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Huda Abu Afash \*

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**"The Role of Storytelling in Instilling Educational Values During Early Childhood"**

### **The Role of Storytelling in Instilling Educational Values**

#### **During Early Childhood**

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Huda Abu Afash

#### **Abstract**

This article highlights the significance of children's stories as an effective educational tool for instilling values during early childhood, particularly given the technological developments that influence children's behavior, daily lives, and capacity to learn educational values (Abdou, 2015). Educational values constitute a fundamental component in building a child's personality, shaping self-concept, and directing behavior, with the home and preschool serving as the primary sources for learning them (Abu-Hussain, 2023). Stories play a pivotal role in socialization, transcending mere entertainment to instill moral and social values through guided reading and accompanying activities in kindergartens and preschools according to the Israeli curriculum (אַיָּה אַבָּא-בָּקָר, 2024).

The research adopted a qualitative methodology based on analyzing relevant scientific sources, aiming to explore educational values in

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children's stories and their positive impact on value learning through event representation and following the protagonist's journey (Boyles, 2018). The research concluded that storytelling represents one of the most important means of embedding values in children's minds, whether in traditional or digital formats, with emphasis on the necessity of training teachers to utilize technology to enhance this role (Asik, 2016).

**Keywords:** Values, educational values, children's stories, early childhood, digital stories, socialization.

### **Introduction**

The instillation of educational values in children during their formative years has long been a central concern for educators and researchers in the fields of educational psychology and child development. In our current era, this subject has become increasingly urgent and important due to the rapid and profound impacts of technological advancement on children's behaviors and their ways of interacting with the surrounding world (Abdou, 2015). Smart devices and digital content have become integral to children's daily lives, which may lead to

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attention dispersion or exposure to undesirable values if not properly guided.

Educational values represent the solid foundation upon which a child's self-concept is built, directing their actions and daily behavior toward positivity and balance (Arikan & Bloom, 2015). During this sensitive developmental stage, home and kindergarten serve as the primary and most influential sources for learning these values in their various forms, as children begin exploring the external world and building their first social relationships through them (Abu-Hussain, 2023). Here emerges the role of parents and teachers as living role models, where children imitate their behaviors and internalize values through daily interaction.

Among the diverse and innovative educational tools, children's stories stand out as a highly effective and enjoyable instrument in the socialization process. Stories are not limited to their purely entertaining role but extend beyond it to convey moral lessons and fundamental values in a manner that perfectly suits children's imagination and their limited comprehension capacity at this age (Adrian, Clemente, & Villanueva, 2007). In Israeli kindergarten curricula, stories are integrated systematically and in an organized fashion, where teachers

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read stories interactively, accompanied by practical activities such as dramatic play, drawing, or group discussions, thereby enhancing children's understanding of values and cultivating a love of reading from an early age (AlajYaya& Abu-Baker, 2024).

This article aims to provide a comprehensive examination of the role of storytelling in instilling fundamental values such as mutual respect, cooperation, tolerance, and responsibility, with particular focus on the culturally diverse context of Israeli society, where stories can serve as a bridge for promoting coexistence among children from different backgrounds and building a generation capable of confronting social challenges with deep humanitarian awareness (Kizel, 2016).

### **Defining Values and Educational Values**

The term "values" is a fundamental concept in the social and educational sciences, and researchers have differed in defining it according to the scientific approach they adopt, whether psychological, social, or philosophical. Generally, values are defined as those standards or guiding principles upon which individuals rely in evaluating matters, choosing their behavior, and determining their priorities in daily life (Arikan& Bloom, 2015). These standards help

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achieve balance between personal and collective interests and form a framework for judging right from wrong.

As for educational values specifically, they are that category of values transmitted deliberately and systematically through the educational and pedagogical process, with the aim of shaping the younger generation's personality and preparing them for social life (Asik, 2016). Examples of these values include honesty, responsibility, justice, empathy, and respect for others, which typically stem from the general objectives of education in any society (Abdou, 2015).

Educational values derive great importance from their ability to connect individuals with their society and help them distinguish between positive and negative behaviors, thereby contributing to building the balanced and stable personality that children need (Abu-Hussain, 2023). During early childhood specifically, the child's mind is highly flexible and malleable, making this period optimal for deeply and permanently embedding values, as children easily absorb positive models and imitate them without resistance (Boyles, 2018). Thus, values become an inseparable part of their personal and social identity.

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### **The Role of Institutions in Instilling Educational Values**

Kindergartens and schools bear significant and fundamental responsibility in raising new generations with educational values, alongside their role in transmitting scientific knowledge and academic skills (Adrian, Clemente, & Villanueva, 2007). These institutions provide an organized and systematic environment that helps instill values through daily programs and group activities.

However, this responsibility is not confined to educational institutions alone but is shared with the family, which begins the instillation process from home through living example and daily interaction with the child (Abdou, 2015). The family is the first environment in which children are exposed to values, whether through parental behavior or family narratives.

The media also plays an increasingly important role in reinforcing or weakening these values, especially with the spread of digital platforms, in addition to civil society organizations that offer awareness programs (AlajYaya& Abu-Baker, 2024). When there is a lack of educational awareness within some families, the role of kindergartens in compensating for this deficiency becomes more critical, through

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systematic programs focusing on shared and humanitarian values (Abu-Hussain, 2023).

Among the most effective methods that these institutions employ in instilling values is storytelling, due to its unique ability to capture children's attention and engage them emotionally and intellectually simultaneously, making the learning process enjoyable and non-obligatory (Formen& Nuttal, 2014).

### **Storytelling as an Educational Tool for Instilling Values**

A story directed at children is defined as a prose narrative containing a sequence of events and diverse characters, aimed at entertainment or education, or both together (Dempster, Oliver, Sunderland, & Thistlethwaite, 2016). Its main elements include the plot (sequence of events), primary and secondary characters, the moral message or main theme, and the temporal and spatial setting (Ningrum, 2023).

Children are characterized by an innate inclination toward stories; from their early years, they are drawn to hearing tales, eagerly follow their events, and imagine themselves as part of them, making storytelling a deeply impactful educational experience for children across various domains, not exclusively for learning values, but potentially as a

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means of teaching reading that children need at the beginning of their lives (Boyles, 2018).

Stories affect children's personalities in multiple and integrated aspects: intellectually, they expand imagination and stimulate critical thinking by posing implicit questions about consequences and choices (Boyles, 2018); socially, they instill values of cooperation, respect, and belonging through positive character models (أجعاجع& Abu-Baker, 2024); and emotionally, they enhance empathy and help release negative feelings, especially in stories that address dealing with living creatures or the environment (Bar-Tal, 2013).

In the current digital age, digital stories—such as interactive applications and short animated films—have become more attractive to children thanks to visual and audio elements, which enhance their educational impact. However, this requires teachers to develop their skills in effectively using technology and selecting safe and appropriate content (Asik, 2016).

Studies demonstrating the impact of practical application within kindergartens indicate that teachers can dedicate daily time to reading one story, such as a tale about friendship between different animals to promote the value of tolerance, or a story about a child protecting

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their garden to embed in environmental responsibility. Reading is then followed by interactive activities such as drawing the favorite character, acting out the main scene, or group discussion about "what would you have done if you were the protagonist?" (Boyles, 2018). This approach helps children emotionally assume roles and apply values in their daily behavior (AlajYala & Abu-Baker, 2024).

It is recommended to select culturally diverse stories reflecting Israeli diversity, with continuous training for teachers in using digital tools such as interactive applications and encouraging parents to practice shared reading at home to reinforce the impact and unify the educational message (Asik, 2016).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion this article, it can be stated that storytelling represents one of the most powerful and effective educational tools in instilling educational values in children during early childhood, where its role transcends mere entertainment to become a constructive instrument for personality and moral consciousness (Abdou, 2015, 2017). Through engaging narrative, children are exposed to positive models that help

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them distinguish between correct and incorrect behaviors and reinforce fundamental values such as honesty, cooperation, respect, and social responsibility (Arikan& Bloom, 2015; Asik, 2016). This impact comes indirectly, making comprehension deeper and more sustainable, as children assume the roles of various characters in stories and emotionally experience their situations, transforming values from mere words into daily behaviors that are part of their everyday lives (Adrián, Clemente, & Villanueva, 2007).

Recent studies have also confirmed the fundamental role of storytelling in developing the intellectual, emotional, and social aspects of children. Intellectually, stories expand children's imagination and stimulate critical thinking, contributing to the balanced growth of their cognitive abilities (Boyles, 2018). Emotionally, they enhance empathy and the ability to understand others' feelings, especially through stories focusing on dealing with animals or living beings, as Bar-Tal's study (2013) demonstrated a connection between early reading of imaginative stories and the development of pro-environmental attitudes. In another recent study, daily reading of stories about empathy toward animals showed a notable increase in empathy levels among children

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(AlajYahya & Abu-Baker, 2024), confirming that early childhood is the optimal period for educational influence through such means.

With the advent of the digital age, digital stories, whether illustrated, interactive, or in the form of short films—have become an integral part of children's lives, capturing their attention more effectively thanks to visual and audio elements (Asik, 2016). However, their effective deployment requires continuous training for teachers in integrating technology into the storytelling process, with careful selection of content that aligns with children's cultural and social context to avoid any potential negative effects.

Overall, storytelling—whether traditional or digital, serves as a vital bridge between pleasure and learning, between knowledge and behavior. Educational institutions and kindergartens investing in this tool through systematic programs and accompanying activities will contribute to preparing generations with firmly rooted values and sound humanitarian awareness. In the context of a multicultural society like Israeli society, stories can be a tool for promoting tolerance and coexistence through selecting narratives that reflect diversity and encourage acceptance of others (Kizel, 2016).

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Finally, this article recommends enhancing the role of storytelling in educational curricula, with emphasis on training teachers and parents, and developing local story content that suits the needs of both Arab and Jewish children equally. Through this approach, we will build a generation capable of facing future challenges with deep and deeply rooted humanitarian values, a generation that combines creativity with responsibility, and imagination with reality.

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