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The Implementation Of Digital Comic Learning Media Based On Moral Dilemmas To Enhance Understanding Of The Value Of Honesty Among Elementary School Students

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the implementation of digital comic learning media based on moral dilemmas and to analyze the improvement in the understanding of the value of honesty among elementary school students. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, utilizing a quantitative pre-experimental design specifically a one-group pretest-posttest design complemented by qualitative data. It was conducted at SD Negeri 106205 Pasar Baru with 25 fourth-grade students as participants. Data were collected through observations, tests, and interviews. The results indicate that the media was implemented using two moral dilemma stories: one involving the discovery of a wallet, and another concerning the admission of fault for damaging a peer's belongings. Through the use of this media, most students were able to follow the narratives and identify the truth, although their ability to articulate the reasoning behind their chosen actions still requires further development. Test results show that the mean score for students' understanding of honesty increased from 50.20 in the pretest to 84.40 in the posttest, yielding an N-Gain score of 0.687, which falls into the medium category. Individually, 13 students showed a high level of improvement, while 12 students showed a medium level of improvement. Based on these findings, the use of digital comic learning media centered on moral dilemmas provides students with opportunities to grasp the value of honesty through situations relevant to

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their daily lives; furthermore, the test results demonstrate an enhancement in the students' understanding of the value of honesty following instruction that utilized this media.

Keywords: digital comics, moral dilemmas, understanding the value of honesty, elementary school.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding sits at the second level of Bloom's Taxonomy. It is the ability to interpret, explain, and make sense of information that has been learned, using one's own words (Anisa et al., 2026). At this stage, students do more than just mechanically memorize facts; they are able to synthesize concepts functionally and independently, allowing them to use the information they have acquired to explain ideas or address problems (Juniari et al., 2026). Consequently, the success of learning cannot be measured solely by a student's ability to recall material, but rather by the extent to which they can grasp its meaning and apply the knowledge they have gained.

Understanding is essential not only for mastering academic content but also for recognizing and applying the values that serve as guiding principles in life. One such core value is honesty (Hasanudin et al., 2026). Honesty is the capacity to acknowledge, state, or provide information that aligns with reality and the truth (Saeful, 2021). Understanding the value of honesty entails a student's ability to distinguish between honest and dishonest behavior, determine actions that align with the value of honesty, explain the reasoning behind their chosen actions, and comprehend the consequences of those actions. Students who grasp the value of honesty do not merely state that telling the truth is "good" or that lying is "bad"; they are also able to explain why a particular action is categorized as honest or dishonest. This makes it a fundamental element that must be instilled (Ilmia et al., 2023).

Understanding the value of honesty serves as a primary foundation for character education in elementary schools, as it aligns a student's thoughts, words, and actions from an early age, while simultaneously building trust within social relationships (Nurbaya et al., 2022). At this stage, students begin to encounter various situations that require them to speak the truth, admit their mistakes, complete assignments independently, refrain from cheating during examinations, and respect the rights of others (Adiyah et al., 2026). If these values are not successfully internalized through consistent practice within the school environment, there is a risk that students may develop manipulative behaviors that become difficult to correct at later

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stages of their education. Consequently, primary school students typically begin to demonstrate an ability to grasp more complex norms (Setiana & Eliasa, 2024).

In reality, however, students' understanding of honesty does not yet reflect a comprehensive grasp or the ability to apply the value of honesty across various circumstances. While students may know that taking someone else's belongings is wrong, they may not necessarily know how to act when they find an item with an unknown owner. This is supported by preliminary research data from SD Negeri 106205 Pasar Baru, which indicates that although 78% of students understand the meaning of honesty, they do not consistently practice it in their daily actions at school. This situation reveals a gap between possessing knowledge about honesty and understanding how to apply it when faced with situations that require careful judgment. Therefore, the issue of how students understand the value of honesty warrants attention within the learning process in primary schools.

Based on the identified issues, the learning process in elementary schools requires an approach that provides students with opportunities to understand values through situations closely related to their daily lives as the value of honesty must be cultivated through a systematic learning process (Hasan & Wardan, 2026). Instruction that focuses solely on definitions, advice, commands, or prohibitions does not necessarily offer students sufficient space to consider the reasoning behind specific actions. Therefore, a pedagogical solution is needed one that goes beyond merely defining honesty and instead presents scenarios that students can observe, reflect upon, and discuss. Learning should be structured to ensure that students gain experience in understanding the rationale behind an action, as well as the consequences that follow.

One potential solution to support this learning process is the use of instructional media. Instructional media refers to tools employed to convey educational content to students (Karomah et al., 2024). Such media serve as aids in the teaching and learning process, helping to clarify the meaning of the information being presented (Nurrita, 2018). When teaching the value of honesty, media can be used to illustrate behaviors, dilemmas, potential courses of action, and the consequences that may arise from a given decision. Through the use of such media, students do more than just listen to a teacher’s explanation; they are given the opportunity to observe, comprehend, and discuss the issues presented. Consequently, selecting the appropriate instructional media is crucial for fostering an understanding of the value of honesty.

One type of instructional media that can be used to convey the value of honesty is the digital comic. A digital comic is a visual storytelling medium based on electronic devices or online

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platforms that integrates a sequence of images, characters, dialogue, and plot (Payanti, 2022). The combination of visual and verbal elements allows content to be delivered through a narrative arc, enabling students to follow events step-by-step. To ensure that digital comics serve as more than just a collection of stories or behavioral examples, they can be designed to incorporate moral dilemmas. A moral dilemma is a situation characterized by a conflict between ethical values that each possess moral legitimacy, requiring an individual to engage in complex deliberation when making a decision (Masud et al., 2025). Moral dilemmas provide an opportunity to recognize an issue, consider various alternative courses of action, make a choice, and articulate the reasoning behind that decision (Hasibuan et al., 2026). Integrating digital comics with moral dilemmas serves as a relevant approach, as the two elements complement one another: digital comics present characters, events, and conflicts through illustrated narratives, while moral dilemmas introduce issues that prompt students to weigh potential courses of action.

The selection of digital comics based on moral dilemmas as a learning medium is supported by existing research. Rachmasari (2023) found that comics can be utilized as a medium to convey the value of honesty to elementary school students. Furthermore, students who participate in discussions regarding moral issues tend to show greater development in their level of moral reasoning compared to those in a control group (Blatt & Kohlberg, 1975). These findings provide both theoretical and empirical support for the use of comics, moral dilemma narratives, and discussions on moral issues within an educational context.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus both in terms of narrative content and learning activities on four specific aspects of understanding the value of honesty: identifying honest and dishonest behaviors, determining actions based on the value of honesty, explaining the underlying moral reasoning, and analyzing the consequences of honest and dishonest actions. These four aspects allow for a more comprehensive assessment of students' understanding, moving beyond the mere ability to memorize definitions or cite examples of honest behavior. Consequently, this research does not merely employ digital comics as a vehicle for storytelling; rather, it uses them to present challenges that encourage students to reflect upon and deliberate on the value of honesty. Based on the description above, the use of digital comic-based learning media centered on moral dilemmas is considered a viable alternative for enhancing the understanding of the value of honesty among elementary school students. This study aims to examine the implementation of such digital comic-based learning media and the subsequent improvement in students' understanding of the value of honesty following instruction that

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utilizes these materials. Consequently, this research is conducted under the title, "The Implementation of Digital Comic-Based Learning Media Centered on Moral Dilemmas to Enhance the Understanding of the Value of Honesty Among Elementary School Students."

METHODE

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research (Nasution et al., 2024). The quantitative component is used to determine the improvement in students' understanding of the value of honesty before and after the use of digital comic learning media based on moral dilemmas. Meanwhile, the qualitative approach is used to describe the process of implementing this media within the learning environment.

The study was conducted at SD Negeri 106205 Pasar Baru during the odd semester of the 2026/2027 academic year, with 25 fourth-grade students as the research subjects. The quantitative research design follows a pre-experimental, one group pretest-posttest format, involving the administration of a test both before (pretest) and after (posttest) the implementation of the media. Data collection techniques included observation, testing, and interviews. Observations were carried out to monitor the implementation process and student activities during instruction. Tests were used to measure the students' understanding of the value of honesty, while interviews were conducted with the fourth-grade teacher to provide supporting data.

Quantitative data were analyzed by comparing the mean pretest and posttest scores and calculating the Normalized Gain (N-Gain) to determine the extent of the improvement in students' understanding of the value of honesty. Qualitative data were analyzed through data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Both sets of analytical results were integrated to provide a comprehensive description of the media implementation and the improvement in students' understanding of the value of honesty.

Materials and methods should make readers be able to reproduce the experiment. It should be provided sufficient detail to allow the work to be reproduced. Methods that already published should be indicated by a reference: only relevant modifications should be described. Do not repeat the details of established methods.



Figure 1. Research Design

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O_1 = Pretest (Initial Understanding)
X = Implementation of Digital Comics
O_2 = Posttest (Understanding)

RESULT

The results of this study encompass two main aspects: the implementation of digital comic learning media based on moral dilemmas, and the improvement in the understanding of the value of honesty among fourth-grade students at SD Negeri 106205 Pasar Baru. Data were collected through observations of student activities during instruction, as well as through test results obtained before and after the implementation of the learning media.

1. **Implementation of Digital Comic Learning Media Based on Moral Dilemmas**

The digital comic learning media, based on moral dilemmas, presents issues related to the value of honesty through illustrated stories that resonate with daily life. This media consists of two primary stories:

a. The first story features a character named Budi, who finds a wallet and faces a choice: return it to its owner or keep the money inside.
b. The second story features a character named Dina, who accidentally breaks a friend's ruler and must decide whether to admit her mistake or conceal the incident.



Figure 2. Digital Comic Learning Media Based on Moral Dilemmas

The implementation of the learning media begins with an introductory phase to present the learning objectives. Subsequently, the teacher displays a digital comic, allowing students to read and follow the unfolding narrative. After reading the story, students are guided to identify

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the central problem, determine the appropriate course of action for the characters, provide justifications for their choices, and discuss the consequences of each action. The lesson concludes with a collective discussion facilitated by the teacher on the value of honesty.

Throughout the learning process, student activities are observed. This observation encompasses student engagement in reading the story, identifying problems, determining actions, providing justifications, expressing opinions, and explaining the consequences of the chosen actions. The results of these observations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Observations on Student Activity During the Implementation of Learning Media

No	Aspects Observed	Number of Students	Percentage
1.	Reading and observing a digital comic	24	96%
2.	Identifying issues related to honesty within the story	21	84%
3.	Determining the appropriate course of action	20	80%
4.	Explaining the reasoning behind the chosen action	17	68%
5.	Expressing opinions during a discussion	19	76%
6.	Explaining the consequences of the chosen action	18	72%

Based on Table 1, the activity of reading and paying attention to digital comics yielded the highest percentage, at 96% (24 students). The ability to identify the truth reached 84% (21 students), while determining the appropriate course of action reached 80% (20 students). Furthermore, 19 students (76%) expressed their opinions during discussions, and 18 students (72%) were able to explain the outcomes of the actions they chose. The lowest percentage was observed in the aspect of explaining the reasoning behind the chosen course of action, at 68% (17 students).

2. Improvement in Students' Understanding of the Value of Honesty

The improvement in students' understanding of the value of honesty is explained based on the results of pretests and posttests administered to 25 students. The pretest was conducted prior to the implementation of digital comic learning media based on moral dilemmas, while the

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posttest was administered after the students had engaged in learning using this media. The tests were developed based on four indicators of the understanding of the value of honesty: (1) identifying honest and dishonest behaviors; (2) determining appropriate actions in moral dilemma situations; (3) explaining the reasoning based on the value of honesty; and (4) taking action regarding oneself and others.

The pretest and posttest data for each student are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Data on Pretest and Posttest Results Regarding Students' Understanding of the Value of Honesty

No	Student Code	Pre-test	Post-test	Score Improvement
1.	S-01	45	85	40
2.	S-02	50	80	30
3.	S-03	40	75	35
4.	S-04	55	90	35
5.	S-05	60	85	25
6.	S-06	45	80	35
7.	S-07	50	85	35
8.	S-08	55	90	35
9.	S-09	40	75	35
10.	S-10	60	90	30
11.	S-11	50	80	30
12.	S-12	45	85	40
13.	S-13	55	90	35
14.	S-14	40	75	35
15.	S-15	50	85	35
16.	S-16	60	95	35
17.	S-17	45	80	35
18.	S-18	55	85	30
19.	S-19	50	90	40
20.	S-20	40	75	35
21.	S-21	55	85	30

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22.	S-22	45	80	35
23.	S-23	60	95	35
24.	S-24	50	85	35
25.	S-25	55	90	35
Total	25 students	1.255	2.110	855
Average		50,20	84,40	34,20

Based on Table 2, all students achieved higher posttest scores compared to their pretest scores. The total pretest score was 1,255, with an average of 50.20, while the total posttest score reached 2,110, with an average of 84.40. Thus, there was an average score increase of 34.20 points following the implementation of digital comic learning media based on moral dilemmas.

Regarding individual student performance, the highest increase 40 points was achieved by students S-01, S-12, and S-19. Meanwhile, the lowest increase 25 points was recorded by student S-05. The remaining students showed improvements ranging from 30 to 35 points.

To determine the level of improvement in the understanding of the value of honesty, a Normalized Gain (N-Gain) calculation was performed. This calculation is used to assess the magnitude of score improvement by accounting for the difference between the maximum possible score and the initial score obtained by each student. The N-Gain formula is as follows.

$$g = \frac{S_{post} - S_{pre}}{S_{maks} - S_{pre}}$$

The N-Gain calculation based on the class average score is:

$$g = \frac{84,40 - 50,20}{100 - 50,20}$$

$$g = \frac{34,20}{49,80}$$

$$g = 0,68$$

The calculation results show that the class average N-Gain value is 0.687. The category of improvement is determined based on the N-Gain interpretation criteria presented in Table 3.

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Table 3. N-Gain Interpretation Criteria

N-Gain Value Range	Category
g ≥ 0,70	High
0,30 ≤ g < 0,70	Medium
g < 0,30	Low

Source: adapted from Hake, R. R. (1999)

Based on Table 3, the class-average N-Gain value is 0.687, which falls into the medium category as it lies within the range of 0.30 to less than 0.70. This result indicates that the improvement in students' understanding of the value of honesty when viewed at the class level falls into the medium category.

In addition to the class average, the improvement in the understanding of the value of honesty is also analyzed based on the individual N-Gain for each student. The calculations show that 13 students fall into the high category, while 12 students fall into the medium category. No students fall into the low category. Consequently, 52% of the students are in the high improvement category, and 48% are in the medium category.

The discrepancy between the category for the class-average N-Gain and the categories for individual N-Gain values arises because they are calculated using different bases. The class-average N-Gain is determined using the mean pretest and posttest scores of the entire group, whereas the individual N-Gain is calculated using the specific pretest and posttest scores of each student. Therefore, it is possible for the class-average N-Gain to fall into the medium category, even while some individual students achieve a high-category result.

DISCUSSION

Research findings indicate that the use of digital comic-based learning media centered on moral dilemmas provides a learning experience that guides students toward understanding values of righteousness through issues relevant to their daily lives. Stories such as finding a lost wallet or damaging a friend’s property present situations that require characters to choose between various courses of action. These scenarios serve as a context for students to grasp that honesty is not merely about distinguishing between right and wrong, but also involves careful deliberation before making a decision.

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Digital comics facilitate the presentation of problems through a combination of imagery, characters, dialogue, and narrative flow. This format helps students follow the situations experienced by the characters before they respond to the issues at hand. However, the medium alone is insufficient to foster a deep understanding; activities such as identifying problems, proposing options, explaining rationales, and discussing consequences are essential for connecting the narrative to the students' own reasoning processes.

A critical aspect to focus on is the ability to articulate the reasoning behind a chosen course of action. This is significant because students might identify the "correct" action without fully grasping the underlying rationale. For instance, a student might state that a lost wallet should be returned, yet their reasoning could be rooted solely in a fear of reprimand or punishment a motivation distinct from the recognition that the wallet belongs to someone else and that this right must be respected. Consequently, teachers should probe the reasoning behind students' responses through follow up questions, rather than accepting the chosen action as the final answer.

These findings can be interpreted through Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development, which posits that the evolution of moral reasoning can be understood by examining the justifications individuals use when making decisions. Moral considerations may range from concerns about punishment or personal interest, to adherence to social rules and expectations, and ultimately to principles concerning rights and responsibilities. In an educational context, the varying reasons students provide when addressing a dilemma offer insight into how they evaluate their actions. Nevertheless, the observations made during this study are not sufficient to definitively categorize the specific stage of moral development for each student. The use of moral dilemmas aligns with the work of Noviani et al. (2026) cited in this study which highlights how such dilemmas provide students with opportunities to identify issues, weigh various options, and understand the consequences of their actions. This reinforces the value of using stories that contain moral conflicts when teaching the virtue of honesty. Students are given the chance not only to receive a moral message from a story but also to express their own perspectives and deliberate on the actions taken by the characters.

Consequently, the implementation of digital comic-based learning media centered on moral dilemmas serves to create a concrete context for exploring the value of honesty. Student engagement with the stories should be complemented by activities that delve into the reasoning

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behind and the consequences of specific actions, ensuring that learning extends beyond a mere grasp of the plot.

The improvement in pretest and posttest scores indicates a positive shift in students' understanding of honesty following instruction that utilized digital comics based on moral dilemmas. These findings suggest that presenting the reality of honesty through stories can effectively support students in comprehending such values. Nevertheless, the test results reflect changes in understanding based solely on the measured indicators; they do not directly prove a change in the students' honest behavior in their daily lives.

This improvement can be attributed to the presentation of material through concrete, contextual problems. The stories featuring Budi and Dina illustrate situations where an individual must decide on a course of action involving honesty. Rather than being presented with an abstract concept of honesty, students are provided with tangible examples of dilemmas, which they can grasp through the experiences of the characters. Through this approach, students are guided to identify behaviors, determine appropriate actions, provide justifications, and consider the consequences of the decisions made.

In the context of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, the act of considering the reasons for and consequences of one's actions is linked to the process of moral reasoning. An understanding of the value of honesty is not sufficiently demonstrated merely by the ability to choose an action deemed "correct." Students must also grasp the underlying rationale that makes such an action appropriate. For instance, a student might choose to return a found wallet out of fear of punishment, a desire to follow rules, or an awareness that the item belongs to someone else. These varying motivations indicate that an understanding of the value of honesty is closely tied to how a student evaluates and justifies their decisions.

Although all students showed an improvement in their scores, the degree of progress varied, suggesting that the level of understanding achieved differs from one student to another. Those who have not yet reached a high level of improvement require further reinforcement specifically in articulating their reasoning and considering the consequences of their actions. Consequently, the use of digital comics based on moral dilemmas should be accompanied by teacher guidance, incorporating discussions and questions that encourage students to further develop their reasoning processes.

Overall, the research findings indicate that the implementation of digital comics centered on moral dilemmas leads to an improved understanding of the value of honesty among students.

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Presenting stories that feature moral dilemmas provides a context for students to grasp the value of honesty, while subsequent discussions help them articulate their reasoning and weigh the consequences of their actions. Based on the class-average N-Gain, this improvement falls into the "moderate" category. Therefore, this medium can be considered a viable alternative for supporting the teaching of the value of honesty in elementary schools.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the implementation of digital comic-based learning media centered on moral dilemmas was carried out by presenting two stories that depict the reality of honesty in daily life: the story of Budi, who finds a wallet, and the story of Dina, who accidentally breaks a friend's ruler. Through these narratives, students are guided to identify the issues at hand, determine appropriate courses of action, articulate the reasoning behind their choices, and understand the consequences of each action. Observations indicate that most students were able to follow the storylines, recognize the reality of truthfulness, and decide on suitable actions. However, their ability to explain the rationale behind their decisions still requires further development.

The use of digital comic-based learning media centered on moral dilemmas led to an improved understanding of the value of honesty among students. This improvement is reflected in the rise of the average score from 50.20 on the pretest to 84.40 on the posttest an increase of 34.20 points. The N-Gain score was calculated at 0.687, which falls into the medium category. Individual analysis revealed that 13 students showed a high level of improvement, while the remaining 12 students fell into the medium category. These results demonstrate that all students experienced an increase in their scores after participating in lessons using this media. This improvement suggests that digital comics based on moral dilemmas can help students grasp the value of honesty by presenting concrete, real-life scenarios, encouraging careful consideration in decision-making, fostering the ability to articulate the reasons behind those decisions, and promoting an understanding of the consequences both positive and negative of honest or dishonest behavior in everyday life.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future research is encouraged to examine the implementation of digital comic learning media based on moral dilemmas involving a larger number of students and different school

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settings to obtain a broader understanding of its effectiveness. Further studies may also compare this learning media with other instructional approaches to identify its relative contribution to students' understanding of the value of honesty. In addition, future researchers should investigate whether improvements in students' understanding are accompanied by changes in their honest behavior in everyday school activities. This may be conducted through longer observation periods and follow-up assessments. The development of digital comics containing more diverse moral dilemma situations is also recommended to provide students with opportunities to recognize, evaluate, and respond to various challenges related to honesty in their daily lives.

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