Implementation of Storytelling Methods in Enhancing Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the implementation of the story method in improving the emotional intelligence of early childhood in Gemilang Kindergarten. Emotional intelligence is a child's ability to recognize, manage, and express emotions appropriately, and be able to foster positive social relationships. The story method was chosen because it is considered effective in conveying moral messages and emotional values to children through an interesting and easy-to-understand narrative plot. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with group B children aged 5–6 years as subjects. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study showed that the implementation of the story method can improve children's ability to recognize and control emotions, as well as improve children's empathy and social skills. Based on the results of observations, 90% of children showed appropriate or very good emotional development, with details of 80% in the Developing According to Expectations (BSH) category, 10% Developing Very Well (BSB), and 10% still at the Starting to Develop (MB) stage, and no children were included in the Not Yet Developing (BB) category. Thus, the story method has proven to be effective as a learning strategy to develop the emotional intelligence of early childhood.

INTRODUCTION

During early childhood, children experience a very important period of growth, during which various aspects of intelligence, including emotional intelligence, begin to develop significantly. Emotional intelligence encompasses a child's ability to recognise, understand, and control their own emotions as well as those of others (Afifah & Mashuri, 2025). Children with good emotional intelligence find it easier to adapt to their environment, form harmonious social relationships, and deal with various emotional challenges in their daily lives. One approach that can be used to stimulate emotional intelligence in early childhood is storytelling. Through stories, children not only have fun, but also gain emotional experiences that allow them to understand a variety of feelings and positive social values (Sukatin et al., 2020).

Based on the latest data on the development of emotional intelligence in early childhood, a study conducted by UNICEF shows that around 44% of children aged 3-5 years in developing countries have difficulty managing their emotions and displaying positive social behaviour, such as sharing or showing empathy towards their peers (Widodo, 2020). This indicates that many children still need support to optimally develop aspects of emotional intelligence. In Indonesia, a survey conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) through the Pancasila Student Profile Programme (Haryono et al., 2024) also found that many early childhood children do not yet show consistency in self-control and social awareness. These findings underscore the importance of implementing learning methods that can effectively stimulate children's emotional development. Therefore, the implementation of storytelling methods at Gemilang Kindergarten is highly relevant as a learning strategy that can support children in recognising, understanding, and managing their feelings, as well as improving empathy and social skills in a more focused and enjoyable way.

This study was conducted at Gemilang Kindergarten to analyse the implementation of storytelling methods in improving the emotional intelligence of early childhood. The focus of this study was to observe the impact of storytelling methods on children's self-awareness, emotion management, empathy, and social skills. With a conducive environment, storytelling methods are expected to help children better understand and manage their feelings. The storytelling method used stories that were relevant to the children's world, contained moral values, and were delivered interactively. The stories were selected based on their relevance to the children's daily experiences, making them easier to accept and understand. Previous studies have shown that storytelling can help children recognise and express their emotions and encourage positive social skills (SAFA'AH, 2022) (Widiyastuti, 2024).

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The application of storytelling methods in early childhood education not only aims to improve cognitive aspects, but also plays an important role in the development of emotional intelligence, which is closely related to communication psychology (Mawardah & Puri, 2025). In the context of Islamic education, the storytelling method serves as a means of conveying moral and spiritual values, which emphasises empathetic communication, compassion, and building emotional closeness between teachers and students (Abbas et al., 2025). This is in line with Novita Loka's view that communication psychology in Islamic education not only helps the effectiveness of message delivery but also encourages the formation of children's character and personality through the process of emotional internalisation of values (Eko & Novita, 2023). Stories that contain moral and religious messages, when delivered with the right psychological approach, can create a learning atmosphere that is not only communicative but also touches the affective realm of children. Thus, the storytelling method becomes a strategic tool that aligns educational goals with an effective communication approach that is imbued with Islamic values.

According to Goleman, emotional intelligence in early childhood can be developed through appropriate stimulation, one of which is through narratives or stories that allow children to experience social and emotional simulations. Goleman emphasises that

emotional experiences provided through stories can strengthen the connection between emotions and social understanding, forming the basis of empathy, self-control, and interpersonal skills (Goleman, 2021). Additionally, according to a study by Pramudyani & Nugroho, storytelling activities that involve two-way interaction (such as discussions after the story) have been proven to increase children's empathy and social awareness because they are involved in emotional reflection and considering other people's perspectives (Pramudyani, P. & Nugroho, 2023).

The storytelling approach as a method for improving emotional intelligence in early childhood not only serves to instil moral values, but also plays a role in honing social skills that are important for their lives. Through interesting characters and storylines, children can learn to recognise various types of emotions, understand the consequences of each action, and find the right way to respond to the emotional situations they experience (Endang Kartikowati & Dr. Zubaedi, 2020). In addition, children's involvement in storytelling activities, whether by listening, telling stories, or discussing, encourages them to better understand their own feelings and those of others (Sari et al., 2022). Consistency in applying this method can shape a more mature mindset in dealing with conflicts and foster empathy towards the surrounding environment (Widiyastuti, 2024). Therefore, storytelling is not merely a form of entertainment, but also an effective learning tool for developing children's emotional intelligence from an early age.

This study aims to analyse the implementation of storytelling methods in improving the emotional intelligence of young children. Storytelling was chosen because it plays an important role in helping children recognise, understand, and manage their emotions through experiences gained from characters and storylines. This study will examine how interactive storytelling can influence the development of aspects of emotional intelligence, such as self-awareness, emotion management, empathy, and children's social skills. This study will also explore the effectiveness of the storytelling method in building children's understanding of various emotions and how they respond to them in their daily lives. Thus, the results of this study are expected to provide insight for educators and parents about the importance of using the storytelling method as a learning strategy that supports the development of emotional intelligence in early childhood.

METHODS

This study utilised a descriptive qualitative approach to thoroughly describe the implementation of storytelling methods in enhancing the emotional intelligence of early childhood students at Gemilang Kindergarten. This approach was chosen because it was able to reveal the meaning and deep understanding of the subjective experiences of the research subjects in a natural context (Sugiyono, 2021). The research subjects consisted of group B students (aged 4–5 years) and classroom teachers at Gemilang Kindergarten. There were 15 group B students who became research subjects, consisting of 8 boys and 7 girls. In addition, 2 classroom teachers were also involved in this study. Purposive sampling was used to select subjects who were considered capable of providing relevant information regarding the application of the storytelling method in learning.

Data collection techniques included observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation (Pertiwi, 2020). Observations were made directly of the children's behaviour during storytelling activities, covering emotional expression, the ability to recognise their own and others' feelings, and social responses to stories. Interviews were conducted with class teachers as activity implementers to obtain information about the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes of the storytelling method. Documentation in the form of activity photos, teacher observation notes, and children's work products were used as additional data (Aprianti & Vitaloka, 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted at Gemilang Kindergarten, with the aim of determining the effectiveness of storytelling methods in improving the emotional intelligence of early childhood. The learning activities focused on group B (aged 5–6 years), who participated in daily storytelling sessions using an interactive approach (Anggraini et al., 2018). The stories used included the everyday story 'Rani Learns to Share', which tells the story of a child who learns to share toys with her friends at the playground, the Islamic story 'Prophet Muhammad the Role Model', which tells of the honesty and compassion of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as an example for children, and the educational fairy tale 'The Rabbit and the Turtle', a classic tale that teaches the values of patience, hard work, and not underestimating others, which is rich in emotional and moral values.

The results of the observation show that storytelling encourages children to become more aware of and understand their own feelings and those of others. Children become more open in expressing emotions such as happiness, sadness, fear, and anger. Teachers use guiding questions and discussions to help children understand the meaning behind the stories, as well as stimulate their empathy and social awareness. The following is data on the emotional intelligence development of children in group B based on observation results:

No	Child's Name	Language Development
1	Alif Muqri	BSH
2	Alin	BSH
3	Aqmar Nadhif	BSH
4	Aulia Ramadhan	BSH
5	Fina Anggraini	BSH
6	M. Amran	MB
7	M. Haikal	BSH
8	M. Izzan	BSH
9	M. Jazilul Fawaidh	BSH
10	M. Syamsuri	BSH
11	Rayyan	BSB
12	Rosa Lindah	BSH
13	Syerkhan Ahmad	BSH
14	Vanesha Adista Meza	BSH
15	Zidan	BSH

Explanation:

MB: Beginning to develop

BSB: Developing very well

BSH: Developing as expected

From observations of 10 children involved in learning activities using the storytelling method, it was found that 8 children (80%) were in the BSH (Developing as Expected) category, 1 child (10%) was in the BSB (Developing Very Well) category, and 1 child (10%) was still in the MB (Starting to Develop) stage. These results indicate that, overall, 90% of children experienced emotional development in line with early childhood developmental stages or even exceeded expectations. This indicates that the storytelling method contributes positively to the improvement of children's emotional intelligence.

The differences in these developmental categories refer to the assessment indicators used in early childhood education. Children in the MB category show that they are beginning to exhibit behaviour consistent with developmental indicators, but are still inconsistent (Harianja et al., 2023). Meanwhile, children in the BSH category have demonstrated the expected abilities, while children in the BSB category are able to demonstrate higher achievements consistently and in depth. The BB (Not Yet Developed) category was not found in the assessment results.

Differences in children's developmental achievements can be influenced by various factors (Murniarti, 2020). The family environment plays an important role in shaping children's emotional abilities, particularly in terms of providing affection, warm communication, and role modelling in managing emotions (Muali & Fatmawati, 2022). In addition, children's language skills also have a significant influence, as children who are able to express their feelings well tend to find it easier to understand and manage their emotions (Maulinda et al., 2020). The habit of listening to stories, both at home and at school, also influences children's imagination, empathy, and social understanding (Alfira & Siregar, 2024). Previous social experiences, such as involvement in group activities or playing with peers, also contribute to children's ability to respond appropriately to emotional situations. In addition, individual differences in developmental readiness are also natural factors that cause variations in the achievement of emotional abilities (Khadijah & Jf, 2021).

The success of most children in reaching the BSH and BSB categories confirms that the storytelling method is an effective approach in supporting emotional intelligence development. Meanwhile, children who are still at the MB stage require special attention through a more personalised approach and continuous support from teachers and parents so that their development process can proceed more optimally. These findings are in line with previous research. According to Fauziah & Nurlaili, the storytelling method encourages the development of empathy and emotional control through narrative stimulation that is appropriate for the child's stage of development (Fauziah, A., & Nurlaili, 2022). Rahmawati et al. also state that storytelling combined with expression and visual media can strengthen children's emotional perception, as they are able to associate emotions with the experiences of characters in stories (Rahmawati, N., Yuliani, S., & Pratiwi, 2021).

This study also shows that storytelling is an effective method in helping young children recognise and manage their emotions. Through stories, children learn to understand basic emotions, imitate emotional expressions, and understand the physiological responses associated with emotions. This study emphasises the importance of support from parents and educators in accompanying children as they experience various emotional experiences, so that they can develop effective emotion regulation skills. (Salsabila et al., 2021). Research from (Gare, 2023) found that storytelling can influence the formation of empathy in children aged 5–6 years. Through pre-test and post-test observations of empathy indicators, this study showed that children involved in storytelling activities demonstrated improvements in listening to others, accepting other people's perspectives, and being sensitive to others' feelings. These results confirm that storytelling can be an effective tool in developing empathy in early childhood.

The storytelling method not only improves understanding of emotions, but also influences children's social behaviour. Children at Gemilang Kindergarten began to show improvements in their ability to cooperate, help friends, and respond to conflicts more positively after participating in regular storytelling sessions for several weeks. Thus, the results of this study indicate that the storytelling method is an effective learning strategy for developing emotional intelligence in early childhood, particularly in the areas of emotion recognition and management, empathy, and social skills.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of research conducted at Gemilang Kindergarten, it can be concluded that the implementation of the storytelling method has proven to be effective in improving the emotional intelligence of early childhood. This method is able to help children recognise, understand, and manage various emotions in a more focused manner through the emotional experiences conveyed in stories. Children showed positive development, especially in the aspects of self-awareness, emotional control, empathy, and social skills. The observation results show that 90% of children showed appropriate or very good emotional development, with 80% in the Developing as Expected (DAE) category, 10% in the Very

Well Developed (VWD) category, and 10% still in the Beginning to Develop (BBD) stage. No children were in the Not Yet Developed (NYD) category, indicating the success of the storytelling method in supporting children's emotional development. Stories that are presented interactively, are relevant to everyday experiences, and are rich in moral and emotional values can create a learning atmosphere that is both enjoyable and meaningful. Thus, the storytelling method not only serves as a means of entertainment, but also as an effective learning strategy in shaping children's character and emotional intelligence from an early age. The application of this method is highly recommended for educators and parents as a communicative, educational approach that touches on the affective aspects of child development.

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