



The Integrative Thematic Model with HAJRAH Syntax on Children's Peace Culture Value in Early Childhood Education in Makassar, Indonesia.

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ABSTRACT

Early childhood is a critical phase for cultivating character and social values, including peaceful coexistence. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the integrative thematic learning model with HAJRAH syntax (High Preparation, Action, Joining, Reaction, Assessment, High Reinforcement) in developing peace culture values in young children. Using a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group, 26 kindergarten children (aged 5–6) in Makassar were divided into experimental and control groups. Data were collected using a pre-test and post-test questionnaire and observation sheet validated by experts (CVI = 0.87; Cronbach's α = 0.81). The independent sample t-test revealed a significant difference between the groups ($p < 0.001$), with the experimental group showing a mean increase of 2.636 points in peace culture indicators (tolerance, cooperation, conflict resolution). The findings indicate that HAJRAH-based learning fosters stronger social-emotional development and peaceful behaviors in children. This model offers a promising pedagogical framework for implementing character education in early childhood settings.

Artikel HISTORY

Submission 2025-06-30

Received 2025-08-18

Accepted 2026-04-04

KEYWORDS

HAJRAH model, peace education, early childhood development, thematic learning, social-emotional learning

DOI. 10.21009/jpud.v20i1.57765

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1. Introduction

Early childhood education (PAUD) plays a strategic role in shaping the foundation of children's character (Ramadhanti, 2022; Hajerah et al., 2022; Amri & Intisari, 2019). The age of 5-6 years, often referred to as the sensitive period or golden age, is a critical phase for developing basic competencies (Windayani *et al.*, 2021 ; Atikah, 2023). At this stage, education is not only about delivering knowledge, but also about instilling core values that help children grow into morally upright individuals, especially in their interactions within society (Widayati et al., 2023 ; Sakti, 2024 ; Haryono et al., 2020). One of the essential values that should be instilled is the culture of peace, which includes the ability to appreciate differences, resolve conflicts constructively, and live harmoniously in diversity. This value is a crucial aspect of shaping a tolerant and well-characterized generation, (Muthoharoh, 2024; Halim, 2022; Saptadi, 2023; Wahid, 2019) by fostering an inclusive social awareness and empathy toward others regardless of their background (Zammit, 2023). Globally, efforts to implement peace education in early childhood have gained momentum due to increasing social fragmentation, bullying, and violent tendencies even among young children. According to UNESCO, early interventions in values education are more effective than corrective actions at later stages (UNESCO, 2022; Wong, 2024; Roca Campos et al., 2021).

However, many countries, including Indonesia, still face gaps in integrating peace culture into early childhood pedagogy in a systematic and engaging way. This highlights the need for contextualized learning models that are both culturally rooted and pedagogically structured. As Saripudin, Ilfiandra & Saripudin (2022) emphasize, a well-developed peace education curriculum should incorporate eight essential values such as self-awareness, prosocial behavior, and conflict resolution, which must be internalized during the early years (Al Mushaqiri et al., 2021; Toklu, 2024).

The character of loving peace encompasses behaviors aimed at creating a sense of safety and tranquility, which can also be felt by others (Halim, 2022; Zulkarnain, 2020). According to Ramadhanti (2022) and Rahman, (2023), there are four dimensions of the character of loving peace: truth, love, right action, and non-violence. In line

with this, UNESCO describes a culture of peace as one that involves respect for life, justice, tolerance, and the ability to resolve conflicts (Lim, 2022). This perspective is further supported by peace pedagogy models in early childhood education that emphasize tolerance, empathy, and understanding, supported by interdisciplinary approaches promoting justice and respectful interactions in daily life (Roque-Hernandez, 2022; Setiadi, 2017). Loving peace is reflected in a person's attitudes, speech, and behavior that bring happiness, comfort, and security to others. This aligns with how children perceive peace, through love, mutual respect, and harmonious relationships fostered within educational environments (Giwangsa et al., 2023; Nasional, 2011 ; Çengelci Köse & Bayir, 2016).

Peace education aims to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes, enabling students to become self-aware, understand their interactions with others, and engage positively with society, which is further supported by recent findings showing its effectiveness in promoting emotional regulation, multicultural sensitivity, and constructive communication in early childhood settings (Ilfiandra et al., 2021; Toklu, 2024; Al-Mamun et al., 2025). Through such interactions, children learn about moral concepts and the consequences of their actions (Langenhoff, 2022; Lim, 2022; Tuncdemir et al., 2022). Action research conducted by Amca Toklu (2024) in a multicultural setting in Cyprus illustrates how five-year-old children can develop peace values and communication skills through structured interventions, which aligns with recent findings emphasizing the effectiveness of early childhood peace programs in diverse contexts (Wong, 2024).

Teaching a culture of peace to early childhood is crucial because, at this stage, children are in the early phase of character and personality formation (Faiqoh, 2015; Babuta & Wahyurini, 2014; Hasanah, 2018). Schools serve as strategic places to cultivate principles that they will carry into adulthood (Fitrianiingtyas & Jumiatmoko, 2023; Rusmiati, 2023; Subianto, 2013). Therefore, peace culture education in schools is essential, as schools are institutions designed to educate students from diverse ethnic, religious, and racial backgrounds under the supervision of educators (Castro & Bermeo, 2023; Fausta et al., 2024; Mujiburrohman & Faqih, 2024; Munandar & Fahrurrozi, 2024).

In this context, the integrative thematic learning model with the HAJRAH syntax offers a solution to address these various challenges by integrating multiple aspects of learning into holistic themes relevant to children's lives. The syntax provides systematic steps that facilitate learning through direct experience, social interaction, and deep reflection. Research by Hajerah (2023) shows that when applied in early childhood settings, the HAJRAH syntax fosters prosocial behavior, promotes peaceful communication, and develops children's moral reasoning through meaningful reflective activities and social engagement. These findings are in line with previous studies that affirm the model's effectiveness in enhancing holistic character development in young learners, including those by (Eko & Kusumawati, 2023; Putri et al., 2021).

Rooted in constructivist theory—particularly the sociocultural perspectives of Piaget and Vygotsky—HAJRAH emphasizes interaction, scaffolding, and active participation in building knowledge and moral understanding. This aligns with broader studies highlighting the role of social engagement, guided play, and adult facilitation in promoting cognitive growth and emotional regulation (Hajerah, 2023; Skene, 2022; Zhou, 2024). Furthermore, character-driven learning activities integrated into this framework have been shown to enhance empathy and moral reasoning (Ilfiandra & Saripudin, 2022; Zulkarnain, 2020). The reflective dimension of the model also supports children's ability to internalize values, regulate emotions, and develop peaceful behavior in social contexts (Karissa & Hayati, 2024; Rukmana, 2021; Skene, 2022).

Previous studies have shown that the integrative thematic learning model is effective in instilling character values such as Pancasila and tolerance (Amri et al., 2023; Safitri et al., 2020 ; Huda et al., 2021). However, research specifically examining the impact of the HAJRAH syntax on strengthening peace culture values in early childhood through an experimental approach remains very limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by testing the influence of the integrative thematic learning model based on the HAJRAH syntax on peace culture values in kindergarten children.

Amid increasingly complex social dynamics, the values of a culture of peace are becoming more relevant than ever. However, instilling these values in early childhood education in Indonesia still faces various challenges. Surveys and observations indicate that peace culture learning in kindergartens remains suboptimal. Teachers often struggle to design effective and engaging learning experiences to internalize these values. Moreover, the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* in *Sekolah Penggerak* (pioneer schools) is often not supported by adequate teacher capacity to adapt value-based learning approaches. This gap has led to suboptimal outcomes, as noted by (Williyansen et al., 2024).

Teaching a culture of peace to early childhood is crucial because, at this stage, children are in the early phase of character and personality formation (Faiqoh, 2015; Babuta & Wahyurini, 2014; Hasanah, 2018). Schools serve as strategic places to cultivate principles that they will carry into adulthood (Fitrianiingtyas & Jumiatmoko, 2023; Rusmiati, 2023; Subianto, 2013; Fausta et al., 2024). A culture of peace encompasses values such as tolerance, empathy, mutual respect, and the skills to resolve conflicts peacefully (Istianah, 2023, Istianah, 2024). Through this teaching, children learn to appreciate diversity, live harmoniously, and approach differences with a positive attitude. Without early introduction to these values, children may develop aggressive behaviors, emotional difficulties, or lack the ability to build healthy relationships (Rahayu, 2016).

The character of loving peace encompasses behaviors aimed at creating a sense of safety and tranquility, which can also be felt by others (Halim, 2022; Zulkarnain, 2020). There are four dimensions of the character of loving peace: truth, love, right action, and non-violence (Ramadhanti, 2022; Rahman, 2023). According to UNESCO, a culture of peace involves respect for life, justice, tolerance, and the ability to resolve conflicts (Lim, 2022). Loving peace is an attitude, words, and actions of a person that can make others feel happy, comfortable, and at ease because of the presence of that individual (Nasional, 2011). Peace education aims to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes, enabling students to become self-aware, understand their interactions with others, and engage positively with society (Ilfiandra et al., 2021). Through such interactions, children learn about moral concepts and the consequences of their actions (Lim, 2022).

In response to these challenges, the integrative thematic learning model with the HAJRAH syntax offers a promising solution. This model integrates various aspects of learning into holistic themes relevant to children's lives and provides systematic steps that support learning through direct experiences, social interaction, and deep reflection. Research by Hajerah (2023) shows that HAJRAH fosters prosocial behavior, peaceful communication, and moral reasoning in early childhood through meaningful reflective activities and social engagement. These findings align with previous studies that highlight the model's effectiveness in promoting character development (Eko & Kusumawati, 2023; Putri et al., 2021).

The HAJRAH model is rooted in constructivist theory, particularly the sociocultural perspectives of Piaget and Vygotsky, emphasizing interaction, scaffolding, and active participation. It aligns with studies emphasizing the role of guided play, adult facilitation, and social engagement in fostering cognitive and emotional development (Skene, 2022; Zhou et al., 2024; Hajerah, 2023). The model's reflective dimension helps children internalize values, regulate emotions, and practice peaceful behavior in social contexts (Karissa & Hayati, 2024; Rukmana, 2021; Skene, 2022). Moreover, character-driven activities within HAJRAH enhance empathy and support children's moral growth (Ilfiandra & Saripudin, 2022; Zulkarnain, 2020).

Theoretically, HAJRAH is grounded in Piaget's constructivism (which encourages hands-on exploration), Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning (which emphasizes guided dilemmas), and Bandura's social learning theory (which highlights modeling and imitation). The syntax merges these approaches by offering experiential, reflective, and social components within a structured thematic framework. This theoretical blend allows HAJRAH to bridge cognitive development, social interaction, and moral judgment, making it highly suitable for early childhood character education.

While studies have confirmed the effectiveness of thematic learning in instilling values such as nationalism and Pancasila (Amri et al., 2023; Huda et al., 2021; Safitri et al., 2020), empirical research exploring the HAJRAH syntax's impact on peace culture values remains limited. Most existing studies are descriptive or conceptual, lacking robust experimental validation. This study aims to fill that gap by examining the causal relationship between the HAJRAH-based model and peace culture values using an experimental pre-test and post-test design.

This approach not only evaluates the effectiveness of the model but also its validity and practicality in kindergarten contexts. Through this innovation, the research aims to contribute meaningfully to early childhood education literature and practice while providing teachers with evidence-based guidance. Ultimately it is hoped that model can nurture a generation with strong character, tolerance, and a peaceful mindset.

2. Theoretical Study

2.1 Integrative Thematic Model

Thematic Learning is an integrated learning approach that establishes a theme to connect various subjects, providing meaningful understanding to students through direct and interconnected learning concepts. According to Fogarty (Setiawan, 2018), there are several models of thematic learning, such as the fragmented model, connected model, nested model, sequenced model, shared model, webbed model, threaded model, integrated model, immersed model, and network model. Majid, (2019) defines thematic learning as a learning approach designed based on a specific theme. Martiono, (2011) emphasizes that thematic learning provides meaningful experiences by linking subjects, while Sujiono, (2022) states that this approach involves various areas of development, integrating aspects of processes, curriculum, and learning. States that this approach involves various areas of development, integrating aspects of processes, curriculum, and learning.

2.2 HAJRAH Syntax

The learning process consists of various stages that have been explained by experts. According to Gagne dan Briggs (Yaumi, 2022), there are nine events of instruction, which include: (1) gaining learners' attention, (2) informing learners of the objectives, (3) Stimulating recall of prior knowledge (apperception), (4) presenting new content (stimulus), (5) Providing learning guidance, (6) Eliciting learner performance, (7) Providing feedback, (8) Assessing learner performance, (9) Enhancing retention and transfer of knowledge. These nine stages allow flexibility in implementation through various learning activities. These nine stages allow flexibility in implementation through various learning activities. To simplify these stages Dick, Carey, dan Carey (Yaumi, 2023) a grouped the nine events of instruction into five main categories: (1) Pre-instructional activities, (2) Content presentation, (3) Learner participation, (4) Assessment, (5) Follow-through activities. This classification helps facilitate implementation across various learning contexts.

Additionally, the thematic approach in learning has also been a focus of experts.. Wilson & Wing Jan, (2023) propose six stages of thematic learning, which include: (1) Tuning In (Identifying prior knowledge and preparing for exploration), (2) Finding Out (Engaging in shared experiences to discover new information), (3) Sorting Out (Processing and analyzing acquired informa), (4) Going Further (Expanding learning activities and related experiences), (5) Reflection (Reflecting on learning, making connections, and drawing conclusions), dan (6) Action (melakukan tindakan nyata berdasarkan pembelajaran). Taking real actions based on learning. These stages emphasize the importance of exploration, analysis, reflection, and application in thematic learning.

The HAJRAH syntax is also strongly grounded in constructivist learning theory, especially Piaget's idea of learning through direct manipulation and interaction with the environment. Children actively construct knowledge when they are allowed to engage in experiences that challenge their prior understanding. Bandura's social cognitive theory also reinforces this model, as the social aspects of "joining" and "reaction" stages enable children to learn through observation, imitation, and social reinforcement. These theoretical foundations validate HAJRAH as a developmentally appropriate and pedagogically sound approach for young learners.

Based on these perspectives, the integrative thematic learning model with HAJRAH syntax (High preparation, Action, Joining, Reaction, Assessment, High reinforcement) integrates various components into a single process or theme that serves as the main topic of each learning session (Hajerah et al., 2025). This model combines multiple elements within a single process or main theme in every learning activity. By applying this model, students become more actively engaged in the learning process and gain direct experience through a learning-by-doing approach. It also enhances interactive, contextual learning, making it more aligned with the kindergarten learning concept and the principles of thematic learning it self. According Hajerah et al., (2025) this model consists of six stages: 1) high preparation, the teacher greets students, builds motivation, and conducts apperception to connect children's experiences with the learning material, 2) action Encourages exploration of phenomena related to the theme, 3) joining, facilitates simple experiments to deepen understanding, 4) reaction, observes children's responses and reflects on their learning outcomes, 5) assessment Guides children in drawing conclusions from their learning, and 6) high reinforcement, Provides strengthening and follow-up activities to make learning more meaningful. This model ensures that learning is engaging, reflective, and reinforces active participation, making it effective for early childhood education.

In the context of Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka, the HAJRAH model offers an ideal structure for implementing meaningful, student-centered learning. Its emphasis on direct experience, reflection, and reinforcement resonates with the curriculum's goal to cultivate holistic, independent, and culturally aware learners from an early age. The flexible structure of HAJRAH enables teachers to integrate social-emotional learning and value-based education seamlessly into thematic instruction.

2.3 Peace Culture Values

A culture of peace in schools focuses on creating an environment of respect, tolerance, and mutual support among all school members, with the goal of resolving conflicts positively (Ilfiandra *et al*, 2021). Additionally, a culture of peace integrates Pancasila values and togetherness to build a just, inclusive, and respectful school environment while educating students to live peacefully (Setyaningrum, 2023), and care for their friends and family (Approach, 2022). Indicators of a culture of peace include policies that prioritize peaceful conflict resolution and respect for diversity, fostering a safe and respectful environment (Wahid, 2019). This approach also helps students become more self-aware, develop stronger relationships, and improve their social interactions (Ilfiandra *et al*, 2021). The better they recognize and respond to others in social interactions, the more they strengthen their empathy skills (Zilka, 2023). From these perspectives, it can be concluded that a culture of peace in schools is about creating a respectful, tolerant, and inclusive environment by integrating Pancasila values and peaceful conflict resolution. Schools educate students to respect differences, live peacefully, and build harmonious relationships within society.

3. Method

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental method, specifically the Non-Equivalent Control Group Design. The research subjects consisted of 26 Kindergarten B children in Makassar, evenly divided into an experimental group ($n = 13$) and a control group ($n = 13$). The sample was selected purposively based on similarities in age, parental education background, and school environment to reduce potential confounding variables.

The experimental group received instruction through the Integrative Thematic Model using the HAJRAH syntax, while the control group was taught using conventional methods such as direct explanation and simple discussion. For comparison, the control group received similar learning themes (e.g., peace garden, politeness campaign, emotional expression, and friendship story) but delivered through a conventional approach without following a structured syntax.

Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests using a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring peace culture values, tolerance, cooperation, empathy, and conflict resolution—as well as observation sheets to document student behavior. The instrument was validated by three early childhood education experts and a child counselor,

yielding a content validity index (CVI) of 0.87. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha produced a score of 0.81, indicating good internal consistency.

The intervention lasted four weeks, with eight sessions conducted twice per week, each lasting 60 minutes. Each session followed the six-step HAJRAH syntax: High Preparation, Action, Joining, Reaction, Assessment, and High Reinforcement. These steps were thematically adapted to support children's internalization of peace culture values through engaging, context-based project activities. The structure and specific content of each session are elaborated in Table 1. A homogeneity test was conducted prior to analysis. The result showed a Sig. value = 0.356 (> 0.05), indicating that the experimental and control groups were homogeneous, thus meeting the assumption of comparability prior to the intervention.

Table 1.. Learning Design Using the HAJRAH Syntax

Session	Theme	Core Peace Culture Value	Main Activity	HAJRAH Syntax	Peace Values Emerging from HAJRAH Activities	Duration
1	My Peaceful School Garden	Tolerance	Drawing and building a model of a dream school garden together	High Preparation (discussing experiences in gardens), Action (drawing and designing a peace garden), Joining (group discussion), Reaction (reflecting on peaceful settings), Assessment (explaining the meaning of a peaceful garden), High Reinforcement (exhibiting the work)	Accepting others' ideas, tolerance of differences, group cooperation	60
2	Polite Kids Campaign	Respect for others	Creating posters and slogans about polite words	High Preparation (introduction to politeness), Action (observing polite vs. impolite behaviors), Joining (group poster-making), Reaction (sharing stories of polite behavior), Assessment (explaining the poster), High Reinforcement (mini polite campaign exhibition)	Awareness of speaking politely, appreciation of others, courage in delivering peace messages	60
3	Emotion Box	Empathy and emotion regulation	Creating an "emotion box" with expressive drawings and short stories	High Preparation (discussion on emotions), Action (coloring emotions), Joining (sharing happy/sad stories), Reaction (understanding friends' feelings), Assessment (explaining what the emotion box means), High Reinforcement (using the box to express feelings)	Ability to recognize and manage emotions, empathy for others' feelings	60
4	Mini Drama: True Friends	Friendship and responsibility	Role-play based on the story of a "true friend" and peaceful conflict resolution	High Preparation (listening to "true friend" story), Action (role-playing), Joining (group drama), Reaction (reflecting on who is a true friend), Assessment (naming good friend traits), High Reinforcement (singing songs about friendship/helpfulness)	Responsibility in roles, loyalty to friends, peaceful conflict resolution, teamwork	60

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test confirmed normal distribution (Sig. = 0.081 > 0.05). The homogeneity test using Levene's test showed Sig. = 0.014 ($p < 0.05$), indicating unequal variance; hence, the independent sample t-test was interpreted using the "equal variances not assumed" approach.

The parametric statistical tests used in this study included a paired t-test to compare pre-test and post-test scores within each group, an independent t-test to examine differences in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups, and the calculation of effect size (Cohen's d) to determine the magnitude of the intervention's impact. The results indicated that the thematic learning model based on the HAJRAH syntax significantly enhanced children's peace culture values compared to conventional teaching methods.

4. Result And Discussion

4.1. Result

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to evaluate the normality of data distribution in this study. The results, presented in Table 1, show that the post-test score in the experimental group yielded a significance value of 0.081, which exceeds the threshold of 0.05. This value indicates that the data are normally distributed, thereby justifying the use of parametric statistical tests such as the independent samples t-test. The normality finding ensures that the subsequent analyses were conducted under valid statistical assumptions, enhancing the validity and reliability of the research conclusions. The data distribution aligning with normal curve expectations also strengthens the statistical generalizability of the intervention outcomes.

Table 1 presents the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test. The post-test score in the experimental group yielded a significance value of 0.081, which exceeds the threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the

data are normally distributed, thus justifying the use of parametric statistical tests such as the independent samples t-test. The normality finding ensures that subsequent analyses were conducted under acceptable statistical assumptions, increasing the validity and reliability of the research conclusions. The data distribution aligns with normal curve expectations, confirming that the intervention outcomes can be statistically generalized.

Table 1. Normality test

Kelas		Tests of Normality					
		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Sintak	Pre-Test	0,382	11	0,000	0,701	11	0,000
HAJRAH	Eksperimen						
	Post-Test	0,229	11	0,110	0,872	11	0,081
	Eksperimen						

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 2 shows the results of the Levene's test for homogeneity. The significance values for all indicators (e.g., Sig. = 0.014 based on the mean) were less than 0.05. This suggests that the assumption of equal variances between groups was violated. Therefore, the analysis proceeded using the row labeled "equal variances not assumed" in the independent sample t-test to ensure proper interpretation.

Table 2. Uji Homogenitas

Sintak HAJRAH		Test of Homogeneity of Variance			
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
	Based on Mean	7,306	1	20	0,014
	Based on Median	5,614	1	20	0,028
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	5,614	1	19,847	0,028
	Based on trimmed mean	7,538	1	20	0,012

Table 3 presents the results of the independent sample t-test. The significance value (2-tailed) of 0.000 is smaller than the threshold of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted. This confirms a significant difference in the average peace culture values between the experimental group (HAJRAH syntax-based learning) and the control group.

Tabel 3. Independent sampel t-test

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower		Upper
Sintak	Equal variances assumed	7,306	0,014	-5,461	20	0,000	-2,636	0,483	-3,643	-1,629
HAJRAH	Equal variances not assumed			-5,461	14,302	0,000	-2,636	0,483	-3,670	-1,603

The mean difference of 2.636 points reflects a substantial improvement in the peace culture values among children exposed to the HAJRAH-based learning model. The effect size is not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful, suggesting enhanced social-emotional awareness, conflict resolution skills, and interpersonal sensitivity. Furthermore, the 95% confidence interval ranges from -3.670 to -1.603, excluding zero, which reinforces the robustness of the result. A low standard error of 0.483 indicates consistency across the experimental group, demonstrating uniform effectiveness of the intervention.

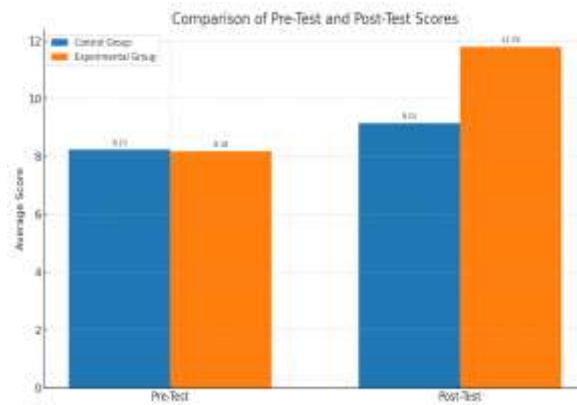


Figure 1 illustrates the comparison of pre- and post-test scores.

The experimental group shows a significant increase from 8.18 to 11.79, while the control group increased only slightly from 8.23 to 9.15. This visual evidence supports the narrative that the HAJRAH syntax-based model has a significant impact on enhancing children's peace culture values.

4.2. Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that the integrative thematic model with HAJRAH syntax significantly enhances children's peace culture values. This is evidenced by a statistically significant increase in post-test scores in the experimental group ($\text{sig}.0.000 < 0.05$), indicating that the intervention produced a measurable and meaningful effect. Unlike conventional methods, the HAJRAH model offers a systematic and reflective learning structure that encourages children to directly experience and internalize peace values through social interaction, guided play, and value-based activities.

The effectiveness of this model can be explained through its strong theoretical integration. Grounded in Piagetian constructivism, HAJRAH stimulates active exploration and logical thinking in children. Its reflective phase also aligns with Kohlberg's stages of moral development, enabling children to comprehend ethical dilemmas within their own contextual experiences. Furthermore, social modeling embedded in collaborative activities reflects Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of observation and interaction in shaping prosocial behavior. The integration of these three theoretical perspectives makes HAJRAH not only developmentally appropriate but also effective as an instructional approach for cultivating a culture of peace.

Peace culture in the context of early childhood education is not merely a collection of normative values but an essential foundation for healthy socio-emotional development. During early childhood, children are in a critical phase of character formation and are highly susceptible to environmental influences and social interactions. A safe, supportive, and interactive learning environment plays a crucial role in fostering empathy, moral awareness, and social competence (Hamre & Pianta, 2001 ; Lubis et al., 2024 ; Flear, 2021). Values such as tolerance, empathy, cooperation, and serve as key predictors of emotional regulation, academic adjustment, and positive social relationships (Qashmer, 2023 ; Durlak et al., 2011; Adynski, 2024). When children are habituated from an early age to practice peace-oriented values, they are more likely to regulate their emotions effectively, build constructive relationships, and develop a sense of social responsibility in reducing aggressive behavior and enhancing reflective thinking skills (Vahedi, 2012 ; Cao, 2023; Mondri, 2021). Therefore, teachers need to deliberately and systematically stimulate these values through approaches that are integrated into thematic learning processes, such as the HAJRAH syntax.

These findings are consistent with prior studies in Indonesia showing that integrative thematic learning supports children's character development and enhances empathic and prosocial behavior, particularly when instruction is meaningful and value-based (Ismail & Pratiwi, 2022; Rachmawati & Kurniati, 2020; Suryana & Hijriani, 2021). International evidence further strengthens the validity of these findings. Zilka (2023) reported that structured social-emotional approaches significantly improve empathy and emotional regulation in early childhood. Flear (2021) highlighted that children's engagement in direct learning experiences reinforces awareness of diversity and social values.

Aloizou et al., (2025) found that value-based thematic learning promotes deep internalization of moral values. Empirical research indicates that core socio-emotional competencies, such as emotional regulation, empathy, and prosocial behavior, are essential values that can be systematically integrated into early childhood learning frameworks (Durlak et al., 2011 ; OECD, 2020; Blewitt et al., 2020). Toklu (2024) confirmed the effectiveness of peace education in fostering global citizenship awareness from the preschool level. Sakti (2024) underscored the importance of local cultural values as the foundation of children's character development. Furthermore, global findings from the OECD's International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study (IELS) confirm that empathy and prosocial behavior are key indicators of quality early childhood education.

From a practical standpoint, these findings call for teacher training programs that go beyond the technical implementation of HAJRAH and emphasize strengthening teachers' competencies in creating reflective, contextual, and peace-oriented learning experiences. The model aligns closely with the broader objectives of Indonesia's Kurikulum merdeka and the Profil Pelajar Pancasila framework, which place character development at the core of national educational. Nevertheless, this study has limitations. The relatively small sample size and limited duration of intervention restrict the generalizability of the HAJRAH syntax, and test its implementation across diverse cultural contexts to assess its scalability and adaptability.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that the HAJRAH syntax is not only effective in enhancing peace culture values but also highly relevant to the developmental needs of young children. The integration of learning theories, support from both national and international research, and alignment with national education policy position this approach as a viable alternative for broader implementation in early childhood education practice. With a deeper understanding of how this approach operates, teachers can more confidently design thematic learning experiences that extend beyond cognitive development to holistically nurture children's socio-emotional character formation.

5. Conclusion

The results of this study affirm that the integrative thematic learning model with HAJRAH syntax significantly enhances peace culture values in early childhood. Compared to conventional methods, HAJRAH provides structured, reflective steps that foster children's socio-emotional and moral development through direct and socially interactive activities. The statistical findings validate the effectiveness of the intervention, with significant gains observed in the experimental group.

This learning model is especially relevant for children in the critical phase of character formation. It nurtures essential values such as tolerance, empathy, and cooperation, key foundations for emotional regulation, social relationships, and academic readiness. By encouraging children to actively practice peace-oriented values from an early age, the model promotes long-term reflective thinking and reduces aggressive tendencies.

Practically, HAJRAH empowers teachers to deliver learning that is both contextual and value-based. It supports systematic classroom management and promotes efficient use of time and resources. Therefore, educators should be trained not only in the HAJRAH syntax but also in designing reflective learning experiences that integrate character formation into everyday classroom interactions.

Moreover, this study highlights the potential for scaling up this model. Future research should involve a larger sample size, extended implementation periods, and diverse cultural settings. Developing a HAJRAH-based learning module could support its broader application. This aligns with the direction of Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes character education and aims to cultivate the values embedded in the Profil Pelajar Pancasila, making HAJRAH a timely and contextually relevant instructional innovation.

6. References

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