



## The Development of School Readiness of Kindergarten Students Through Storytelling

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### Abstract

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Complete-playtime is an early concept of kindergarten idea. However, recently, children no longer obtain many opportunities to explore themselves through contextual learning activities such as playing drama or listening to tale. Children are focused on academic-centered activities, so they experience learning boredom at an early age. Moreover, students have not owned a school readiness when entering elementary school. This research helps kindergarten students have school readiness like academic skill, emotional-social skill, and morality through storytelling classically. This experimental study used True-Experimental Posttest-Only Design. The two kindergartens were selected through cluster sampling from 100 target populations—the data was collected using the Bender Gestalt Test and observation. The series of storytelling activities as a treatment given towards students proved that the experimental group had school readiness earlier than the controlled group. The experimental group possessed more school readiness than the control group, with the difference was 37% age equivalent to eight years old and 29.6% equal to 7 years old. Other purposes accomplished were developing school readiness skills in vocabulary building, active question-answering, positive attitude towards peers, concern towards social environment, and literacy development.

## INTRODUCTION

The early development of social, emotional, and intellectual skills significantly affects how children can participate well in school later on. Therefore, to prepare children for school, it is introduced Kindergarten (TK) and other preschool programs can access all children (Lally, 2010). Preschool or kindergarten (TK) is where children can develop early competencies to have enough skill in the next stage and perform various primary school adaptations. In other words, kindergarten offers multiple learning activities to build school readiness (school readiness).

School readiness is a child's preparation to acquire various skills that children need to know and do in multiple learning processes before attending formal school lectures (Linder et al., n.d.-a). Predictors of school readiness include (1) concern for the child; (2) family structure and care; (3) home environment; (4) learning skills; (5) social behavior; (6) mathematical and task-based literacy; (7) health and socioeconomic status (Linder,

2013). While contextual factors such as education and teacher's experience, parenting, and parent roles are significant predictors for stability and change in children's school readiness (McWayne et al., 2012).

At the beginning of implementation, kindergarten programs use creative approaches such as role-playing and drama (full-play time) or language and motoric development activities (Elizabeth, 2010). However, nowadays, the concept shifts to learning activities that focus more on literacy and numeracy in reading-writing-counting (*calistung*). Children are required (too) early to have the elementary level's academic ability at the elementary level. It inhibits kindergarten students' opportunities to develop other essential skills and skills needed in elementary school environments. Children spend more time in the classroom, especially at children at the TK-B level, so they have little chance to explore the environment, explore social skills, and build relationships with peers.

While school readiness programs such as kindergarten only focus on cognitive activity, the kindergarten programs are only strongly associated with academic school readiness but are not related to social school readiness (Forry et al., 2013; Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013). Many preschool children in Indonesia experience difficulties developing their social-emotional competencies because they focus on academic activities (Nurhafizah & Moh. Kosnin, 2016; Suranata, 2010; Wulansuci & Kurniati, 2019). School readiness associated with emotional and social aspects also needs to be emphasized in kindergarten as it affects children's ability to self-regulate (Eisenberg et al., 2010; Liew, 2012; Lally, 2010). Social skills are an essential aspect of school success, so children are interested in the social world and learn to behave well toward peers (Berhenke et al., 2011; Jones et al., 2011; (Ziv, 2013b).

Learning activities in kindergarten in the context of early literacy skills relate to early numeracy development (Purpura et al., 2011). However, early literacy and numeracy created a problem when Kindergarten teachers in Sumenep taught *calistung* in conventional ways (writing on the board, learning to read using textbooks, and learning to count without the game media). As a result, many students became bored and saturated, reluctant to pay attention to the activities instructed and are not motivated to complete learning activities. The conventional *calistung* learning process continued mainly because prospective students should read and write while enrolling at the elementary level.

Literacy and numeracy skills are essential to introduce to kindergarten children (Callaghan et al., 2012); Dice & Schwanenflugel, 2012), but this raises other issues in the child in the learning process when given without regard to and consider the mental readiness and level developmental function achieved by the child. Therefore, the introduction of literacy, social-emotional skills, language development, and cognitive ability as a basis for children's academic and social activities in the next stage can be given by returning to the concept of full-play time such as storytelling and role play.

Storytelling for childhood positively impacts education and social-emotional aspects such as developing critical thinking skills, creativity, student activeness in learning activities, literacy skills, narrative thinking skills, self-exploration, and interpersonal skills (Agosto, 2013). Children in the age of kindergarten more actively listen to stories from teachers will have more ideas, more straightforward to understand information, and the ability to answer questions, various vocabulary stores, and experience communication development (Loizou et al., 2011; Stevens et al., 2010).

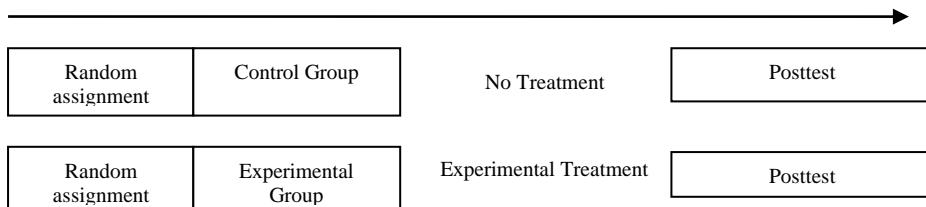
Kindergarten students have more coherent and cohesive storytelling skills after participating in storytelling activities; even students can directly tell about the pictures they see in class (Fekonja-Peklaj et al., 2010). Besides, children can play individual roles, participate and adapt in groups, and form friendships with peers in the kindergarten environment (Currenton & Craig, 2011; Wright et al., 2013). Storytelling from electronic and traditional storybooks shows significant results in children's communication and language skills; combining the two media shows substantial effects on children's communicative ideas rather than using one of them (Korat, 2010: 27; (Moody et al., 2010).

Problems in kindergarten occur because the school readiness program is currently narrow down to cognitive skills that focus more on *calistung* ability and less attention to aspects of social-emotional, language, information comprehension, and overall mental readiness of children. The phenomenon of *calistung* learning in early childhood and the impact and the urgency from the kindergarten operating in Sumenep regency is the reason to study the barriers in the school readiness program. To sum up is to offer solutions in the form of storytelling methods that empirically used to help children acquire skills in the cognitive, social, and emotional aspect before formal learning in primary school.

This research is: (1) to test the effectiveness of storytelling on B-level kindergarten students; and (2) to develop the skills needed by B-level kindergarten students at the elementary school level through storytelling.

## METHOD

This research was research with the actual experiment of post-test design. The control group (C) and the experimental group (E) were selected randomly through cluster sampling techniques to choose samples from populations scattered in a geographical, heterogeneous, and grouped selection. The group is a kindergarten (TK) in Sumenep district, TK. Yaa Bunayya and TK. Pertiwi, where each kindergarten has a group of students.



**Figure 1 Posttest-Only Design (Source: Creswell, 2012)**

The control group did not receive treatment, while the experimental group received a series of medicine in the form of storytelling activities presented in classical. There were two types of variables: storytelling as the independent variable and school readiness as a dependent variable. The following steps carried out the sample selection procedure:

**Table 1 Cluster Sampling Technique**

No	Step Sample Determination
1	Limit the number of population: 100 kindergartens in Sumenep regency
2	Sample size 35% = 35 kindergartens
3	Determination of clusters based on the number of sub-districts are 17 districts
4	Number of samples are divided by sub-district (35: 17) = 2.0
5	Two kindergartens in Sumenep Regency selected as a research sample
6	One kindergarten is a control group, and one kindergarten is an experimental group.

The two kindergartens are private kindergartens with some homogeneous characteristics: implementing national curriculum, do not deliver reading nor listening to tales or storybooks towards students, located in the town area, and spending similar learning hours. The target group of treatment targeted was TK-B students, where students at B level prepared to continue to elementary school (SD). The number of TK-B of the control groups was 30 students, and the number of students in the experimental group was 27.

Students of the experimental group were divided into three classes, and they got the same fairytale material every two times each week with a duration of 30 minutes per meeting. One storyteller in one class. Treatment held up to 24 sessions, and in each session, students get different tales.

The Bender Gestalt test was used to measure students' post-treatment preparedness. Before a study by (Koppitz et al., 1961), the Bender Gestalt correlates well with school beginners' readiness and can predict definite achievement. Three aspects to determine the condition of school readiness of students, namely: (1) the difference between the chronological and the emotional age of students; (2) social aspects; and (3) the moral aspect. According to the Manual BG System, BG tests scored on the nine pictures created by each respondent by considering the distortion, rotation, integration, and preservation of each image. The item scoring did following the Bender Test Scoring System procedure.

## RESULT

Students of the control group and experimental group students were between 5-6 years old. Through the scoring of BG tests, it was found that there was a gap between the students' emotional and chronological age. The difference was: (1) the emotional age was lower than the chronological age, and (2) emotional age was higher than the chronological age.

**Table 2**  
**The Emotional Age of Control Group**

Age Equivalent	Amount (%)
The age range of 4 years	3 (10%)
The age range of 5 years	10 (33.3%)
The age range of 6 years	10 (33.3%)
The age range of 7 years	4 (13.3%)
The age range of 8 years	3 (10%)

Whether on chronological or emotional age, the majority (76.6%) of TK-B students of the control group were not ready for advanced education, namely elementary school. Simultaneously, 23.3% of students from the control group were emotionally prepared to continue to the primary school level.

**Table 3**  
**The Emotional Age of the Experimental Group**

Age Equivalent	Amount (%)
The age range of 4 years	0 (0%)
The age range of 5 years	4 (14.8%)
The age range of 6 years	5 (18.5%)
The age range of 7 years	8 (29.6%)
The age range of 8 years	10 (37%)

Students of TK-B who will subsequently enroll at the elementary level must have a chronological age of 7 years. Students who still have the age range of 5-6 years already are 66.6% of students who are emotionally ready to continue higher education in the experimental group. The provision of storytelling influenced this.

The treatment of the experimental group and post-test groups conduct in the odd semester. Early childhood studying in kindergarten and getting storytelling at school had faster school readiness and more in terms of numbers (by 43.3% difference) than students who never listened to school tales.

## DISCUSSION

### Students' Academic Readiness

Kindergarten students who participate in storytelling or listening to tales from teachers at school have better school readiness than students who never listen to school tales. School readiness on the academic aspect of the equivalent average age between the control and experimental group earned by post-test using the Bender Gestalt Test. 66.6% of the practical group students already have an academic readiness to continue to primary school in the first semester at the TK-B level. Simultaneously, 76.6% of students and groups cannot make schools in the academic aspects of the semester and the same level. Experiment group students develop better skills in terms of:

1. The addition and mastery of vocabulary make students get some new words by listening to fairy tales. Students are instructed to record and memorize a new language, but when they hear a new word that is not understood, they ask the

vocabulary's meaning and content. Moreover, the next day, students use the language in daily communication by the context.

2. By reasoning and critical power, the students can understand the law of causality after listening to several stories that imply every deed's consequences that each of the different figures in fairy tales acquires. Students can also question why a figure needs to be imitated by his actions. Other characters should not; why specific figures get punished, and other statistics compliment or reward. Spontaneously, students question why the expression shown by the animal or human figures in a fairy tale is incompatible with the text or its editorial, like the editor who tells of sadness. Still, the image of the character tends to show angry expressions.
3. The ability of imagination. While performing in a role play classroom, students can create storylines without getting many directions, make conversations understandable for their meaning and purpose, and have the initiative to solve the issues raised in the drama. Students also understand their role in role-playing and the relationship between one position and another.
4. Respond in answering statements. After the storytelling activity ends at each session, the storytellers ask some questions related to the story just presented to the students. The students who want to answer directly raised their hands and then replied, but there is also a direct answer without raising the writing. The students are very excited to answer the following questions by asking the storytellers to ask them again.
5. Easy to understand information. Can invite students to communicate well and understand what the storytellers are saying by observing how students respond, the form of sentences used when students communicate with teachers and storytellers, and the conformity between what the teacher or the storyteller tells and the responses of the students. When students are asked to retell fairy tales at each meeting, students can redefine in their language but still contain the same intent as the text of fairy tales.
6. They can explain the meaning of the picture. The image media is often used when storytelling. The images are used in two ways, first showing images before storytelling, second, showing the pictures after storytelling. Students can explain the picture's purpose when the storyteller asks the students to explain what they understood from the pictures. The students can precisely describe 90% of the images.

Student behavior's academic readiness is non-numerical academic skills, not in student report cards and not just inferred from figures showing chronological age and student ability. The academic readiness develops through storytelling in this study is contextual academic skills related to language development, imagination, agility, student responsiveness, thinking of causality, understanding oral information, and pictures, reflecting what is believed to, and suitable interest towards school activities. According to (McWayne et al., 2012), these aspects are contextual factors in students' school readiness. Previous research has also proved that storytelling positively impacts

developing ideas, language, and understanding of the child's students' information (Loizou et al., 2011); Curenton & Craig, 2011; Wright et al., 2013).

Early childhood is the emergence of early burnout symptoms, a condition where kindergarten students feel lazy, saturated, and unmotivated to attend school activities. The focus of school activities is heavier on academic school readiness (Forry et al., 2013; (Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013) realized through *calistung* activities. The symptoms are also evident from the control group's behavior, where the students study in the classroom for about 4 hours 30 minutes with two intermittent breaks. During school, students appear to have no interest in teachers and classroom activities; talking to friends; and perform other activities prohibited by teachers such as in and out of the classroom, so that teachers need to close the door so that students can not get out of class before break time.

Longer study time and more densely packed material content, received by control group students in schools, make it easier for students to feel bored with classroom activity. On the other hand, students also have little opportunity to develop school readiness skills that they can do through the full-play concept. So the earlier and more children get academic-cognitive activities such as *calistung* in kindergarten, the faster the students will experience school burnout. The students (control group) get slower school readiness than the experimental group.

### **Readiness of Social-Emotional Aspect**

The difference between the chronological and the emotional age of the students from each group and the comparison of emotional age between the experimental and control groups showed that both groups at the same stage and school level had significantly different emotional ages. Students from the experimental group already have a more mature emotional age and are emotionally well prepared to continue to the elementary level after attending storytelling activities in kindergarten.

Students from experimental groups have better social responses than control groups in the social-emotional aspect. Can invite the experimental group to communicate better, work together in storytelling activities, understand better on teacher's instruction, and not easily hurt friends at school. While many of the control group's students still easily broken classmates physically, like hitting and pinching.

One of the school readiness characteristics is social-emotional maturity by the development and level of children's school (Agosto, 2013; (Linder et al., 2013). The social-emotional aspects observed in this study are:

1. Interpersonal relationship of children with peers
2. Attitude towards older people
3. Ability to adapt to activities and new people
4. Concern for friends/ social environment

First, the experimental group students can better control themselves when there are friends who are mocking or doing complicated things like hitting and not quickly

replying to unpleasant deeds. Students are more easily conditioned and invited to do class activities together, including storytelling activities in the classroom. Students listening to fairy tales have better self-regulatory skills at an early age (Eisenberg et al., 2010; Liew, 2012; Lally, 2010). While the control group students more easily make fights with peers in the classroom, pinch and hit each other, especially boys who deliberately lure their classmates to fight and shout at each other.

Second, after students attend storytelling activities at school, they have a better respect for older people such as teachers and storytellers. This respect is shown by listening well to what the storyteller tells and answering. Students only occasionally talk to classmates during class activities. Still, overall, they are not busy with their respective activities when they direct students to perform or complete specific actions in the classroom. In contrast, to control group students from the beginning to the end of the commencement of learning, prefer and often do other activities and do not respond to the teachers' instructions.

Third, experimental group students can quickly adapt when receiving new activities at school such as storytelling; students also easily make adjustments with the storytellers after two meetings. Students can interact well with new people, cultivate a sense of confidence in others that make them safe and comfortable, open to the arrival of new people to school, and do activities with the storytellers like singing.

Fourth, after one month of storytelling at the school, students show a better attitude of concern and more sensitivity to what is happening in the school social environment. Students care about sad, crying, or sick friends by asking about their friend's condition. Students can intervene when there are friends who hit each other, have the initiative to notify the teacher when there are friends who fight, and remind friends when saying or doing evil deeds. Interest in the social world and behave well with friends is an essential indicator of school children's success (Berhenke et al., 2011; Ziv, 2013). Such behavior is not occurring in control group students, where students have a common concern for their peers as if they do not care if they see friends who are fighting or hitting each other in the classroom.

### **The Development of Moral Aspects**

The moral aspect becomes an essential factor in the education process. It is strongly recommended to start developing from an early age, including the role of teachers in kindergarten, and to pay attention to the child's moral development. Students who follow storytelling activities in schools have an understanding of moral values. Students gain new stories from each meeting, and from each account, students also have a unique experience of the values of the various behaviors known from each fairy tale.

Students can distinguish and conclude between commendable and disgraceful acts. When teachers speak, students do not interrupt and show respect for the other person,

including the storytellers who alternately fill the three classes, unlike the control group, which likes to ignore when the class teacher gives instructions and invites class activities.

Students listen, ask, understand, and apply the moral values derived from fairy tales. Students in both words and deeds can compare between good and evil acts to commit to others, including peers or friends at school. Students' moral aspect and visible from the student's behavior is to say excellent and polite, respecting the elderly, not hurting younger friends, telling the truth, not cheating on friends, and willing to admit mistakes.

## CONCLUSION

Previous studies regarding storytelling emphasized the development of communication, language, and morality regarding a child's development tasks. On the other hand, from the research findings, we conclude that school readiness for kindergarten students will continue to the elementary school level seen from age based on the minimum chronological age of 7 years. Through storytelling, the experimental group whose chronological age has not reached seven years emotionally assessed ready to continue to elementary school because it has reached the age equivalent of 7 and 8 years old even though still in an odd semester. The experimental group grows faster in school readiness than the control group. Storytelling positively impacts students' intellectual abilities and the contextual skills of school preparedness, social-emotional and moral. Socially, children have good sensitivity and awareness at an early age, and morally, students can show respect towards teachers and conclude between good deeds and actions that cause harmful effects.

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