

# The Dimension of Human Nature in Novel *Totto-chan: The Little Girl in the Window*

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## Abstract

Basically, every child is born with a good character. They are a mandate from God who is blessed with extraordinary potential. This is what is then called human nature. Human nature believes that every child has the potential or uniqueness of each that deserves to be developed. A good educational institution should organize learning based on human nature because every child is born with a nature. One example of providing education based on human nature is the education in Tomoe Gakuen in the novel *Totto-chan: The Little Girl in the Window* by Tetsuko Kuroyanagi. In this study, the author tries to describe the dimensions of human nature implied in the novel. The research method used is literature study because it uses novel book media as the main object of research. The data was collected using a documentation technique, where the author reads the contents of the novel as a primary data source as a whole and records data relevant to the object of research. The author also reads and records data obtained from books or other similar studies as secondary data sources so that detailed data results are obtained. The data analysis technique in this study uses Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic theory and has three main steps, namely the symbolic step, the step of giving meaning to the symbol, and the step of philosophical thinking. The results of this study indicate that the dimensions of human nature in the novel are reflected in humanist education, flexible and independent learning, and focus on children's potential.

**Keywords:** dimensions of human nature, totto-chan novel

## 1. Introduction

The concept of human nature believes that every child has potential that deserves to be developed from birth. The influence of interaction with the surrounding environment, whether good or bad, greatly influences the process of the development of that nature (Samsuri, 2020). A good environment should strive to fully develop the potential of the child. This is because the child is a perfect gift from God and has a variety of heterogeneous potentials (Rifa'i, 2018). So, it is appropriate for education providers to organize education that is oriented to the nature or potential of these students. Daniel Muhammad Rosyid as quoted by Musfiatul Muniroh (2019) in her book entitled "Belajar, Bukan Bersekolah", explains that a good education should always pay attention to several important principles, namely student-centred education, the learning process that is packaged innovatively and innovatively. running flexibly, oriented to the diversity and uniqueness of children's potential (multiple intelligence), learning that prioritizes the healthy learning process of children through habituation, prioritizing creativity and inculcating a sense of responsibility, tolerance among students, populist education costs, and all relevant aspects of education with the needs of the child.

The principle of education as described above indirectly supports the concept of human nature because it emphasizes the holistic development of heterogeneous children's potential. However, current education is still dominated by equality and standardization as the main component of its implementation. So, in practice, education often overrides the interests, talents, and various uniqueness and potentials of each student (Oktori, 2021). This phenomenon that occurs is the lighter which is used as the reason why it is very important to develop an educational institution based on the nature of students. Toni Pransiska (2017) in his research explains that the environment and education are basic components of life that play an important role in the development of human nature. The same thing was also stated by Agus Riyan Oktori (2021) who views

education as the right place to develop children's potential so that maximum efforts must be made in its implementation. One form of education that holds the concept of human nature is the educational institution Tomoe Gakuen, which is told in the novel *Totto-chan: The Little Girl in the Window* by Tetsuko Kuroyanagi (2019). The learning process developed at Tomoe Gakuen is based on the potential development of each student. The concept of human nature raised in the story is also reflected in the implementation of applied learning.

Several studies on the learning system in the novel have been conducted, including by Muhammad Mustofa Habib, et al. (2021), and Apri Damai Sagita Krissandi, et al. (2019). Both of them talk about the values of humanist education contained in the novel. The values of humanist education in the two studies are described in several important points, namely (1) strengthening students' self-confidence in giving meaning to life, (2) opening the way to develop self-ability, based on freedom and responsibility, (3) guiding students to find life with self-motivation and the desire to be better, (4) develop an original perspective and expression according to the students themselves. The basic difference between the research and that conducted by the author is in the material object discussed, namely the dimension of human nature. There are also other studies conducted by Arifin and Ghunniyatul Karimah (2018) and Muhammad Rozani and Nela Oktarina (2017) which discuss the value of character education implemented in the same novel. In this study, the author focuses on discussing the values of character education from the perspective of K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari which is thick with Islamic values and aims to form human beings with character and noble character. The difference in material objects is very visible between the research and the research conducted by the author.

Based on the description of some of the research above, it can be taken as a statement that there are similarities and differences with the research that the author did. The main similarity is in the formal object of *Totto-chan's* novel: *The Little Girl in the Window*. However, there are differences in each discussion of the material object. There have been no previous studies that have focused on discussing the concept of human nature raised in the novel as the author did. In fact, in essence, the discussion of nature is the most fundamental thing in leading to other discussions in the world that are more complex. As Hamka stated in his commentary, Al-Azhar, quoted by Uul Nurjanah (2017), stated that *fitrah* is a basic feeling that is pure from within a person for the recognition of the existence of God who holds the highest power in this world. The research conducted by the author discusses the dimensions of human nature which is an essential element that will give birth to the most fundamental data concept in the novel in question, exceeding previous studies. Therefore, the author tries to fill the research gap by reviewing in detail the concept of human nature in the novel *Totto-chan: The Little Girl in the Window*.

## 2. Research Methods

This research uses library research, which is a research approach that examines a theory that exists in references related to values, traditions, and norms contained in a particular social situation to be studied (Sugiyono, 2019). This literature study cannot be separated from instruments in the form of texts such as books, journals, or other research results, because the references used are sourced from these instruments. Data collection techniques in this study use documentation techniques. This technique is done by collecting and recording data relevant to the object of research through various references or data sources. Sources of data used in this study consisted of primary and secondary data sources. The primary data source is the data used as the main reference for the research, namely the novel *Totto-chan: The Little Girl in the Window*. While secondary data sources are data that function as supporting or complementary primary data so that valid and detailed data can be obtained. Secondary data sources are books, articles, and other research that are relevant to the topic and deserve to be used as sources of supporting data.

Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic method was applied as a data analysis technique in this study. The hermeneutic method has three kinds of steps that must be taken, namely the symbolic step, the step of giving meaning to the symbol, and the step of philosophical thinking (Kurniawan, 2009). The symbolic step is a simple phenomenology of understanding the symbols in the text by and from the symbols themselves. In other words, the process of describing the initial meaning implied in the text is a symbolic step. But this meaning is only superficial, so further interpretation is needed to achieve a deep and critical meaning. The second step is giving meaning to the symbol. This is a person's step into the realm of hermeneutics by interpreting or interpreting the various symbols that have been obtained in the first step. This interpretation process is very subjective and is influenced by the knowledge and background of each person who interprets it. The last step is the step of philosophical thinking. That is to correlate the results of symbol interpretation with the origin of the basic discourse of human life (Indraningsih, 2011). The three steps of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics were taken to obtain a detailed and valid interpretation of the data regarding the dimensions of human nature contained in the novel *Totto-chan: The Little Girl in the Window*.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Epistemology of Human Nature

Word *fitriah* etymologically comes from Arabic, *fathara*, and the *masdar* form is *fathrun*. The word means he holds tightly, breaks, splits, tears or cracks it, while according to terminology, *fitriah* means a creation, the existence of a new thing for the first time and the structure or general characteristics of a natural nature, wherewith these characteristics a person child will be created and born (Multahada, 2020). In other words, every child born must have the potential and uniqueness of each. There is a fundamental difference between the concept of *fitriah* and the concept of *tabula rasa* which was introduced by John Locke from the west. *Tabularasa* etymologically comes from the Latin, namely *tabula* and *rasa*. *Tabula* means map or atlas, while *rasa* means a clean slate. He is a philosophical empiricist who thinks that every child who is born is like a clean white paper and does not have any potential (Mudin et al., 2021). This is certainly contrary to the concept of *fitriah* in Islam which assumes that humans are born with potential that deserves to be developed.

There are several meanings or interpretations of the term *fitriah* in Islam, namely (1) *fitriah* which means holy both physically and spiritually, (2) *fitriah* means Islam itself, (3) *fitriah* means believing in the Oneness of Allah, (4) *fitriah* are the basic characteristics of human purity, (5) *fitriah* is accepting the birth of humans who have their orientation or can accept the truth that humans bring in life (Oktori, 2021). The values of the concept of human nature developed in the world of education are very simple. There is not always the word "Islam" in the process of developing the values of human nature in education. Because the discussion of nature is about a universal concept. The discussion about an education organization that is based on the natural learning process possible, is what is called *fitriah* (Muniroh, 2019). So that children will develop according to their respective levels of development without any coercion or a restrictive system. This is because children have their nature. So, an education actor should support the fulfilment of this nature by carrying out education based on human nature.

At least, seven things can be used as the basis for the values of human nature in the world of education, namely (1) the principle of accompanying or nurturing children, not regulating or managing children, (2) the basis for implementing education is to awaken and awaken, not manipulate or modify and teach. , (3) prioritizing the use of every moment as much as possible rather than managing those moments strictly and systematically, (4) designing a project learning program that involves the contribution of each child so that children can bring out their uniqueness or potential, (5) there is a special program for each child different levels, (6) oriented to the level of child development, (7) ensuring children grow appropriately during learning and placing children in the right on place or where they should be (Muniroh, 2019).

#### 3.2. Axiology of Education in *Totto-chan Novel*

Novel *Totto-chan: The Little Girl in the Window* is a novel that tells the story of a child in his life at a school called Tomoe Gakuen which was founded in 1937 by Sosaku Kobayashi. Tetsuko Kuroyanagi or more familiarly called *Totto-chan* is the main character in this novel as well as the story writer and one of the alumni of the school concerned. He stated that the educational method implemented by Sosaku Kobayashi, who was then the principal of the school, prioritized the potential of children and believed that children were born with good character. Many distinctive educational values can be learned from the novel *Totto-chan: The Little Girl in the Window*. These values are integrated with the form of children's learning activities carried out at the school concerned. The activities designed are varied to develop the potential and characteristics of each student.

I tried to explain Mr. Kobayashi in this book. He believes that every child is born with a good character, which can easily be damaged by their environment or by the bad influences of adults. Mr. Kobayashi tries to find the "good character" of each child and develop it so that the children grow up to become adults with distinctive personalities. Mr. Kobayashi really values everything natural and wants children's characters to develop as naturally as possible. He also loves nature very much. His youngest daughter, *Miyo-chan*, told me that her father used to take her for walks when she was little while saying, "Let's go for a walk and observe the rhythms of nature." (Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, 2019, pp. 269–270).

##### 3.2.1 Development of Children's Imagination

The importance of developing children's imagination is a value that is first reflected in the education held by Tomoe Gakuen. In storybooks, the first thing that makes the reader interested is the concept of the school which is very different from most schools. Learning activities at Tomoe Gakuen are carried out in an unused train carriage. The school environment is still beautiful and far from the bustle of the city. The design of the classroom environment carried out in the train carriage can make children more optimal in participating in learning. They can learn while imagining at will. Imagination is very important for developing a child's brain. For example, a child will imagine that he is on his way to a mysterious place. Of course, this is also very effective to increase children's enthusiasm.

Totto-chan stopped walking when she saw the gates of the new school. The school gates were once made of smooth concrete pillars. The name of the school is listed there in big letters. But the gate of this new school only consisted of two not very tall logs. Both stems are still overgrown with twigs and leaves.

"This gate is growing," said Totto-chan. "Maybe it will continue to grow until it is taller than a telephone pole!". ... For classrooms, the school uses six unused train cars. Totto-chan felt like she was dreaming. School in the train carriage! (Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, 2019, p. 20)

### **3.2.2. *The Protecting Principal***

In the novel *Totto-chan: The Little Girl in the Window*, the author very often mentioned the principal's attitudes, either directly or indirectly, showing an attitude of nurturing the child, accompanying, listening, and caring about everything related to the child. teach him. This attitude is certainly not owned by every principal and is an advantage that is rarely found. The novel is told when Totto-chan, who is the main character of a new novel, enrolls in school at Tomoe Gakuen for the first time. So, the first thing he did was meet the principal. Usually, children are not allowed to tell a long story and are only given a short interview. However, unlike the principal Tomoe Gakuen who is familiarly called Mr. The Kobayashi. Instead, he sparked a conversation with Totto-chan in the form of the sentence "Now tell me all about yourself. Tell me anything and everything you want to say." (Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, 2019, p. 26).

### **3.2.3. *The Principle of Freedom to Learn Another***

The thing that is no less important to be applied at Tomoe Gakuen is the freedom of learning that is applied. The Indonesian Minister of Education, Nadiem Makarim, initiated the independent learning program in 2020. However, Tomoe Gakuen, which has been operating since 1937, has instilled the principle of being free to learn from even the smallest things. In the implementation of learning carried out in train cars, children are free to choose anywhere to sit (in Japan this is not common because children are usually given a fixed seat), and the teacher offers children a choice of what lessons they will learn that day. that. So that this allows children to express themselves according to their respective nature. They can choose lessons according to their interests and talents.

This teaching method allows the teacher to observe, over time as children move on to higher grades, what areas of interest the children are in, including their way of thinking and character. It's the ideal way for teachers to really get to know their students. For students, starting the day by learning something they enjoy the most is fun. The fact that they have all day to study material they don't like shows that they have somehow survived the lessons (Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, 2019, p. 39).

### **3.2.4. *Experiential Based Learning***

Learning at Tomoe Gakuen is not only done in train cars. But, also outside the classroom. Children are occasionally invited to take a walk and see various natural scenery. They can learn directly from their experience in the field. For example, learning about farming from a farmer directly. Education at Tomoe views that the teacher does not always have to be someone who delivers lessons in classes, but someone who is an expert in his field is a real teacher who is no less important in playing a role in learning.

"This is your teacher for today. He will teach you many things." With those words, the Headmaster introduced a new teacher. Totto-chan studied the teacher carefully. His first impression, the teacher was not dressed like a teacher. Outside of his undershirt, he wore a striped, short-sleeved shirt. He wasn't wearing a tie and had a towel around his neck. The trousers are made of blue dyed cotton fabric. The pants pipe is narrow and full of patches. His feet were not wearing ordinary shoes, but a kind of thick two-toed and rubber-soled T-shirt, typical of work clothes. On his head perched a worn Straw hat. ... "Aren't you the farmer who cultivates the fields near the creek?" she asked the man cheerfully.

"That's right," said the new teacher with a broad smile (Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, 2019, p. 183).

### **3.2.5. *The Principle of Trust in Children***

What Head Tomoe Gakuen has always nurtured is the importance of giving trust to a child. Usually, adults will reprimand or scold the child when the child does something that is not supposed to or is considered to be against the norm. But this is not the case in Tomoe Gakuen. In one chapter it is told that Totto-chan dropped her purse accidentally in the toilet hole. Then because he wanted to pick up the dropped wallet, he was forced to dismantle the garbage container by scooping up its contents slowly. The principal accidentally saw Totto-chan's behaviour. Instead of scolding or reprimanding, he was curious and asked kindly what Totto-chan was doing. After hearing Totto-chan's answer, the headmaster then said, "You'll

return everything when you're done, right?" The principal had put his trust in Totto-chan and this was effective in boosting the child's confidence (Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, 2019, p. 60).

### **3.2.6. Learning by Playing**

One of the principles of learning is the implementation of learning activities while playing. Children are active individuals and like new things. So, this principle is very appropriate to be implemented in children to improve their learning abilities. One of the learning practices while playing that is described in the novel *Totto-chan: The Little Girl in the Window* is learning activities at the swimming pool, picnics to hot springs, the commemoration of sports days, and many other examples.

Summer vacation is over and the day of the party to the hot springs has arrived. For Tomoe's students, the event was very important. There really wasn't much to surprise Mama, but when Totto-chan came home from school one day and asked, "Can I go on a picnic to the hot springs with the other students?" Mom gaped. He had heard old people flocking to the hot springs, but the first-year students? But after reading the Principal's letter carefully, Mama thought it was a good idea. He even admired the Headmaster's plan. The picnic will be named "School on the Beach", at a place called Toi, on the Izu Peninsula, Shizuoka (Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, 2019, p. 96).

### **3.2.7. Viewing Weaknesses as Strengths**

There is a chapter in Totto-chan's novel: *The Little Girl in the Window* that proves that a weakness can be a very significant advantage. The chapter talks about the school's sports anniversary. There are several competitions that every child must participate in. One of the children named Takahashi who has an abnormality in the growth of his arms and legs which are very short for his age, participates in a unique race, namely climbing and descending the fastest stairs. At first glance, the competition is very easy, but it turns out to be quite difficult, especially for those who have a body and wide feet. The principal deliberately designed the competition to prove that Takahashi was able to win the competition on his own.

Undoubtedly, in particular, he must have imagined Takahashi—whose dining table would be filled with a variety of First Prize vegetable dishes. Perhaps the Headmaster hoped the boy would remember the pride and joy of winning the First Prizes, before growing feelings of inferiority in Takahashi because of his size and the fact that his body had stopped growing. And maybe, who knows, the Headmaster has carefully thought through all of Tomoe's signature sports, just so that Takahashi can become first place in various sports (Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, 2019, p. 143).

### **3.2.8. Student Centered Approach**

This learning approach is very familiar to educators. Student-centered views children as active learners. The teacher only acts as a facilitator who helps children's development. The same is true of the learning practices that were injured in Tomoe Gakuen. Each learning activity is not designed rigidly by providing unidirectional lessons from the teacher, but children have the opportunity to express their opinions and skills according to their respective talents and interests.

So, learning in this school is generally free and independent. The student is free to consult with the teacher whenever he feels it is necessary. The teacher will come to the student if asked and explain everything until the child understands. Then they are given other exercises to do on their own. That's learning in its truest sense, and it means that no student sits idle and doesn't care while the teacher is explaining something. First graders have not yet reached the stage of fully independent study, but they are allowed to start by studying the material they are most interested in (Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, 2019, p. 39).

### **3.2.9. The Principle That Every Child Has Good Character**

The education held at Tomoe Gakuen views that every child has a good character from birth. This is by the principal's principle as told by the author. No child is not good. It is the influence from outside that will develop or destroy that good character. That's why the child is seen as a complete individual as a human being. It is no different for every child. All have the right to receive education according to their respective portions and levels of development.

"You are a good boy, you know that, right?"

That's what the Headmaster always said whenever he passed Totto-chan. And every time the Headmaster said that Totto-chan smiled, jumped low, and then said, "Yes, I am a good boy." And he believed those words.

In fact, in many ways Totto-chan was a good boy. He is kind to everyone, especially his friends who have disabilities. He always defended them. If there are other schoolchildren who call their friends disabled, he dares to fight with the bad boy, even though he ends up crying. Totto-chan is willing to do anything to take care of any injured animal she finds. But teachers are also often surprised to find Totto-chan getting into trouble because she wants to satisfy her curiosity when she finds something unusual (Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, 2019, p. 194).

### ***3.3. The Relevance of the Epistemology of Human Nature and the Axiology of Education in Totto-chan's Novel***

#### ***3.3.1. Humanist***

Education Humanist education is education that adheres to the philosophy of humanism in which this theory views humans as the most important object in the implementation of education (Fadli, 2020). The human in question is none other than students. Students have the right to be treated like complete human beings. The attitude of tolerance and respect for each other's shortcomings, trust and responsibility given to children, as well as other things that can humanize children are the basis of the principles of humanist education. The humanism in the novel *Totto-chan: The Little Girl in the Window* is relevant to the concept of human nature which views that every child is born with a good character. Humans are indeed good personalities, it's just that the influence of the wrong environment sometimes makes a good character change. Therefore, the environment developed in the story is very concerned to support the development of the child's character to become a complete human being.

#### ***3.3.2. Development and Independent Learning***

This is still related to the educational humanism implemented in Tomoe Gakuen in the story that the author studied. The learning process is flexible, meaning that teaching and learning activities at Tomoe Gakuen are not only based on the same learning model and are systemic. This institution puts forward a flexible learning model adapted to the needs of children by taking into account the situation and conditions. Likewise with the principle of independent learning. Freedom in this case is that children are given freedom about what lessons they will learn. This freedom does not mean that the teacher gives freedom as freely as possible but by giving certain limits to the child so that the child can make choices according to his wishes without forgetting the main learning outcomes to be conveyed.

#### ***3.3.3. Development of Children's Potential***

One thing that needs to be underlined regarding the concept of human nature education is the belief that every child has potential that deserves to be developed. Students have their uniqueness, so they will need different treatment. Thus the development of student potential will be maximized. This is also closely related to the concept of multiple intelligences which was first proposed by Gardner in 1983. Gardner explained that children do not only have one intelligence but many other potentials that can be developed into multiple intelligences. The relevance of the novel that the author studied is in the learning process that seeks to develop the potential of each student. For example, in role-playing activities, sports days, and other activities that support the development of children's talents and interests.

## **4. Conclusion**

The concept of human nature views that every human being has potential or uniqueness that can be developed. The embodiment of the concept of human nature has relevance to the learning points described in the novel *Totto-chan: The Little Girl in the Window* by Tetsuko Kuroyanagi. The learning model in the school named Tomoe Gakuen has a uniqueness that other institutions do not have. Some of the educational values that are instilled in Tomoe Gakuen include the importance of developing children's imaginations, nurturing school principal leadership, the principle of independent learning, the principle of giving trust to children, the implementation of learning by playing, the application of a student-centred approach, and the principle that every child has a good character. There is some relevance between the educational values implemented by Tomoe Gakuen and the concept of human nature. The relevance is in the form of educational concepts that are humanist, learning is carried out flexibly and independently, and focuses on the development of the potential or uniqueness of each child. All of these relevancies are interrelated to form a learning component that seeks to apply the concept of complete human nature to children.

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