

Innovative Learning Strategies: The Effect of Task-Based Methods and Buddhist Ethical Narratives on Student Creativity

Sukodoyo^{1*}, Andini Ariska Safitri², Waluyo³

^{1,2} Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Syailendra, Semarang, Indonesia

³ Sekolah Tinggi Agama Buddha Negeri Sriwijaya, Tangerang, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of task-based learning methods integrated with Buddhist ethical narratives in enhancing elementary school students' creativity within the context of moral education. The research employed a mixed-methods approach using the Classroom Action Research (CAR) model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart. Data were collected through classroom observation, documentation of student work, and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively to measure improvements in creativity indicators, while qualitative data were examined thematically to identify narrative patterns and student responses. The results demonstrated a 41.5% increase in overall student creativity, with the highest improvement observed in the creative thinking indicator (55.1%), followed by discipline (37.8%) and active questioning (40.7%). The incorporation of ethical narratives from the *Dhammapada*, including the stories of Kisagotami Theri and Culapanthaka, proved to be an effective pedagogical tool for instilling moral values while simultaneously fostering creative thinking. This method also promoted active student engagement, critical reflection, and original expression in completing ethically focused tasks. The implications of this study suggest that a task-based learning approach, when integrated with moral narratives, can enhance both ethical instruction and creativity development in students. These findings are particularly relevant for the development of religious education curricula in primary schools and offer a foundation for teacher training programs aimed at designing more participatory and reflective learning experiences.

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* Corresponding author: author email address: sukodoyo.sukodoyo@sekha.kemenag.go.id
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Introduction

Education in Indonesia plays a pivotal role in shaping future generations who are not only intellectually competent but also ethically grounded and creatively empowered (Hayati, Zahara, & Nurhayati, 2019). However, educational practices in many schools remain dominated by traditional methods that emphasize rote memorization and examination-based assessments (Noviani, Dantes, & Suastra, 2021; Yustiani, Susanti, Safitri, & Gulo, 2024). This often results in passive learning behaviors, including limited student participation, reluctance to ask questions, and mechanical task completion without critical engagement (Munandar, 2014). These challenges are even more pronounced in the context of religious education—including Buddhist education—which ideally aims to internalize moral values while fostering critical and innovative thinking. In response to these systemic shortcomings, the *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) policy promotes student-centered approaches and personalized exploration (Astuti, Sukodoyo, & Kustiani, 2018). Yet, empirical evidence on instructional practices that successfully integrate moral development and creativity remains scarce.

Creativity, defined as the ability to generate novel and meaningful ideas, is recognized as a key 21st-century skill (Torrance, 2017). Unfortunately, many primary schools in Indonesia continue to rely on rigid teaching methods that prioritize outcomes over process, thereby stifling students' creative potential (Wijayanto, Sukodoyo, & Endah Ekowati, 2021). Observable patterns such as answer copying, disengagement in class discussions, and low initiative in assignments reflect weakened original thinking (Mamonto, 2020). In the context of Buddhist education, ethical principles such as *sīla* (discipline) and *ehipassiko* (inquiry) offer meaningful opportunities to bridge moral reflection and imaginative exploration. Stories from the *Dhammapada*, for instance, possess pedagogical value capable of linking ethical insight with creative interpretation (Jothidammo, 2012). However, systematic use of these narratives in structured task-based learning remains underexplored in empirical research.

Previous studies have consistently shown that student creativity is often hindered by the overuse of lecture-based methods and outdated instructional media (Anita, 2025; Khakikudin, Sumadi, & Sudarmi, 2015; Riyadi & Supriatna, 2025). Sukodoyo (2018) and Bima et al. (2023) indicates that students struggle with time management, idea generation, and active participation when confined to conventional pedagogy. Similarly, Aisyah & Insani (2021) argue that a lack of innovation in religious education reduces student engagement and undermines ownership of the learning process. While pedagogical solutions such as project-based learning and differentiated instruction have been proposed (Ilmudinulloh, 2022; Tirtayati, Suarni, & Magta, 2014), their adaptation to religious education—particularly in fostering moral formation—requires further development. For example, although Akmal's (2018) and Siregar's et al. (2022) affirm the effectiveness of task-based learning in early childhood artistic development, its relevance to moral education in Buddhist ethics remains largely unexplored.

Relevant studies in the literature can be grouped into three main categories. First, research on task- and project-based approaches that have been shown to

enhance student responsibility and creativity by promoting meaningful engagement and critical thinking (Anggriani & Hurriyati, 2024; Iting, 2021; Nurdin, Oktaviana, & Putri, 2024; Siminto, Majdi, Hardiansyah, Rofi'i, & Gazali, 2025). Second, research in moral and religious education—especially Buddhist ethics—which highlights the value of *Dhammapada* stories for character development and moral internalization (Aliza, 2016; Sukarti, 2020; Sukodoyo, Widiyono, Medhacitto, & Setyaningsih, 2024). Third, studies on the integration of technology and digital tools in creative learning, including digital journals, video puppet media, flipped classrooms, and AI-enhanced platforms (Doshi & Hauser, 2024; Hsia, Lin, & Hwang, 2021; Tang, Mao, Naumann, & Xing, 2022).

Despite these contributions, several gaps remain. First, there is limited research on how task-based learning can be adapted within Buddhist education to simultaneously develop creativity and ethical reasoning. Second, the predominance of digital approaches in creativity-focused studies has often overlooked alignment with the moral objectives of religious education—especially in contexts still rooted in oral and analog traditions such as storytelling. Third, existing creativity assessment frameworks frequently neglect moral dimensions such as discipline and ethical reflection, which are central to Buddhist value education. Therefore, research is needed to bridge these gaps by developing pedagogical models that integrate creativity, ethical values, and the distinctive cultural and educational context of Buddhist teaching.

This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating how narrative-based tasks grounded in Buddhist ethics can enhance the creativity of fifth-grade students. Specifically, it explores how stories such as those of Kisagotami Theri and Culapanthaka can stimulate curiosity, discipline, and critical thinking. Using Kemmis and McTaggart's Classroom Action Research model (Meesuk, Sramoon, & Wongrugsu, 2020), this study designed and implemented a series of interventions that align task-based learning strategies with spiritual values. This research makes an important contribution by bridging cognitive and moral development in Buddhist education, offering empirical insights into how structured learning tasks can facilitate both domains concurrently.

The hypothesis of this study posits that task-based learning methods integrated with ethical narratives can enhance student creativity while simultaneously strengthening moral understanding. It is hypothesized that students who engage in structured, morally enriched tasks—such as those inspired by the stories of *Kisāgotamī Therī* and *Cūlapanthaka Thera*—will exhibit significant improvements in creativity indicators including curiosity, discipline, inquiry, and original thinking, compared to students exposed to traditional instruction. Drawing on Torrance's (2017) theory of creativity as the capacity to generate valuable novel ideas, and Jothidammo (2012), articulation of the pedagogical value of *Dhammapada* narratives, this study argues that creativity and morality are not mutually exclusive domains, but rather interdependent. Consequently, this research positions narrative-based tasks as a promising pedagogical strategy within Buddhist education for fostering the dual goals of ethical formation and creative development.

Method

This study aimed to explore the effect of task-based learning integrated with Buddhist ethical narratives on the creativity of Grade V students at SD Dharma Mulia. The unit of analysis comprised a group of five Buddhist students (two girls and three boys) enrolled in the Buddhist Education and Ethics course, along with their teacher. The research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, specifically the model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart. This method was selected for its iterative and cyclical structure, which enables the continuous refinement of teaching strategies based on real-time student feedback—making it particularly well-suited for examining pedagogical practices in classroom settings (Katz-Buonincontro & Anderson, 2020).

A mixed-methods approach was adopted (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009), combining both qualitative and quantitative data to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of Buddhist ethical narrative-based tasks on students' creativity. The quantitative component focused on assessing specific creativity indicators, including curiosity, discipline, active questioning, and creative thinking. Meanwhile, the qualitative component provided insights into student and teacher perceptions, particularly regarding the personal and academic effects of the task-based learning activities. This methodological integration facilitated a holistic analysis of the learning process, providing both numerical measurements and rich contextual data reflecting students' engagement with Buddhist ethical narratives.

Data sources were primarily obtained from classroom observations, student work, and interviews. Structured observation sheets were used to monitor student behavior, including task completion, originality of ideas, and participation. Semi-structured interviews with students and their teacher were conducted to gain deeper insights into how the learning activities influenced students' creativity and their understanding of ethical values. Additionally, documentation of student work—such as reflective journals and lesson plans—offered further evidence of creativity and the integration of Buddhist moral teachings. The use of multiple data sources enabled triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity of the study by incorporating diverse perspectives on the instructional process.

Data collection occurred over two instructional cycles, each consisting of a 70-minute session. During each cycle, the teacher implemented narrative-based tasks centered on Buddhist ethical stories, including those of Cūlapanthaka Thera and Kisāgotamī Therī. In the observation phase, structured observation sheets were used to monitor the development of students' creativity indicators, while qualitative data were collected from students' written reflections and the teacher's lesson plans. Interviews were conducted at the conclusion of each cycle to assess students' and the teacher's perceptions of the learning experience, with a particular focus on how the narrative-based tasks influenced students' creativity and moral reasoning.

The data analysis process employed both descriptive and thematic techniques (Qomari, 2009; Rozali, 2022). Quantitative data from the observation sheets were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean score calculations and percentage increases in creativity indicators across cycles. Qualitative data, including interview transcripts and student journals, were analyzed thematically by identifying

recurring themes and interpretive patterns, especially those illustrating the influence of Buddhist ethical narratives on student creativity. Success was determined if at least 74% of students achieved a 'Scale 3' assessment level, indicating that their creativity met the expected criteria. This step-by-step analytical approach provided a nuanced understanding of the impact of the task-based learning method on the creative development of students.

Findings

Teachers' Implementation of Task-Based Method in Learning Buddhist Ethics

The implementation of the task-based learning method by the teacher demonstrated significant improvement across instructional cycles, as measured using a 4-point Likert scale (1 = “not implemented” to 4 = “implemented very well”). In the initial cycle, the application of the method was suboptimal, with relatively low scores observed across most instructional phases. However, as the intervention progressed, notable enhancements were recorded in several key areas, including the formulation of learning objectives and student motivation, delivery of instructional content, provision of student guidance, implementation of evaluation and feedback mechanisms, and acknowledgment of student achievements.

Table 1: Teacher's Implementation of Task-Based Method

Phase	Pre-Cycle	Cycle I	Cycle II
Goal Setting & Motivation	1	3	4
Presentation of Material	2	3	3
Student Guidance	1	2	3
Evaluation & Feedback	1	2	3
Recognition of Student Work	1	3	4

Table 1 presents a visual representation of the improvement in the quality of the teacher's implementation of the task-based learning method from the pre-cycle phase to Cycle II. The most notable enhancement occurred in the phase of goal setting and motivation, which increased significantly from a score of 1 in the initial cycle to 4 in Cycle II. This substantial rise indicates a meaningful shift in how the teacher articulated learning objectives and inspired student engagement. During the initial cycle, learning objectives may not have been clearly communicated, resulting in students' limited understanding of what was expected of them. However, through the implementation of a more structured rubric and the integration of Buddhist narratives—such as the story of Kisāgotamī Therī, which emphasizes the value of questioning in the pursuit of wisdom—the teacher succeeded in enhancing student motivation. This aligns with Torrance's (2017) theory that creativity involves the ability to solve problems through deep and critical inquiry.

Although improvements were also noted in the presentation of material, performance in this phase remained consistent with a score of 3 in both Cycle I and Cycle II. The teacher began to deliver content in a more structured and interactive manner, incorporating visual aids and multimedia tools to support conceptual understanding. Nevertheless, this phase still indicates a need for continued pedagogical innovation, such as integrating project-based learning and facilitating more in-depth group discussions to further engage students.

In the student guidance phase, the score improved from 1 in the initial cycle to 3 in Cycle II. This progression reflects a greater level of teacher involvement in

assisting students during task-based activities, including both individualized support and facilitation of group interactions. The teacher also began employing more personalized instructional strategies and scaffolding techniques to support students in navigating increasingly complex tasks.

Evaluation and feedback practices also showed meaningful progress, with scores rising from 1 in the initial cycle to 3 in Cycle II. Feedback became more specific and constructive, enabling students to clearly identify their strengths and areas for improvement. This development suggests that the teacher began incorporating formative assessment methods—such as quizzes, peer reviews, and self-assessments—to monitor student progress and provide timely, actionable feedback.

Recognition of student work demonstrated one of the most substantial gains, with scores increasing from 1 in Cycle I to 4 in Cycle II. In the initial cycle, recognition was minimal, with limited acknowledgement of students' efforts or achievements. By Cycle II, however, the teacher had adopted more consistent and meaningful forms of recognition, both formally (through awards) and informally (through classroom dialogue). This practice contributed to a more positive classroom environment and encouraged sustained student engagement.

Overall, the teacher's implementation of the task-based learning method improved markedly across all measured phases. The most significant gains were observed in goal setting and motivation, as well as in the recognition of student work—suggesting a shift toward more structured, transparent, and reinforcement-driven instructional practices. While improvements were also observed in other areas, further development is needed, particularly in the phases of material presentation and student guidance. These findings highlight the teacher's growing awareness of the importance of clear goal-setting, individualized support, and positive reinforcement in fostering student engagement and achievement within a task-based learning framework.

Students' Creativity Development in Task-Based Learning of Buddhist Ethics

The development of students' creativity during the implementation of the task-based learning method was assessed using four primary indicators: curiosity, discipline, active questioning, and creative thinking. Scores were assigned using a Likert scale, with the values subsequently aggregated to obtain a composite score for each indicator. The progression of these scores was monitored across three stages: the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II. The table below presents the detailed results of these assessments:

Table 2: Student Creativity Indicators

Indicator	Pre-Cycle	Cycle I	Cycle II	% Increase (I-II)
Curiosity	37	54	74	37.0%
Discipline	113	111	153	37.8%
Active Questioning	20	27	38	40.7%
Creative Thinking	40	49	76	55.1%

Table 2 illustrates the development of student creativity indicators across three stages: pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II. The data reveal significant improvements across all four creativity indicators. The most notable increase occurred in the indicator of creative thinking, which rose by 55.1%. Students demonstrated a heightened ability to generate original and meaningful ideas. This progress was evident in their assignments, particularly in the creation of comics

inspired by the *Dhammapada* that explained the concept of karma in narrative and visual form. These comics not only reflected a deep conceptual understanding, but also illustrated students' capacity to transform abstract ideas into communicative and engaging works. This creative growth was largely attributable to the autonomy granted to students in determining the format of their final projects—an approach that encourages divergent thinking, consistent with the findings of Hsia et al. (2021), who argue that autonomy in learning tasks stimulates broader and more original idea generation.

A significant increase was also observed in the discipline indicator, which improved by 37.8%. This suggests notable behavioral changes, particularly in students' ability to complete assignments punctually and demonstrate greater responsibility for their work. The transformation was largely influenced by the internalization of moral values conveyed through Buddhist narratives, especially the story of Cūlapanthaka Thera, which emphasizes perseverance and patience in overcoming personal limitations. This narrative served as a strong moral reference for students, as evidenced in field notes and student reflections that cited the story as a source of inspiration for maintaining diligence and persistence despite challenges.

The indicator of active questioning also improved significantly, with an increase of 40.7%. This shift reflects a transition from passive to active learning behaviors, as students began demonstrating the confidence to ask clarifying questions, seek deeper understanding, and engage in reflective inquiry during class discussions. For instance, some students began to question the contemporary relevance of Buddhist stories or attempted to interpret symbolic meanings in the *Jātaka* tales. This development indicates that the learning process not only fostered intellectual curiosity but also created space for meaningful exploration of complex themes.

Curiosity, as the first indicator, also showed notable growth, increasing by 37.0%. This was reflected in students' enthusiasm for independently seeking additional information related to the assignment themes. Whereas students initially relied solely on teacher-provided content or textbooks, by Cycle II they were conducting independent research using sources such as Buddhist storybooks, children's encyclopedias, and digital content. Reflective journal entries revealed that the Buddhist stories introduced at the beginning of the lessons sparked their interest in exploring lesser-known characters. This shift indicates a growing sense of ownership over the learning process, with students beginning to exhibit initiative and self-directed inquiry.

The most prominent change across the learning cycles was the shift from a passive, repetitive approach to one characterized by exploration and reflection. In the pre-cycle phase, students often submitted copied responses and relied heavily on teacher direction. By Cycle II, however, they began producing more original, research-based work and offering thoughtful responses grounded in personal interpretation. Field notes documented students citing multiple sources in their assignments, forming independent opinions, and engaging in active discussions to defend their perspectives.

These changes reflect an improvement in students' metacognitive abilities—specifically, their capacity to monitor, evaluate, and regulate their own cognitive processes. This growth was supported by task structures designed to promote autonomy, reflection, and accountability. The teacher provided a flexible

assignment framework that allowed students to align their personal interests with the tasks, while ensuring that each activity remained rooted in the Buddhist ethical values studied. This approach strengthened the integration of affective and cognitive domains in learning, producing creativity that was not arbitrary but deeply informed by moral understanding.

In the context of character and moral education, the data strongly suggest that creativity and ethical values can be developed simultaneously, and that they mutually reinforce one another. Students became not only more creative in organizing ideas, but also more reflective in evaluating the ethical implications of their creative outputs. This approach positions creativity not as the end product of education, but as a reflective process that involves inquiry, meaning-making, and moral deliberation.

Overall, the improvements observed across all four creativity indicators confirm the effectiveness of the task-based learning method integrated with Buddhist ethical narratives. The combination of creative autonomy and moral guidance proved to be a powerful pedagogical strategy, cultivating a learning experience that is comprehensive, meaningful, and impactful for long-term character development and 21st-century competencies. The findings affirm the importance of designing educational experiences that foster both higher-order thinking and spiritual-social values relevant to students' lives.

Thus, the development of students' creativity in this study reflects not only cognitive growth but also shifts in attitude, learning behavior, and moral awareness. Buddhist ethical narratives served as a key catalyst in this transformation, providing both a rich conceptual context for idea exploration and a moral framework that guided students' creative expression in a responsible and meaningful direction.

Integration of Buddhist Ethical Narratives in Enhancing Student Creativity

The integration of Buddhist ethical narratives within the educational context has demonstrated a significant impact in fostering students' creativity while simultaneously strengthening their moral values. Based on thematic analysis of students' journals and interview data, three primary patterns emerged through which Buddhist narratives enriched the creative process: (1) moral cultivation as a foundation for thinking, (2) behavioral formation through exemplary characters, and (3) creative collaboration in story-based activities. These three dimensions are interwoven, collectively stimulating deep reflection, ethical awareness, and the generation of ideas that are not only original but also morally meaningful.

Firstly, moral anchoring emerged as a key contribution of Buddhist narratives to classroom practice. In learning activities that combined reflective tasks with stories from the *Dhammapada*, such as the prompt "How would Kisāgotamī Therī resolve this dilemma?", students were encouraged to prioritize ethical considerations before formulating responses or proposing solutions. In this context, values such as compassion, patience, and forgiveness served not only as thematic content but also as sources of inspiration for creative thinking. As one student noted in her journal, "I thought about kindness first, then the answer came." This statement illustrates an understanding of creativity as a process of self-actualization rooted in ethical consciousness. The narrative functions as a moral anchor that enriches students' imagination without restricting intellectual freedom.

Secondly, Buddhist stories also play an important role in shaping behaviour through exemplary characters. Narratives such as that of *Culapanthaka* (a monk

who was initially considered unintelligent but later became a paragon of perseverance and patience) served as a reference point for students in facing personal challenges. Some students explicitly stated that they remembered *Culapanthaka* when they felt lazy or late, as in the quote, 'I remembered *Culapanthaka's* patience and got up earlier.' This indicates a process of value internalisation that leads to positive behaviour change. This phenomenon is in line with the findings of Doshi & Hauser (2024) that narrative frameworks are able to form habits through character identification. In this case, students not only read or listen to the story, but make it a moral reference in their daily lives. Characters who overcome obstacles in compassionate and disciplined ways provide direct inspiration for students to do the same.

Thirdly, Buddhist narratives encourage creative collaboration in group activities such as re-enactments of *Jātaka* stories. In this activity, students not only bring the stories to life, but also adapt them to a modern context through role-playing with their peers. This process demands imagination, empathy, communication skills and co-operation. Through role discussion, moral interpretation and performance planning, students experience both ethical learning and integrated creative expression. Although the quality of outcomes varied depending on the composition of the group as noted by Hassaskhah & Mozaffari (2015) in their study of group dynamics the majority of students showed improvements in moral understanding and collaboration skills. In this case, narrative becomes a democratic medium of learning, where values are constructed and interpreted collectively.

The integration of Buddhist stories in learning not only conveys moral messages, but also stimulates students' inventiveness through reflective and participatory processes. The stories serve as a bridge between spiritual values and contemporary educational practices, creating a space for students to explore ideas freely while remaining ethically directed. The resulting creativity is not the result of unbridled free impulse, but rather born out of deep value processing, allowing students to create something that is not only new, but also socially and spiritually meaningful.

The implications of these findings are wide-ranging. In the context of curriculum, the integration of ethical narratives can strengthen learning across areas such as character education, arts and languages. Teachers can use Buddhist stories not only as teaching materials, but as reflection tools, discussion triggers, and the basis for collaborative projects. This narrative-based learning process is also relevant to constructivist and socio-cultural educational theories, such as Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development, where students achieve higher understanding through social interaction.

Overall, Buddhist ethical narratives proved effective in strengthening students' creativity through a holistic and transformative approach. By embedding morals as a basis for thinking, providing inspirational models of behaviour, as well as facilitating collaboration in a meaningful context, these stories have become catalysts for impactful learning. Therefore, it is important for educators to consider the strategic value of narrative integration in the development of a creative curriculum that is orientated towards building students' character and emotional intelligence.

Discussion

This study evaluates the application of a task-based learning method integrated with Buddhist ethical narratives to enhance the creativity and moral development of Grade V students. The results indicate a significant improvement in the quality of teachers' implementation of the method, particularly in the goal-setting and motivation phases. In these stages, teachers succeeded in communicating learning objectives more clearly and increasing student motivation through Buddhist stories that emphasize the importance of asking questions to gain wisdom. The most substantial increase was observed in the creative thinking indicator, which rose by 55.1%, followed by discipline (37.8%) and active questioning ability (40.7%), with an average increase in student creativity reaching 41.5%. Buddhist narratives such as those of Kisagotami Theri and Culapanthaka supported students in developing ethical reflection and critical thinking. These stories encouraged collaborative creativity through story-based activities and enhanced students' moral understanding and teamwork skills.

The findings suggest that the integration of Buddhist ethical narratives not only fosters creativity but also contributes to character building and the development of emotional intelligence. This enhancement occurs because Buddhist narratives provide a profound moral context that nurtures values such as wisdom, empathy, and perseverance. Stories like Kisāgotamī Therī and Cūlapanthaka Thera challenge students to think creatively and critically by conveying morally relevant concepts. This aligns with Medhacitto et al. (2024), who emphasize Appamāda—a principle of heedful mindfulness—as a foundational ethical lens through which learners can develop not only awareness but also sustained moral agency in modern educational settings. This aligns with Torrance's (2017) theory of creativity, which emphasizes the ability to generate valuable and novel ideas.

These narratives also offer space for idea exploration, enabling students to connect values to their personal experiences and engage in critical reflection on the surrounding world. This process is supported by the constructivist learning theories of Piaget and Vygotsky, which posit that knowledge is built through active interaction with the environment and lived experience (Piaget, 1973; Vygotskij & John-Steiner, 1979). In this context, Buddhist stories serve as instruments for moral development, enriching the learning process and encouraging students to pursue meaning through personal exploration.

Furthermore, Schunk (2012) theory of task-based learning highlights that meaningful and relevant tasks stimulate students' critical and creative thinking skills. The Buddhist stories used in the classroom also facilitated opportunities for collaborative learning, thus enhancing students' cooperation skills. This supports their character development and emotional intelligence, consistent with Goleman (1996) theory, which underscores the role of emotional awareness and management in the development of creativity and social competencies.

The results of this study align with prior research emphasizing the importance of task-based learning methods in enhancing student creativity and engagement, as shown in the works of Tirtayati et al. (2014), Yusika & Turdjai (2021), Ramadhan & Hindun (2023), Fariza & Kusuma (2024) and Yuliantina &

Yuliati (2023). However, this study provides a novel perspective by integrating Buddhist ethical narratives into task-based learning, offering a deep moral framework within the educational process. This approach is consistent with findings by Ismoyo (2020), Lisniasari et al. (2023) and Widodo, (2023), who emphasized the role of ethical values in Buddhist education for character formation.

In contrast to previous studies that largely explored creativity within STEM or the arts (Duyver, Groeneveld, & Aerts, 2023; Zhou, 2021), this research investigates the intersection of creativity and moral development. It demonstrates that task-based learning can foster creativity within ethical and religious contexts, such as through reflective writing inspired by Buddhist teachings. Additionally, it contrasts with studies focusing on creativity in Western educational models, which often treat cognitive and moral development separately (Abeysekara, 2022; Panaïoti, 2022; Velinda, Valentinna, Ningrum, Hasanah, & Permatasari, 2024). This study argues that creativity can flourish more effectively when grounded in ethical values, reinforcing the interconnection between cognitive and moral growth.

The uniqueness of this research lies in its integrative approach, combining task-based pedagogy with Buddhist ethical narratives—an area not previously explored empirically at the primary school level. While earlier studies typically addressed creativity in artistic or technological contexts, this research places it within a transformative moral framework, using Dhammapada stories as foundational material for classroom tasks.

The implications of this study are significant in the realms of moral and creative education. Socially, it demonstrates that education should aim not only to develop students' cognitive abilities but also to nurture their character and emotional intelligence—crucial elements for building a more ethical and harmonious society. Integrating Buddhist ethical narratives within task-based learning introduces an educational model that connects creativity with profound moral values, fostering students who are both imaginative and empathetic.

Historically, this approach underscores the importance of local cultural values in enriching learning experiences in an era increasingly characterized by global homogeneity. Ideologically, the findings suggest that education grounded in ethical traditions, such as those found in Buddhism, can offer a more holistic response to contemporary moral and social challenges. This opens pathways for developing curricula that integrate cognitive, moral, and emotional elements to create more meaningful and transformative educational experiences (Bakhati, 2024; Nyaupane, Thapa, & Neupane, 2024).

Despite the benefits, challenges related to the pluralistic nature of educational environments must be acknowledged. The integration of Buddhist ethical narratives may face resistance in religiously and culturally diverse classrooms. It may not be universally accepted, particularly among students or parents with differing religious perspectives (Gay, 2018). Moreover, inconsistent implementation or overreliance on specific stories may reduce the richness and inclusiveness of moral education. Therefore, the success of this approach depends heavily on educators' readiness to adapt and align learning materials with the social and cultural contexts of their students (Roehlkepartain et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the findings indicate that integrating moral values with creativity can contribute to a more holistic education. Schools should continuously evaluate and develop

instructional methods that balance cognition, morality, and creativity while respecting societal diversity (Durlak et al., 2011; Goleman, 1996).

Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational policymakers consider incorporating task-based learning approaches that integrate Buddhist ethical narratives into the primary school curriculum. Policy actions may include developing curricula that blend active learning with moral and ethical instruction drawn from Buddhist stories. Teacher training programs should be implemented to support the effective application of this method, particularly in goal setting and student motivation. Moreover, the moral lessons embedded in Buddhist narratives can be introduced through extracurricular programs to further cultivate character and emotional intelligence. The implementation of such policies has the potential to enhance students' creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and moral reasoning in daily life.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the implementation of task-based learning methods integrated with Buddhist ethical narratives significantly enhances the creativity of primary school students, particularly within the context of Buddhist Education and Ethics. The observed improvements encompass various indicators of creativity, including creative thinking (55.1%), discipline (37.8%), active questioning (40.7%), and curiosity (37%), with an overall average increase of 41.5%. Narratives from the *Dhammapada*, such as those of Kisagotami Theri and Culapanthaka, served not only as vehicles for moral instruction but also as pivotal catalysts for generating original ideas, fostering ethical reflection, and encouraging active student engagement in task completion. These findings underscore the effectiveness of structured tasks, when combined with Buddhist pedagogical principles such as *ehipassiko* (inquiry) and *sīla* (discipline), in promoting both cognitive innovation and ethical reasoning.

The primary scholarly contribution of this study lies in its unique integration of a task-based pedagogical approach with the ethical and narrative traditions of Buddhism. It introduces a novel instructional design that bridges cognitive and affective domains by proposing a creativity evaluation framework that incorporates moral dimensions such as discipline and reflective thinking. Furthermore, this study contributes to the literature on religious education by providing empirical evidence of the efficacy of analog, story-based methodologies, which are often overlooked in the current digital-centric discourse on educational innovation.

Nevertheless, this study presents certain limitations. The small sample size and the short duration of the intervention—conducted over two learning cycles—limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the long-term effects of this approach on students' creativity and character development remain undetermined. Future research is therefore recommended to expand the scope of investigation by involving a larger and more diverse participant base across various cultural and religious backgrounds. Employing a longitudinal design would also be beneficial to assess the sustained impact of integrating moral values into creative learning processes. Through such efforts, the full potential of this method can be further explored and validated as a transformative strategy for character and creativity education across diverse educational settings.

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