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Humanistic Education Values for Elementary School Children in the Novel Guru Aini by Andrea Hirata

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Abstract
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis nilai-nilai pendidikan humanistik bagi anak usia sekolah dasar dalam novel Guru Aini karya Andrea Hirata. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain hermeneutika Hans-Georg Gadamer. Sumber data primer adalah novel Guru Aini karya Andrea Hirata, sedangkan data sekunder terdiri dari buku-buku dan jurnal ilmiah yang relevan dengan penelitian. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan teknik baca intensif dan catat. Instrumen penelitian yang digunakan adalah human instrument (peneliti sendiri). Keabsahan data ditegakkan melalui triangulasi sumber. Analisis data menerapkan tiga tahap hermeneutika Gadamer, yaitu pemahaman (subtilitas intellegendi), eksplikasi (subtilitas explicandi), dan aplikasi (subtilitas applicandi). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan ditemukan kutipan-kutipan yang mencerminkan empat nilai pendidikan humanistik, yaitu konsep diri, empati, aktualisasi diri, dan penerimaan tanpa syarat. Keempat nilai tersebut relevan dengan pendidikan anak usia sekolah dasar karena dapat membantu anak membangun konsep diri yang positif, mengembangkan kepedulian terhadap sesama, mengoptimalkan potensi diri, serta tumbuh dalam lingkungan yang memberikan rasa aman dan penerimaan. Penelitian ini memberikan implikasi teoretis dan praktis, khususnya bagi guru dalam memanfaatkan karya sastra sebagai media pendidikan karakter, bagi orang tua dalam memberikan dukungan emosional kepada anak, dan bagi sekolah dalam membangun budaya belajar yang lebih humanis serta menghargai keberagaman kemampuan siswa.

Keywords: pendidikan, humanistik, sastra, hermeneutika

Abstract
This study aims to identify and analyze the values of humanistic education for elementary school-age children in the novel Guru Aini by Andrea Hirata. This study uses a qualitative approach with Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic design. The primary data source is the novel Guru Aini by Andrea Hirata, while secondary data consists of books and scholarly journals relevant to the research. Data collection was carried out using intensive reading and note-taking techniques. The research instrument used was the human instrument. Data validity was established through source triangulation. Data analysis employed Gadamer's three stages of hermeneutics, namely understanding (subtilitas intellegendi), explication (subtilitas explicandi), and application (subtilitas applicandi). The results show that quotations were found reflecting four values of humanistic education, namely self-concept, empathy, self-actualization, and unconditional acceptance. These four values are relevant to elementary school-age education because they can help children build a positive self-concept, develop concern for others, optimize their potential, and grow in an environment that provides a sense of security and acceptance. This study offers theoretical and practical implications, particularly for teachers in utilizing literary works as a medium for character education, for parents in providing emotional support to their children, and for schools in building a more humanistic learning culture that values students' diverse abilities

Keywords*: education, humanistic, literature, hermeneutics*

1. Introduction

Education in Indonesia is still often trapped in a pragmatic approach; students are frequently viewed as passive objects who merely need to be filled with knowledge, while learning remains teacher-centered and dominated by assignments that give students little room to take an active role and develop their potential to the fullest (Sultani et al., 2023). Teachers still tend to dominate as transmitters of knowledge, so that their role as educators, facilitators, and learning companions for students has not been fully optimized (Mukaddam et al., 2020). This imbalance in the teacher-student relationship has the potential to produce unfair learning practices, such as discrimination in the classroom in the form of differences in attention, facilities, and motivation based on students' academic ability, which can affect their self-confidence and learning motivation (Monica et al., 2026). This condition shows that educational problems do not only concern academic aspects, but also the protection and well-being of students within the school environment.

This problem is worsened by the persistence of violence committed by educators within the school environment, both physical and psychological (Sultani et al., 2023; Hasibuan et al., 2020). A monitoring report by the Indonesian Commission for Child Protection (KPAI) titled "Child Protection Emergency," covering January–April 2026, recorded 426 complaint cases dominated by problematic parenting, physical and psychological violence, sexual crimes against children, and threats from harmful digital content (KPAI, 2026a), and affirmed that educational institutions remain one of the settings with a fairly high rate of complaints (KPAI, 2026b). In 2025, KPAI recorded six cases of violence in educational institutions that resulted in fatalities, while up to October 2025 there were 26 cases of children ending their own lives, a third of which were caused by situations within the educational environment (KPAI, 2025). This picture is reinforced by a number of cases across various regions, such as alleged sexual violence committed by a teacher against 23 elementary school students in South Labuhanbatu, North Sumatra (Nugraha, 2025), sexual abuse of three sixth-grade students in Cilacap, Central Java (Zain & Dennys, 2025), and physical violence by a teacher in South Central Timor, East Nusa Tenggara, that resulted in the death of a fifth-grade student (detikJabar, 2025). This series of cases confirms that the educational environment has not yet fully become a safe space that supports students' growth and development.

These various phenomena show that education faces not only academic problems, but also humanitarian problems related to how educators and students view and treat one another, so that a strengthening of humanistic values within the educational environment is needed. Education is not solely aimed at developing intellectual ability, but also at shaping individuals with good character and social concern, while encouraging the creation of a learning environment that is safe, comfortable, and respectful of differences (Permatasari et al., 2025). Efforts to instill humanistic values can be carried out through various media and learning activities that provide meaningful experiences, one of which is literary works (Hermansyah, 2021). Literary works play a role in developing children's language, cognitive, affective, psychomotor, personal, and social aspects, while also serving as a medium of entertainment and education because they contain values about life and human existence (Nurlaila et al., 2023). Instilling humanistic values through literary works can be done through reading, understanding, and reflectively discussing their content, so that students not only gain entertainment but also learn to understand emotions, develop their These various phenomena show that education faces not only academic problems, but also humanitarian problems related to how educators and students view and treat one another, so that a

strengthening of humanistic values within the educational environment is needed. Education is not solely aimed at developing intellectual ability, but also at shaping individuals with good character and social concern, while encouraging the creation of a learning environment that is safe, comfortable, and respectful of differences (Permatasari et al., 2025). Efforts to instill humanistic values can be carried out through various media and learning activities that provide meaningful experiences, one of which is literary works (Hermansyah, 2021). Literary works play a role in developing children's language, cognitive, affective, psychomotor, personal, and social aspects, while also serving as a medium of entertainment and education because they contain values about life and human existence (Nurlaila et al., 2023). Instilling humanistic values through literary works can be done through reading, understanding, and reflectively discussing their content, so that students not only gain entertainment but also learn to understand emotions, develop their imagination, and internalize the values contained within them (Nurmalisa et al., 2025). This is reinforced by the findings of Arnisyah et al. (2023) that literary works can foster students' ability to appreciate literature, express themselves, and interpret meaning at the elementary school level, as well as by the findings of Efendi et al. (2026) that literary works help teachers instill values of honesty, discipline, responsibility, cooperation, care, and self-confidence in students.

Humanistic values in literary works can be found across various genres, one of which is the novel, which is able to present a deeper picture of human life through characters, conflicts, and events close to social reality (Sumarni & Shomary, 2023). A number of novels have been shown to raise humanistic values, such as Totto-Chan: The Little Girl at the Window by Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, which presents concepts of humanistic and emancipatory education through inclusive, flexible, and contextual learning (Amaruddin et al., 2024), and Laskar Pelangi by Andrea Hirata, which contains values of empathy and friendship highly relevant to children's character formation (Nurjaman et al., 2025). Among these various humanistic novels, Guru Aini by Andrea Hirata is of particular interest because it presents educational issues, human relationships, and the process of personal development of its characters. The novel tells the story of a young teacher named Desi who strives to understand the uniqueness of Aini, her student who has the worst math score in class yet holds a strong determination to become a doctor, until Aini eventually grows into a confident individual. The novel deeply highlights the essence of humanity in the interaction between teacher and student, ranging from care and sacrifice to the belief that every child deserves the opportunity to learn regardless of their limitations.

Research on humanistic values in the novel Guru Aini remains relatively limited. Studies by Janatin et al. (2025) and M.Akip et al. (2024) do use Guru Aini as their object of study, but both focus on character values in general, not humanistic values specifically. Meanwhile, studies by Khanifah & Fauzan (2025) and Nazihah & Anggraini (2020) examine humanistic values in different novels, meaning that no study has yet specifically examined humanistic values in Guru Aini, particularly in relation to elementary school learning. This gap forms the basis for the urgency of this study: previous studies on Guru Aini have focused on character education values in general while studies on humanistic education values remain limited; this novel has previously been directed mainly as literary teaching material at the senior high school level, so its relevance for elementary school-age students remains unexplored; and there is considerable potential for Guru Aini to serve as a learning medium for instilling humanistic education values in elementary school-age children, given that the story represents an educational practice that understands students' psychological conditions individually.

Based on the description above, this study aims to identify and analyze the values of humanistic education for elementary school-age children in the novel Guru Aini by Andrea Hirata. This study is expected to contribute to the development of literary studies, particularly regarding humanistic education in novels, and to serve as an alternative use of literary works as a medium for instilling humanistic education values among elementary school students.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative research design, namely research aimed at understanding and interpreting the meaning of a phenomenon in depth without manipulating variables or testing hypotheses, and focusing on uncovering the meaning, values, and messages contained in the research object through descriptive data in the form of words, sentences, dialogue, and narrative (Prastowo, 2020). The research design applied is Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic approach, namely a dialogical process of understanding between reader and text, in which meaning is not found unilaterally by the reader but emerges through the encounter between the reader's horizon and the horizon of the text itself. Gadamer's hermeneutic interpretation process is carried out through three stages, namely understanding (subtilitas intellegendi), explication (subtilitas explicandi), and application (subtilitas applicandi)

(Hardiman, 2015). The primary data of this study were obtained directly from the sentences, scenes, dialogue, and characterization found in the novel Guru Aini by Andrea Hirata, published by Bentang Pustaka in 2020 (Hirata, 2025). This novel was chosen because it contains a series of events, dialogue, and character actions that represent the teacher-student relationship in accordance with humanistic values, contains humanistic education values both explicitly and implicitly, and is frequently used as an object of literary and educational research. Secondary data were used as supporting data, obtained from theoretical books on humanistic education, scholarly journals, and other sources discussing humanistic education, Carl Rogers' humanistic theory, and elementary school-age education.

Data were collected using intensive/close reading and note-taking techniques, namely reading the novel carefully and repeatedly, marking sections of text that contain humanistic education values, and then grouping the data according to the value categories that are the focus of the study. The main instrument of this study is the researcher herself (human instrument), as in qualitative research the researcher acts directly as the primary tool that collects and analyzes data (Creswell, 2023). Data validity was examined through source triangulation, namely a data-checking technique that compares the data obtained with something outside the data itself (Lasiyono & Alam, 2024). Data from the novel Guru Aini were compared with relevant scholarly journals. Data were analyzed using Gadamer's hermeneutics through three stages (Nashihin, 2025). In the understanding stage, the researcher read the novel carefully and marked quotations containing humanistic education values. In the explication stage, the researcher interpreted these quotations more deeply through the movement of the hermeneutic circle between parts and the whole of the text. In the application stage, the researcher related the interpretive results to the present-day context, namely their relevance to elementary school learning.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the analysis of the novel Guru Aini, four humanistic education values were found reflected through the actions, thoughts, and interactions of the characters, namely self-concept, empathy, self-actualization, and unconditional acceptance. These four values are

discussed in the following subsections, accompanied by the relevant quotations found in the novel.

Self-Concept

Self-concept is reflected through the characters' process of self-acceptance and their acknowledgment of their own limitations.

> "Her left hand, bent from an old fracture, and a three-stitch scar clearly visible on an otherwise very beautiful face never once covered up along with the strong charisma radiating from her calm, intelligent Slavic eyes, made Bu Desi's appearance strikingly dramatic." (Hirata, 2025:36)
>
> "The other students nodded along even though they did not understand, ashamed of being called stupid. Aini stood up and said loudly, 'I don't understand!' She never hid her lack of understanding, she was never dishonest, and she kept chasing one topic until she truly understood it." (Hirata, 2025:172)
>
> "Because I'm not afraid anymore, Tun. I'm not afraid of math anymore. I'm not afraid of anything anymore. The only thing I'm afraid of is being ignorant." (Hirata, 2025:198)
>
> "Because of that mental exercise of crossing a wooden bridge blindfolded, Aini was no longer intimidated by however tangled, complicated, and chaotic the formulas and graphs in the later chapters of her math book were. Like Bu Desi's view, Aini now saw that complexity as mathematics' way of fulfilling its beautiful promises." (Hirata, 2025:226)

The four quotations above show a related pattern: self-concept does not appear as something fixed, but is formed and changes through the characters' interaction with their actual experience, in line with Rogers' view that self-concept develops through individual experience and interaction with the environment. Self-acceptance is strongly reflected in the character of Bu Desi, who displays her physical condition without attempting to hide it, showing that her self-understanding is not built on the demand to meet an ideal image from her environment, but grows from accepting her own actual condition consistent with Burhanudin et al. (2023), who state that self-concept plays an important role in a teacher's life. Acknowledgment of academic limitations is also central to Aini's characterization: unlike other students who hide their lack of understanding out of fear of being seen as stupid, Aini openly admits when she does not understand, reflecting the important distinction between "not yet able" and "unable," consistent with Budiarsih & Zen (2021), who emphasize that a positive academic self-concept is essential for students to grow well. Aini's declaration that she is no longer afraid of mathematics, and only fears ignorance, marks a shift from viewing difficulty as proof of incapacity to viewing it as a condition that can still change through effort a psychological shift echoed in Nurnaningsih et al. (2025) and Rahmian et al. (2024), who show that meaningful learning experiences allow students to develop a more open self-concept.

Empathy

Empathy is reflected in the characters' sensitivity to understanding other people's experiences and needs from their own point of view.

> "Don't worry, Mah, let's just switch, you take Bagansiapiapi, I'll go to Pulau Tanjong... Tanjong what was it again? Tanjong Gambar? It's fine," said Desi with a wide smile. (Hirata, 2025:11)
>
> A moment later Desi found herself standing stunned at the back door of the rickety bus, surprised that the shabbily dressed men, laborers, immediately made way for her to enter. Desi boarded and was surprised again to see the other men all stand at once to give up their seats for her, though on previous buses full of neatly dressed, educated people, no one had ever once offered her a seat. (Hirata, 2025:21–22)
>
> The next day, Sunday, the front of the small teacher's house was unusually crowded. Some came by bicycle carrying a sack of rice, kitchen tools, a stove, a cupboard, a bucket, a basin, even a

> mattress, a bed frame, a bench, a table, and several chickens all to be given to the new teacher, a young woman from far away, whom they pitied for being so far from her parents. (Hirata, 2025:25)
>
> Nadirah, who knew Aini had moved to Bu Desi's class because she wanted to learn math, did not hesitate to help her. Aini often stopped by Nadirah's desk to ask questions. Patiently, Nadirah explained. (Hirata, 2025:112)
>
> "Don't worry, Dinah, knowledge is more important than these walls. We'll repaint it later, it'll be fine. Keep learning, Aini, scribble away to your heart's content." (Hirata, 2025:173)

These quotations show that empathy in the novel is expressed not only through grand gestures, but through sensitivity to others' conditions and needs from Desi's willingness to accommodate a colleague's preference, to the community's material and emotional support for a newcomer teacher, to Nadirah's and Bu Desi's patience toward Aini's struggles. In Rogers' theory, empathy means entering another person's frame of experience without losing awareness that the experience belongs to someone else; it therefore differs from pity, as it does not position the person being helped as inferior, but as someone whose experience deserves to be understood. Teistler (2024) identifies empathic understanding as one of the four key dimensions of person-centered behavior in teacher-student relationships, while Rianto et al. (2025) and Mardhatillah et al. (2025) emphasize that recognizing individual needs and dignity is a key consequence of applying Rogers' humanistic principles in student-centered learning.

Self-actualization

Self-actualization is seen in the characters' efforts to develop their potential to the fullest in pursuit of a personally meaningful life goal.

> "From now on I have to be good at math because I want to become a specialist doctor, Diah, so I can treat my father... If I want to be good at math in this school, there's no other way, I have to learn from Bu Desi. I know she's fierce, I know the students don't like her, but I'm ready to take that risk, as long as I get good at math." (Hirata, 2025:74)
>
> Every day after school, taking turns with her mother caring for her sick father or selling children's toys, Aini went straight to Bu Desi's house. She didn't care if it was hot, cloudy, rainy, flooded, thundering, or stormy she would always go to study math, and she would always get scolded. (Hirata, 2025:143)
>
> "Other students got bored repeating a lesson after 3 times; Aini repeated it 20 times, and still wanted to keep going." (Hirata, 2025:172)
>
> Aini kept up the same routine, growing even more spirited. After school, she sold children's toys on the sidewalk, then rushed to pedal her bike to study math with Bu Desi. At night, beside her sick father lying in bed, she repeated the lesson tirelessly. (Hirata, 2025:192)

Aini's determination to master mathematics stems from an internal motivation tied to her goal of becoming a doctor to treat her father, rather than merely fulfilling school requirements, and this determination persists even as she must divide her time between school, helping her family's finances, and caring for her ill father. This reflects Rogers' concept of the actualizing tendency, the individual's inherent drive to grow and develop their potential. Rianto et al. (2025) explain that learning motivation and personal meaning are essential components of student-centered learning, while Mardhatillah et al. (2025) affirm that the humanistic approach views human development holistically, encompassing intellectual, emotional, social, and personal dimensions precisely the dimensions reflected in Aini's persistence despite her difficult circumstances.

Unconditional acceptance

Unconditional acceptance is reflected in the characters' attitude of respecting and accepting others as they are, regardless of their ability or limitations.

> "...I am honored to accept someone who has the courage to be honest with themselves, in my class!" (Hirata, 2025:95)
>
> "Are you sure you want to accept her, Bu Desi?" asked Bu Afifah. "Honestly I'm not entirely sure, but there's no harm in trying. That child's determination seems very strong." (Hirata, 2025:105)
>
> "Forgive me for yesterday, Boi." "There's no need for you to apologize, Bu, I'm the one who should apologize because I'm so stupid." "Aren't you upset with me, Nong?" "Not even a little, Bu, in fact I'm proud to be scolded by you." (Hirata, 2025:160)
>
> In certain moments, just to let out the new knowledge she had gained, Aini would explain calculus to her mother, who was busy tidying her toy stall. Her mother could only say, "I agree, Nong, a hundred percent agree," even though she did not understand a single word her eldest daughter was saying. (Hirata, 2025:225)

Bu Desi's acceptance of Aini as a student, despite other teachers' doubts about her ability, shows that she did not treat Aini's initial weak performance as a final verdict on her potential, but instead offered her an opportunity based on her evident willingness to learn. In Rogers' perspective, unconditional positive regard does not mean the absence of correction or disagreement; rather, disagreement with a particular behavior does not turn into rejection of the person. This is consistent with Hidayat & Santosa (2024), who state that teachers accept and respect every child without judging their abilities, and with Lestari & Azizah (2023), who explain that a teacher's unconditional acceptance makes students feel valued and more willing to try new things, thereby increasing learning engagement and critical thinking.

Overall, the four values do not stand independently but are interconnected and integrated within the relationships among the characters, particularly between Bu Desi and Aini. Amalia & Yulianingsih (2020) explain that an individual who has achieved self-actualization will make maximum use of their potential, and this can only flourish within a relationship grounded in empathy and unconditional acceptance, as reflected throughout the novel Guru Aini.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that four humanistic education values self-concept, empathy, self-actualization, and unconditional acceptance are clearly found in the novel Guru Aini by Andrea Hirata and are contextually represented through the characters' actions. This representation demonstrates that humanistic education values can be introduced to elementary school-age children naturally and narratively, through characters' exemplary behavior in everyday life, making these values easier to internalize and apply compared to purely theoretical explanation. These findings affirm that humanistic education is not merely an abstract psychological concept, but also a vehicle for instilling moral values and shaping a whole personality, so that Guru Aini can function as a touching and meaningful learning medium for shaping elementary school-age children's character from an early age. Theoretically, this study strengthens the relevance of Rogers' humanistic theory within the context of elementary education while extending the study of humanistic education into the realm of literary analysis. Practically, the findings can serve as a reference for teachers in using Guru Aini as a medium for character and literacy education, for parents in providing emotional support to their children, and for schools in building a more humanistic learning culture. This study remains limited to a single literary work and four specific humanistic values, and thus does not cover all possible educational values contained in the novel; its

interpretation also remains dependent on the researcher's reading as the human instrument, although this has been strengthened through source triangulation. Future research could examine humanistic education values in other literary works, apply different theoretical perspectives, or test the implementation of these values in real classroom learning activities.

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