016; Pandya, 2024).

According to Yuksel-Arslan, Yildirim, & Robin (2016), the creative process itself through the use of vivid language, imaginative scenarios, and culturally familiar settings plays a crucial role in capturing children's attention and sustaining their interest. Teachers often employ storytelling techniques such as repetition, rhythm, and expressive narration to make the moral and spiritual messages more memorable. These methods not only entertain but also serve as pedagogical tools

for reinforcing desired behaviors and attitudes. The findings underscore that teacher creativity in story creation is not merely an artistic endeavor but a purposeful educational strategy. It allows educators to tailor content to the specific developmental needs and cultural contexts of their students, ensuring that moral and spiritual lessons are both age-appropriate and culturally resonant. This approach also empowers teachers to address contemporary issues such as cooperation, environmental care, or respect for diversity through stories that reflect the lived realities of children in Sabah (Rahiem, Abdullah, & Rahim, 2020; Phillips & Khosravi, 2000).

The integration of moral and spiritual values through teacher-created stories exemplifies the transformative potential of creative pedagogy in early childhood education. By thoughtfully designing narratives that reflect ethical principles and spiritual insights, teachers can foster a nurturing environment that supports the holistic development of preschool children. This reinforces the critical role of creativity in early education and its capacity to shape not only cognitive and emotional growth but also the moral and spiritual foundations of young learners (Herranen, 2020).

9.3. Teacher Creativity in Storytelling Using Creative Teaching Aids for the Spiritual and Moral Development of Preschool Children

The findings of the study indicate that the use of Creative Teaching Aids (CTAs) significantly enhances children's engagement, focus, and participation in storytelling activities. In Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, many preschool teachers incorporate CTAs into their teaching practices to enrich the storytelling experience. While some educators continue to use traditional storybooks, they creatively adapt these materials such as using oversized "Big Books" to better capture children's attention and stimulate curiosity (Rasmini & Karta, 2021; Niyozova, 2025). Others have embraced digital tools, including laptops and projectors, to present animated story clips and multimedia narratives, thereby creating a more immersive and visually stimulating learning environment (Harris, 2016; Pandya, 2024). These creative approaches not only make storytelling more engaging but also serve as effective platforms for transmitting spiritual and moral values. CTAs help children visualize abstract concepts such as kindness, honesty, and empathy, making these values more concrete and relatable. For instance, role-playing with puppets or using emotion cards during storytelling allows children to explore moral dilemmas and practice ethical decision-making in a safe and playful context. Similarly, spiritual themes such as gratitude, inner peace, and respect for nature can be conveyed through visual metaphors and symbols.

9.4. Teacher Creativity in Storytelling Activities to Foster Reflective Practices for the Spiritual and Moral Development of Preschool Children

The research findings emphasize the essential role of teacher creativity in promot-

ing reflective activities during storytelling to foster the spiritual development of preschool children. In Kota Kinabalu, many preschool teachers continue to prioritize reflection in their classroom activities. This approach helps teachers assess children's understanding and pinpoint areas needing improvement (Wegerif, 2010; Niyozova, 2025). Through reflective activities, teachers can gauge how well children have grasped the moral lessons of the stories, which aids in their spiritual growth (Shevchenko et al., 2019). Although some teachers do not place enough importance on reflection, the study highlights its value in developing both comprehension and moral consciousness. Teachers often engage children with reflective questions like, "What did you learn from this story?" and "How would you act if you were in the character's place?" (Romli & Asyraf, 2019). These discussions encourage children to reflect on their behaviors and internalize values taught in the stories (Buleyko, 2025). Additionally, teachers utilize creative strategies, such as role-playing and using real-life scenarios, to make the reflection process more engaging and relevant (Turdaliyeva, 2024). Reflective activities are therefore crucial in shaping children's spiritual development, ensuring that the moral lessons from stories are not only understood but also applied (Tan, 2022).

10. Model Teacher Creativity in Crafting Stories, Using Creative Teaching Aids, and Reflective Activities Contributes to the Spiritual and Moral Development of Preschool Children

Figure 3 shows that the main model of teacher creativity in preschool education is multifaceted, influencing not only cognitive development but also the spiritual and moral growth of young learners. This study conceptualizes the relationships between teacher creativity in crafting stories, the use of creative teaching aids, and reflective activities, and their impact on the spiritual and moral development of children. According to the model presented, teacher creativity in story crafting serves as the foundation, with the teacher's choice of story type, alignment with values and morals, and age appropriateness directly enhancing the learning experience. These stories, infused with ethical and emotional narratives, foster a deeper connection between children and the moral lessons being imparted.

Creative teaching aids, categorized by their type, technology usage, and engagement level, further amplify the teacher's storytelling. These aids, including digital tools and physical props, enhance the interactive nature of the lessons, making learning more engaging and effective (Shevchenko et al., 2019). Moreover, these aids stimulate children's imagination, creating opportunities for moral reflection and spiritual growth, which are integral components of early childhood education (Hansen, 2005; Janius, 2023). Reflective activities, promoted through the integration of interactive and reflective teaching methods, support the development of critical thinking and self-awareness in children. By providing spaces for children to engage in personal reflections about the stories they encounter, these activities encourage them to internalize moral lessons and examine their own values (Fisher & Williams, 2012).

Figure 3. Teacher creativity in crafting stories, using creative teaching aids, and reflective activities contributes to the spiritual and moral development of preschool children.

Ultimately, this model highlights how these pedagogical strategies work synergistically to foster not only cognitive skills but also spiritual and moral development. Through reflective practice, teachers can refine their approaches, continually enhancing the learning environment and ensuring that both creative and moral dimensions of child development are met (James & Brookfield, 2014; Wahidin, 2015). Thus, by embedding creativity in story crafting, utilizing diverse teaching aids, and integrating reflective activities, teachers create a comprehensive learning experience that nurtures the intellectual and ethical growth of preschool children.

11. Conclusion

This study affirms the pivotal role of teacher creativity in storytelling as a trans-

formative approach to promoting both spiritual and moral development in preschool children. Through qualitative insights from educators in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, the research demonstrates that creative storytelling when thoughtfully designed and supported by imaginative teaching aids and reflective activities can foster deep engagement, ethical awareness, and spiritual sensitivity among young learners. Teachers who craft personalized narratives rooted in children's lived experiences and cultural contexts enable children to internalize moral values such as honesty, empathy, and responsibility, while also nurturing spiritual qualities like gratitude, reverence, and emotional resilience. The integration of creative teaching aids, including visual props, puppetry, and digital media, enhances the multisensory appeal of storytelling and reinforces the transmission of values in a developmentally appropriate manner. Reflective practices, such as guided discussions and emotion-based questioning, further support children in processing and applying the lessons learned, bridging the gap between narrative and personal meaning. These findings underscore that teacher creativity is not merely an instructional asset but a foundational element in shaping children's ethical character and spiritual worldview.

By highlighting the interconnectedness of creativity, pedagogy, and value formation, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how early childhood education can be leveraged to cultivate morally aware and spiritually grounded individuals. It calls for a reimagining of storytelling practices in preschool settings not as entertainment, but as a strategic tool for holistic development. Therefore, teacher creativity in storytelling emerges as a vital pedagogical force one that not only enriches cognitive and emotional learning but also lays the foundation for ethical and spiritual growth. By embracing this approach, educators can contribute meaningfully to the formation of compassionate, thoughtful, and morally resilient children. Suggestions for future research involve expanding the scope to include longitudinal studies that examine the sustained impact of creative storytelling on children's moral and spiritual trajectories. Comparative studies across cultural regions could also offer valuable insights into how local narratives and teaching traditions influence value formation. Furthermore, exploring the role of parental involvement in reinforcing storytelling-based moral and spiritual education at home may provide a more comprehensive view of its developmental potential.

12. Recommendation

Recommendations for practice include the development of training modules that equip teachers with skills in story crafting, value-based narrative design, and the use of culturally relevant teaching aids. Schools and teacher education programs should prioritize creativity as a core competency, encouraging educators to experiment with diverse storytelling formats and reflective techniques. Additionally, curriculum designers should integrate storytelling frameworks that explicitly address both moral reasoning and spiritual reflection.

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AI Declaration

We confirm that this research utilizes Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies to improve decision-making, enhance content clarity and accuracy, and assist with proofreading and overall content quality. All AI systems used in this project adhere to ethical standards, legal regulations, and best practices regarding data privacy and security. We are dedicated to using AI responsibly and transparently throughout the project.

Data Availability Statement (DAS)

No data is available for this study. The data generated or analyzed during this study are not publicly available due to privacy concerns, proprietary restrictions, or other relevant reasons. For any inquiries or further information, please contact the corresponding author.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval will be sought from the relevant educational and research authorities before the study commences. The following ethical practices will be adhered to:

1) Informed Consent: All participants will be provided with clear information about the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent will be obtained from each teacher and, if applicable, from parents of the children observed.

2) Confidentiality: Participants' identities will be anonymized in all publications and reports. Any personal or sensitive information will be securely stored and kept confidential.

3) Respect for Participants: Teachers and children will be treated with respect, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their perspectives are valued throughout the research process.

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Conflicts of Interest

We would like to formally declare that there is no conflict of interest in completing this research. We have reviewed the circumstances, and after careful consideration, we can confirm that no personal, financial, or professional interests interfere with my responsibilities or decision-making in this matter.

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