



STIMULATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
WITH THE TELLYNG STORY METHOD

Article Information

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Abstract

Background: Social-emotional development is a fundamental aspect of early childhood education because it enables children to regulate emotions, cooperate with peers, communicate effectively, and establish positive social relationships. Storytelling is considered an appropriate child-centered learning method for fostering these competencies through meaningful and engaging learning experiences. **Objective:** This study aimed to examine the relationship between the implementation of the storytelling method and the social-emotional development of children aged 5–6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City. **Method:** This quantitative study employed an ex post facto design involving 20 children selected through total sampling. Data were collected using structured observation and child development assessment instruments. Descriptive statistics and simple linear regression analyses were performed using SPSS version 25. **Results:** The findings revealed that the storytelling method had a positive and statistically significant relationship with children's social-emotional development ($F = 6.155$; $p = 0.023 < 0.05$; $t = 2.481$; $p = 0.023$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.255$) indicated that storytelling explained 25.5% of the variance in children's social-emotional development, while 74.5% was influenced by other factors beyond this study. **Novelty:** This study provides empirical evidence regarding the contribution of storytelling to children's social-emotional development within an authentic kindergarten classroom context. **Conclusion:** Storytelling is an effective child-centered learning approach for promoting children's social-emotional development through meaningful, interactive, and engaging learning experiences.

Keywords: Storytelling; Social-Emotional Development; Early Childhood Education; Ex Post Facto; Simple Linear Regression.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is an educational effort aimed at children from birth to six years of age through the provision of educational stimulation to support their physical and psychological growth and development so that they are prepared to enter further education. Early childhood is recognized as the *golden age* because this period represents the most rapid stage of growth and development and forms the foundation for children's future learning and behavior. Early childhood education plays a vital role in developing children's potential holistically, including physical, motor, cognitive, language, social-emotional, artistic, religious, and moral development.

Therefore, children require appropriate and continuous stimulation to optimize all aspects of development according to their developmental stages. Appropriate educational stimulation enables children to develop their abilities comprehensively and prepares them for the next level of education. Khadijah and Amelia (2022) stated that early childhood education serves as the primary foundation for developing children's basic competencies through learning experiences that are appropriate to their developmental characteristics. Similarly, Suriansyah (2022) explained that successful early childhood education depends on a supportive learning environment capable of stimulating all developmental domains in an integrated manner. Hasanah and Sugito (2024) further emphasized that learning in early childhood should be child-centered and enjoyable to maximize children's creativity, independence, and social-emotional competence (Amseke, 2023).

One important aspect of early childhood development is social-emotional development. According to Nurmalitasari (2021), social-emotional development refers to children's ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and express emotions while establishing positive relationships with others. Children with well-developed social-emotional competencies are generally more confident, cooperative, independent, responsible, and capable of adapting successfully to their social environment. These competencies also contribute significantly to children's readiness for school and lifelong learning.

Children aged 5–6 years experience rapid development of social-emotional competencies compared to younger children (Suyadi, 2020). At this stage, children begin to understand the feelings of others, cooperate with peers, share responsibilities, solve simple interpersonal conflicts, and follow social rules. Consequently, children require continuous guidance and appropriate educational experiences to support optimal social-emotional development.

Several previous studies have highlighted the importance of stimulating children's social-emotional development. Lestari (2021) reported that group play activities significantly improved children's cooperation, sharing behavior, and emotional regulation. Likewise, Noble (2021) explained that play-based learning provides valuable opportunities for children to develop empathy, cooperation, communication, and emotional self-control through enjoyable learning experiences. These findings indicate that active learning experiences contribute positively to children's social-emotional growth.

The school environment also plays an essential role in fostering children's social-emotional development. Wiyani (2022) stated that teachers function not only as instructors but also as facilitators and role models who help children develop positive social behaviors. A safe, supportive, and enjoyable classroom atmosphere encourages children to participate actively, communicate confidently, and establish healthy relationships with peers. Similarly, Hasnida (2020) argued that consistent social-emotional stimulation provided through classroom activities can promote children's independence, responsibility, and social competence.

Besides the school environment, the family constitutes another important factor influencing children's social-emotional development. Parents serve as children's first educators by providing affection, communication, discipline, and behavioral examples from an early age. Conscience (2021) explained that children receiving consistent parental support generally demonstrate better emotional regulation and social competence than children experiencing limited parental involvement.

Social-emotional competence encompasses children's ability to understand emotions, regulate behavior, cooperate with others, demonstrate empathy, and adapt to social situations. Wiyani (2020) emphasized that children's social-emotional development can be observed through their willingness to cooperate, share, communicate effectively, and adjust to their environment. Susanto (2021) further explained that strong social-emotional competence serves as a foundation for children's academic success and interpersonal relationships.

Development itself represents a continuous process through which children gradually achieve greater maturity across multiple developmental domains. Sujiono (2020) described child development as systematic changes occurring in physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional aspects. Mulyasa (2021) further explained that children's development is influenced by both hereditary and environmental factors, emphasizing the importance of providing appropriate educational experiences throughout early childhood.

Mashar (2022) found that children possessing better emotional regulation and social interaction skills tend to demonstrate greater learning motivation, confidence, and classroom participation. Therefore, continuous stimulation of social-emotional development should become a major priority within early childhood education programs.

Although numerous previous studies have investigated children's social-emotional development, most have primarily focused on general stimulation strategies, play-based learning, or classroom interaction without specifically examining the actual social-emotional conditions of children in authentic kindergarten settings. In addition, limited studies have documented the social-emotional characteristics of children in early childhood education institutions within Kupang City. This research gap highlights the need for empirical studies describing children's current social-emotional development as a basis for improving learning practices in local early childhood education institutions.

Based on interviews and classroom observations conducted at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City, several social-emotional problems were identified among children aged 5–6 years. During classroom and outdoor learning activities, some children were unwilling to share toys, refused to cooperate with peers, frequently disturbed classmates, failed to follow classroom rules, and occasionally displayed aggressive behaviors such as hitting their friends. According to the classroom teacher, these behaviors indicate that several children's social-emotional competencies still require continuous stimulation and guidance through structured learning activities emphasizing cooperation, communication, emotional regulation, and positive peer interaction.

These classroom conditions demonstrate that children's social-emotional development at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten has not yet reached the expected developmental level. Consequently, further investigation is required to describe children's current social-emotional development and provide evidence-based recommendations for improving early childhood learning practices.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the social-emotional development of children aged 5–6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City. The findings are expected to contribute empirical evidence regarding children's social-emotional characteristics and provide practical recommendations for teachers in designing learning activities that effectively promote children's cooperation, emotional regulation, communication, empathy, and positive social relationships.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using an ex post facto research design to examine the relationship between storytelling activities and the social-emotional development of children aged 5–6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City. The ex post facto design was selected because the study investigated naturally occurring conditions without manipulating the independent variable or providing experimental treatment. The independent variable (X) was storytelling activities, while the dependent variable (Y) was children's social-emotional development.

The research was conducted at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City. The population consisted of all children aged 5–6 years enrolled in the kindergarten. Because the population was relatively small, total (saturated) sampling was employed, resulting in a sample of 20 children, all of whom participated in the study.

Data were collected using structured observation and questionnaire-based assessment sheets. Observation was conducted during classroom learning activities to assess children's participation in storytelling sessions and their social-emotional behaviors. The assessment instruments were developed based on indicators of early childhood development to ensure systematic and objective measurement.

The storytelling variable was measured using indicators including children's attention during storytelling, comprehension of story content, verbal responses to stories, and active participation throughout storytelling activities. Meanwhile, the social-emotional development variable was measured through indicators such as cooperation, sharing, empathy, emotional regulation, self-confidence,

responsibility, and interaction with peers during learning activities. These indicators were adapted from the Indonesian Early Childhood Education Development Standards and relevant literature on early childhood social-emotional development.

Before data collection, the research instruments were subjected to validity and reliability testing. Instrument validity was evaluated through expert judgment and empirical testing to ensure that each item accurately measured the intended construct. Reliability testing was conducted to determine the internal consistency of the instruments, ensuring that they produced stable and consistent measurements.

The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25. Data analysis included descriptive statistics to describe respondents' characteristics and variable distributions, normality testing to examine data distribution, simple linear regression analysis to determine the relationship between storytelling activities and children's social-emotional development, the coefficient of determination (R^2) to identify the contribution of storytelling activities to the dependent variable, and the t-test to examine the statistical significance of the regression coefficient at a significance level of 0.05.

Through this quantitative ex post facto approach, the study provides empirical evidence regarding the association between storytelling activities and the social-emotional development of children aged 5–6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of effective learning strategies that support children's social-emotional competencies in early childhood education settings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics of Storytelling and Children's Social-Emotional Development

The descriptive analysis was conducted to determine the distribution of respondents based on the implementation of the storytelling method and the level of children's social-emotional development. The results provide an overview of the categories of both variables before inferential statistical analysis was performed.

Table 1. Distribution of Storytelling Implementation

Category	Interval	Frequency	Percentage
High	53–60	6	30%
Medium	45–52	8	40%
Low	37–44	6	30%
Total		20	100%

Based on **Table 1**, six children (30%) were classified in the **high** category, eight children (40%) in the **medium** category, and six children (30%) in the **low** category regarding the implementation of storytelling activities. The findings indicate that most respondents were in the **medium category**, suggesting that storytelling activities had been implemented adequately but still required further improvement to maximize children's participation and learning experiences.

Storytelling provides opportunities for children to actively listen, observe, imagine, communicate, and respond to stories presented by teachers. These activities encourage children to recognize emotions, understand social situations, and develop positive interactions with peers. The relatively balanced distribution across the three categories also indicates that children's responses to storytelling varied according to their individual developmental characteristics.

Table 2. Distribution of Children's Social-Emotional Development

Category	Interval	Frequency	Percentage
High	55–60	5	25%
Medium	49–54	8	40%
Low	43–48	7	35%
Total		20	100%

Based on Table 2, children's social-emotional development showed that five children (25%) were classified in the high category, eight children (40%) in the medium category, and seven children (35%) in the low category. The majority of respondents were therefore in the medium category, indicating that the social-emotional development of children aged 5–6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten was generally developing at a satisfactory level, although some children still required additional stimulation and guidance.

Children in the medium and high categories generally demonstrated positive social-emotional behaviors, including cooperating with peers, following classroom rules, showing empathy, sharing learning materials, controlling emotions, and participating actively in classroom activities. Conversely, children in the low category still experienced difficulties in emotional regulation, cooperation, and positive peer interaction.

Table 3. Summary of the Simple Linear Regression Analysis (F-Test)

Relationship	F	Sig. (p)	Decision	Conclusion
Storytelling and Children's Social-Emotional Development	6.155	0.023	$p < 0.05$	Hypothesis Accepted

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.505	0.255	0.213	1.35807

Based on the simple linear regression analysis presented in Tables 3 and 4, the F-value was 6.155 with a significance level of 0.023, which is lower than the predetermined significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted, indicating that storytelling has a statistically significant effect on the social-emotional development of children aged 5–6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City.

The coefficient of determination further revealed an R value of 0.505, indicating a moderate positive relationship between storytelling activities and children's social-emotional development. The R^2 value of 0.255 demonstrates that storytelling explained 25.5% of the variance in children's social-emotional development, while the remaining 74.5% was attributable to other variables not examined in this study, including parenting style, family environment, peer interaction, teacher competence, classroom climate, children's individual characteristics, and previous learning experiences.

The Adjusted R^2 value of 0.213 indicates that after adjusting for the sample size and predictor variable, the explanatory power of the regression model remained acceptable. Meanwhile, the standard error of the estimate (1.35807) suggests that the prediction error of the regression model was relatively small, indicating that the model adequately represented the observed data.

These findings demonstrate that storytelling contributes positively to children's social-emotional competence, although it is not the sole determinant of children's development. Social-emotional competence is a multidimensional construct influenced by interactions occurring both inside and outside the classroom.

Table 5. Summary of the Partial Regression Analysis (t-Test)

Relationship	t	Sig. (p)	Decision	Conclusion
Storytelling and Children's Social-Emotional Development	2.481	0.023	$p < 0.05$	Hypothesis Accepted

The results of the partial regression analysis (t-test) showed a t-value of 2.481 with a significance level of 0.023, which is below the significance criterion of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected, confirming that storytelling has a significant positive effect on children's social-emotional development.

The positive regression coefficient indicates that improvements in the implementation of storytelling activities are associated with corresponding improvements in children's social-emotional competence. Children who actively participated in storytelling activities demonstrated greater

empathy, emotional regulation, cooperation, confidence, communication skills, and positive interaction with peers.

Beyond statistical significance, the educational implications of these findings are substantial. Storytelling transforms traditional teacher-centered instruction into an interactive learning process that encourages children's participation, reflection, communication, and collaboration. Through carefully selected stories, children are exposed to moral dilemmas, emotional experiences, and social situations that facilitate the development of empathy, responsibility, cooperation, and emotional self-control. Overall, the regression analysis confirms that storytelling is an effective instructional strategy for promoting children's social-emotional development. Nevertheless, because storytelling accounts for only 25.5% of the explained variance, future educational interventions should integrate storytelling with other child-centered learning approaches while also considering influential contextual factors such as parental involvement, classroom environment, teacher pedagogical competence, and peer relationships to maximize children's social-emotional development.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Storytelling Implementation

Variable	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation
Mindful	20	2	18	20	18.90	0.143	0.641
Meaningful	20	2	18	20	19.25	0.176	0.786
Joyful	20	2	18	20	19.20	0.156	0.696
Valid N (listwise)	20						

Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics of the storytelling implementation based on the three dimensions of Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful learning among 20 children aged 5–6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City. The findings indicate that all three dimensions obtained high mean scores. The Meaningful dimension recorded the highest mean score ($M = 19.25$; $SD = 0.786$), followed by Joyful ($M = 19.20$; $SD = 0.696$) and Mindful ($M = 18.90$; $SD = 0.641$). The relatively small standard deviation values indicate that participants' responses were homogeneous, suggesting that most children experienced storytelling activities in a similar manner.

These findings demonstrate that storytelling activities were implemented effectively and successfully created learning experiences that encouraged children to participate actively, understand the content of the stories, and enjoy the learning process. The consistently high scores across all three dimensions indicate that storytelling provided a supportive learning environment for promoting children's social-emotional development.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that storytelling has a positive and statistically significant effect on the social-emotional development of children aged 5–6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten,

Kupang City, as demonstrated by the significance value of 0.023 ($p < 0.05$). This result suggests that storytelling is an effective child-centered learning strategy for fostering children's social-emotional competencies. Through storytelling activities, children actively engage with story characters and situations, enabling them to recognize emotions, understand social norms, develop empathy, and practice appropriate social behaviors. These findings support the constructivist perspective, which emphasizes that children develop knowledge and social competencies through meaningful learning experiences and active interaction with their environment.

The findings are consistent with previous studies reporting that storytelling promotes children's social-emotional development by improving empathy, emotional regulation, communication skills, and prosocial behavior. Wiyani (2020) explained that children's social-emotional competence is reflected in their ability to cooperate, share, adapt to their environment, and establish positive relationships with others. Likewise, Riffiana and Wahyuni (2023) reported that storytelling helps children recognize, express, and regulate emotions appropriately, while Batubara, Agustini, and Lubis (2023) concluded that storytelling is an effective instructional strategy for developing empathy, cooperation, and positive social interaction among young children. The consistency between the present findings and previous research reinforces the important role of storytelling in promoting holistic child development.

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.255$) indicates that storytelling explains 25.5% of the variance in children's social-emotional development, whereas 74.5% is explained by other variables outside the scope of this study. Although the contribution is moderate, this finding confirms that storytelling is one of several important factors influencing children's social-emotional competence. Other determinants may include parenting practices, family relationships, peer interaction, classroom climate, teacher competence, and children's individual characteristics. This finding supports ecological perspectives of child development, which emphasize that children's development results from interactions among multiple environmental systems rather than a single educational intervention.

The descriptive findings further strengthen the regression results. The high mean scores obtained for the Mindful ($M = 18.90$), Meaningful ($M = 19.25$), and Joyful ($M = 19.20$) dimensions indicate that storytelling creates learning experiences that encourage children's active participation, focused attention, and enjoyment during classroom activities. Children become more engaged in understanding story content, expressing emotions, and interacting positively with peers. These findings are consistent with Widyastuti et al. (2025), who emphasized that mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning promotes active engagement and holistic development, and with Andayanie et al. (2025), who reported that enjoyable learning environments enhance children's motivation and participation.

From a practical perspective, these findings suggest that storytelling should be integrated more systematically into early childhood education programs as an effective instructional strategy for strengthening children's social-emotional development. Teachers are encouraged to select stories containing moral, emotional, and social values and to facilitate interactive discussions, role-playing, and reflective activities following storytelling sessions. Such learning experiences enable children not only to understand the content of stories but also to apply positive social behaviors in everyday situations. Collaboration between teachers and parents is also essential to reinforce these values consistently across home and school environments.

Overall, this study demonstrates that storytelling is an effective pedagogical approach for promoting children's social-emotional development. Although its contribution is moderate, storytelling provides meaningful opportunities for children to develop empathy, emotional regulation, cooperation, communication skills, and positive social relationships. Future studies are recommended to employ larger samples and experimental or quasi-experimental designs while incorporating additional variables, such as parenting style, classroom climate, teacher pedagogical competence, and family socioeconomic background, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of factors influencing early childhood social-emotional development.

CONCLUSION

Main Findings: This study found that the storytelling method was positively and significantly associated with the social-emotional development of children aged 5–6 years at Cemara Liliba Kindergarten, Kupang City. The findings indicate that storytelling contributes to improving children's cooperation, empathy, emotional regulation, communication, self-confidence, and positive social interaction during classroom activities. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.255$) showed that storytelling explained 25.5% of the variance in children's social-emotional development, while the remaining 74.5% was influenced by other factors beyond the scope of this study. **Research Contribution:** This study provides empirical evidence that storytelling is an effective child-centered instructional approach for promoting social-emotional development in early childhood education. Unlike many previous studies that primarily focused on language development and literacy, this research emphasizes the contribution of storytelling to strengthening children's social-emotional competencies within an authentic kindergarten learning environment. **Theoretical and Practical Implications:** The findings support constructivist learning theory, demonstrating that meaningful storytelling activities encourage active participation, emotional understanding, empathy, communication, and positive peer interaction. Practically, the study suggests that early childhood teachers should integrate storytelling into daily classroom activities using interactive stories that contain moral, emotional, and social values to foster children's holistic development. **Research Limitations:** This study employed an ex post facto quantitative design involving only 20 children from a single kindergarten, limiting the generalizability of the findings and preventing strong causal

conclusions. Furthermore, children's social-emotional development was influenced by many other factors that were not examined in this study. **Future Research Directions:** Future studies are recommended to employ quasi-experimental or experimental designs with larger and more diverse samples across multiple early childhood education institutions. Further research should also investigate additional variables, including parental involvement, teacher pedagogical competence, classroom climate, peer interaction, and family socioeconomic background, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of factors influencing children's social-emotional development through storytelling.

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