

Implementation of Storytelling Method In Developing Empathy In Early Children Aged 5-6 Years

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Submitted: 2025-03-29 ; Accepted: 2025-05-13 ; Published: 2025-05-21

Abstract

The background of this research focuses on the importance of developing empathy in early childhood as part of fundamental social skills. The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of the storytelling method in developing empathy in early childhood 5-6 years by looking at how stories can build emotional understanding, improve the ability to recognize the feelings of others and encourage prosocial behavior in children's daily interactions. The method used in this research is qualitative research with a case study approach that aims to explore the implementation of the storytelling method in more depth. The data collection techniques used include observation, interviews, and documentation. The data sources were teachers and children involved in storytelling activities at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten. The data obtained were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques with a descriptive approach to describe the implementation process of the storytelling method and its impact on children's empathy development. The results showed that the implementation of the storytelling method at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten was effective in developing empathy in early childhood. Some of the activities carried out to support this process include the selection of stories relevant to empathy development, interactive and participatory storytelling, the use of visual media and puppets, and role-playing activities. All of these activities not only help children understand and feel the feelings of the characters in the story, but also improve their ability to show empathy towards others in everyday life. Research shows that the storytelling method is effective in developing empathy in children aged 5-6 years. Children are better able to understand the feelings of others and show a caring attitude. The implications of this research encourage educators and parents to use stories as a strategic approach in early childhood social-emotional learning.

Keywords: *Storytelling Method, Developing Empathy, 5-6 Years Old Children*

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INTRODUCTION

At the stage of early childhood development, namely between the ages of 5 and 6 years, it is a very important period in forming various aspects of children's emotional, social, and cognitive abilities. At this age, children begin to learn about interpersonal relationships in understanding their own and others' feelings and developing their ability to communicate verbally and non-verbally (Rahmawati, 2015). On the other hand, they also begin to understand abstract concepts such as emotions, moral values, and the ability to empathize with others. Empathy itself is the ability to feel and understand the feelings of others and respond to them in a positive way (Ruslan, Ismatullah, Luthfiyah, Khairudin, 2024). This ability is very important to develop because empathy helps children interact harmoniously with their social environment, as well as form an attitude of tolerance and understanding of differences. One effective way to develop empathy in early childhood is through the storytelling method (Amrullah & Awalunisah, 2022).

The storytelling method is a technique that has been used since ancient times as a means of conveying messages, moral values and entertaining the audience (Syahru Ramadhan, Yayuk Kusumawati, Nurul Khatimah, Nurul Hikmatul Ma'wiah, Pinkan, Yumarna, 2024). In the context of early childhood education, the storytelling method not only functions as a medium of entertainment, but also as a very effective means of developing children's empathy (Nurfazrina et al., 2020). When listening to stories, children are given the opportunity to enter an imaginary world rich in emotional experiences. Children can feel the feelings of the characters in the story, both positive and negative, and this provides space for them to identify and understand the various feelings they may experience in everyday life (Ahmad et al., 2023).

Through the story method, children will also be taught about the consequences of actions and decisions taken by the characters in the story. This allows children to learn about the importance of considering the feelings of others when making decisions (Cucu Cahyati, Ahmadin, 2024). Through stories, children can learn about various life situations that involve feelings, relationships between individuals and ways that can be used to resolve conflicts positively (Utami, 2019). Thus, the storytelling method can stimulate children to think more deeply about their feelings and those of others and how they can respond in a good way. This is the essence of developing empathy in early childhood (Hanum, 2022).

The storytelling method has many advantages, one of which is the ability to introduce various social situations that children may never have experienced directly (Ilham et al., 2024). Children can learn how story characters interact with others, how they overcome problems or challenges related to how they show attention and concern for the feelings of others (Siregar et al., 2020). In stories, children can also learn about values such as honesty, kindness and friendship, all of which contribute to the development of empathy. In addition, storytelling can create deep and touching experiences for children and can strengthen their understanding of emotions and social relationships (Fadlan, 2019).

The use of storytelling methods in developing empathy in early childhood can also be seen in the context of activity-based learning. Stories told to children can be followed by discussion activities, *role-playing* or even creating their own stories (Izzati & Yulsyofriend, 2020). This activity not only makes children more active in the learning process, but also provides an opportunity for them to reflect on their own feelings and experiences and will learn about how to interact with their friends positively (Ramadhan, Ihlas, et al., 2024). Thus, the

storytelling method not only teaches empathy passively through stories, but also actively through direct experiences that involve children in the learning process (Wahyuni & Nasution, 2017).

In its implementation, it is important to choose a story that is appropriate to the age and developmental level of the child. Stories that are too complex or irrelevant to the child's life experiences may not help them understand the feelings and situations in the story. Therefore, choosing the right story is crucial to achieving the goal of developing empathy in early childhood (Kusuma & Sutapa, 2020). A good story is a story that can touch children's feelings, trigger their curiosity, and then invite them to think about human relationships and how emotions influence actions (Ramadhan, Mutiara, et al., 2024). Educators or parents who tell the story also play an important role in this process. Delivering an emotional story with appropriate facial expressions, voices, and body language can bring the story to life and help children feel the emotions in the story more. Educators who are able to provide reflective questions after the story is finished can help children analyze the feelings of the characters in the story and how those feelings influence their actions (Syahru Ramadhan, 2024). One of the challenges in developing empathy in early childhood is that this ability requires time and a continuous process. Children at this age are still in the early stages of forming self-concept and relationships with others (Indanah & Yulisetyaningrum, 2019).

From the explanation above, it shows that the implementation of the storytelling method in developing empathy in early childhood aged 5-6 years is a very effective approach (Anhar & Ramadhan, 2024). This method not only provides a deep emotional experience for children, but also allows them to learn about social relationships, feelings, and moral values that are important in everyday life (Madyawati, 2017). Through stories, children can learn how to empathize with others and understand that other people's feelings are important and worthy of respect (Mahiratin et al., 2024). Thus, the storytelling method is one of the most useful ways to shape the character and emotional intelligence of children at an early age in educational units as an effective vehicle for developing children's empathy, especially for children at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten.

At Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten, the application of storytelling methods in developing empathy in early childhood is carried out with a holistic and interactive approach. This school has a vision to educate children in a fun way and based on direct experience. In every learning activity, educators at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten try to include story elements that can attract children's attention, either through oral stories, pictures, or other visual media. Educators use illustrated stories that describe various feelings, such as happiness, sadness, fear or courage. These stories are usually chosen based on themes that are relevant to children's daily lives such as friendship, cooperation and honesty. By using various types of stories, children not only learn about the characters in the story, but are also invited to recognize their own feelings and those of others around them.

To make the storytelling process more interesting and in-depth, educators at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten not only tell stories passively, but also involve children in various activities after the story is told. A study published by Adamson (2018) *Pediatric Nursing* shows that people who engage in narrative-based activities, such as reading or acting out characters in stories, tend to be better able to understand the feelings of others. This enriches their emotional and cognitive experiences, which in turn can improve interpersonal relationships and enhance social skills. These activities support the development of deeper empathy. The issue of

Implementing Storytelling Methods in Developing Empathy in Early Childhood (Ages 5-6 Years) is important to write because it is directly related to children's social-emotional development at a crucial stage. This study needs to use a qualitative approach to explore in-depth experiences about how storytelling methods affect children's empathy, including how children understand the feelings of characters in the story and how this affects their relationships with others.

The application of the storytelling method in developing empathy at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten is very important to be researched and studied more deeply scientifically, because its success can make a major contribution to the character building of early childhood. In research Amin (2024) explained that at the early childhood education level, the development of empathy is one of the most crucial aspects in shaping children who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have good social and emotional skills. While in research Budiarti (2022) revealed the importance of the storytelling method in the development of various child skills including cognitive, language, and social skills. These studies generally focus on how storytelling affects other aspects of child development, such as language skills or morality. Some research suggests that storytelling can help children understand abstract concepts, such as kindness and justice. However, very few have specifically examined how storytelling can directly develop empathy in young children (5-6 years old). The specific purpose of this paper is to explore and analyze the concrete impact of the implementation of storytelling methods in developing empathy in early childhood (5-6 years old), which is still not widely discussed in existing research. While the hypothesis to be tested is that the implementation of the storytelling method can significantly develop empathy in early childhood (5-6 years). This research is important because empathy is a key aspect in early childhood social-emotional development that plays a role in shaping character and the ability to interact positively with the environment. At the age of 5-6 years, children are at a stage of rapid moral and emotional development so they need the right approach to stimulate empathy. The storytelling method was chosen because it is able to present emotional situations that are concrete and easy for children to understand. Through stories children can learn to recognize, understand, and respond to the feelings of others. Therefore, this research makes an important contribution to the practice of early childhood education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study research type. (Usman, 2020) . Case study research was chosen because it can provide an in-depth picture of the implementation of the storytelling method in developing empathy in early childhood at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten. This study aims to understand in detail how the storytelling method is applied in this environment and its impact on the development of empathy in children aged 5-6 years. (Sugiono, 2015) . With a qualitative approach, the data obtained will focus more on understanding the meaning, experience, and feelings felt by children, teachers, and parents related to storytelling activities and empathy development. This study also prioritizes in-depth analysis of the interaction between educators and children and how stories are used to stimulate empathy development. (Ramdhan, 2017) .

Data collection techniques in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to directly observe the storytelling process in the classroom and the interaction between teachers and children during the activity. Interviews

were conducted with teachers and parents of children to explore their perspectives on the influence of storytelling methods on children's empathy. (Sidiq & Choiri, 2018) . Documentation in the form of notes on storytelling activities, discussion results, and children's work related to the stories they heard will be used as additional data. The data sources in this study consisted of teachers, children, and parents at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten. This research was conducted at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten which is located in Rabakodo Village, Woha District, Bima Regency from March to April 2025. The research procedure began with preparation, data collection, and data analysis which were carried out in stages. (Helaluddin, 2015) . The data analysis technique used is thematic analysis, where the collected data is analyzed based on emerging themes such as feelings, empathy, and social interactions influenced by the story. (Luthfiyah, 2017) .

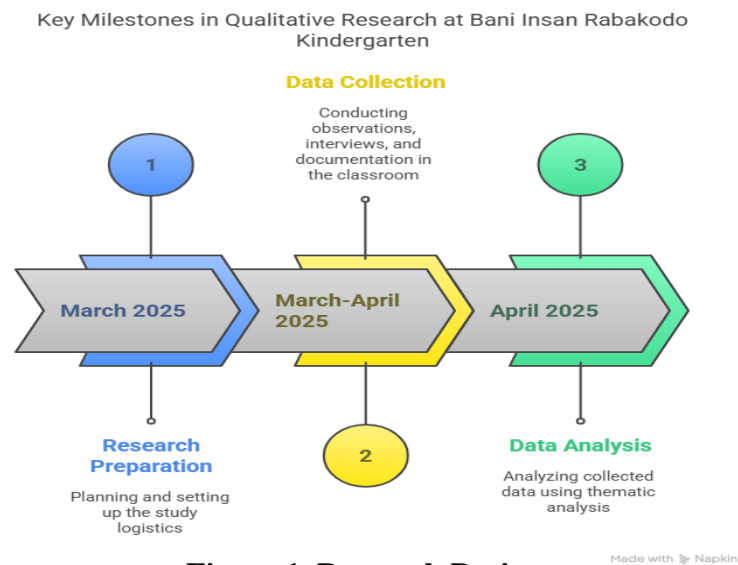


Figure 1. Research Design

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research result

In the process of implementing the storytelling method that has been applied by teachers at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten, several stages of implementation have been carried out, including starting from the planning, implementation and evaluation stages. In order for everything to run well and be measurable, everything must run systematically and produce the desired output. Based on the data and information that has been obtained by researchers through the process of observation, interviews and documentation, here the researcher will describe the data on the effectiveness of the implementation of the storytelling method in developing empathy for early childhood aged 5-6 years at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten.

Table 1.
Effectiveness of Storytelling Method in Developing Empathy in Children Aged 5-6

Observed Aspects	Before Implementation	After Implementation	Changes/Improvements
Understanding Self Emotions	Children still have difficulty recognizing and understanding their own emotions.	Children begin to be able to recognize and name their own feelings (happy, sad, angry, etc.).	Improving children's ability to understand and express their own feelings.
Listening Skills	Children often do not focus when friends or teachers are talking.	Children are more focused and listen to stories attentively.	Improve good listening skills in children.
Ability to Recognize Other People's Emotions	Children are less sensitive to their friends' feelings.	Children begin to recognize their friends' feelings through facial expressions or stories.	Children become more sensitive to the feelings and emotional states of others.
Involvement in Group Discussions	Children tend to be quiet or not actively participate in discussions.	Children are more active in discussing and sharing opinions about the stories they hear.	Increased involvement in group discussions, with sharing of feelings and opinions.
Ability to Demonstrate Empathy	Children still find it difficult to show empathy towards friends who are sad or in trouble.	Children begin to show concern and support when friends are in trouble.	Increased empathy, children are more caring and want to help friends in need.
Social Interaction with Friends	Children are more often involved in conflicts or do not understand their friends' feelings.	Children interact more positively, expressing support and understanding.	Improving the quality of social interactions between children, more harmonious.
Using Stories to Understand Emotions	There is no use of stories to introduce the values of empathy.	Children use stories to understand characters' feelings and relate them to their own experiences.	Effective stories are used as a tool to develop empathy, children understand the moral lessons from the story.

From the table above, it can be explained about the effectiveness of the application of the story method in developing empathy in children aged 5-6 years by carrying out several stages of the process including the planning, implementation and evaluation stages. All of these are carried out by teachers at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten in order to maximize the potential possessed, especially in terms of emotional attitudes. Developing children's empathy can make children have good personalities to navigate a fairly complex life starting from an early age. To be clearer and more in-depth from the several stages that have been carried out by teachers at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten as described in the table above, researchers need to explain comprehensively and in-depth through the analysis below.

In the planning stage, the implementation of the storytelling method in developing empathy in early childhood at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten was carried out with the aim of creating an atmosphere that allows children to develop their social and emotional abilities. Planning begins with the selection of story material that is relevant and appropriate for the child's age. The stories chosen contain various situations that describe emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, or fear, so that children can learn to recognize and understand feelings both in themselves and others. The stories chosen also have characters that can be role models for children in terms of empathy and concern for others. Further planning includes teaching strategies that will be applied during storytelling activities. As in Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten, teachers plan for storytelling activities to be carried out interactively, where children are invited to participate by asking, answering, and discussing the story being told. This not only makes children more involved, but also gives them the opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts.

The main goal of this plan is for children to develop empathy, not only by understanding their own feelings, but also by being aware of the feelings of others. To that end, each story chosen has been designed to trigger group discussion and shared reflection on how the characters in the story feel and interact. The plan also includes supporting activities such as

role-playing, where children can express their feelings through actions or movements, and gives them the opportunity to see the world from another person's perspective. For the implementation of the storytelling method in Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten, it is carried out in a very interactive and in-depth manner in accordance with the aim of developing empathy in early childhood. At this stage, teachers play an important role in ensuring that the storytelling process can take place well and touch on emotional aspects that are relevant to child development.

After the story is finished, the children are invited to discuss what they heard and felt. In this session, the teacher gives each child the opportunity to share their opinions or questions about the feelings of the characters in the story. This approach allows the teacher to dig deeper into the child's understanding of emotions and empathy. The implementation of the storytelling method also involves various visual aids such as pictures or dolls that depict characters in the story. With these aids, children can more easily associate the feelings they hear with more realistic visual expressions, namely the teacher can use dolls to demonstrate the characters in the story, and the children are asked to imitate the expressions or movements of the characters. This activity not only improves their understanding of the story, but also gives them the opportunity to express their feelings through their bodies.

At the evaluation stage is an important stage in ensuring the effectiveness of the implementation of the storytelling method in developing empathy in early childhood. In Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten, evaluations are carried out periodically to assess the extent to which children have developed their empathy after participating in storytelling activities. Evaluation is carried out by observing changes in children's behavior during and after the storytelling session and through children's interactions in group discussions. The teacher records the children's responses to questions asked such as whether they can recognize their own and others' emotions in the story that has been told. If children can easily identify the feelings of the characters in the story and share their own feelings, it shows that this method is effective.

Although the implementation of the storytelling method at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten has shown many positive results, several challenges still arise during its implementation. One of the main challenges is the limited time available to complete the storytelling sessions in depth. Given that early childhood children have a shorter attention span, some storytelling sessions sometimes cannot run optimally because children begin to lose interest or feel bored. To overcome this, teachers at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten adopted a more flexible approach by breaking long stories into several shorter sessions and inserting other activities that actively involve children, such as role-playing or drawing characters in the story. In this way, children remain involved in the learning process without feeling bored.

Overall, the implementation of the storytelling method at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten has had a significant positive impact in developing empathy in early childhood. After several storytelling sessions, children showed a clear improvement in their ability to recognize and understand their own and others' feelings. Many children who previously could not express their feelings clearly are now more open and able to express their feelings in simple words. For example, after listening to a story about a child caring for a sick friend, several children spontaneously offered help to their friends who fell or looked sad. Children also showed more concern for their friends' feelings. They were more likely to share and cooperate in group activities.

Discussion

The explanation above shows that the implementation of the story method is quite effective in developing empathy in children aged 5-6 years at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten. The achievement of the implementation of the story method cannot be separated from several forms of activities that have been carried out by teachers in implementing the story method as an effort to develop empathy in children aged 5-6 years at Bani Insan Rabakodo

Kindergarten. From the results of observations, interviews and documentation, the researcher will explain the form of implementation of the story method carried out by teachers at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten to develop empathy in children aged 5-6 years, including the following:

1. Choosing Stories That Are Relevant to Children's Empathy Development

Teachers at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten understand that choosing the right story is one of the main factors that can support the development of empathy in early childhood. Therefore, in implementing the storytelling method, teachers choose stories that describe feelings and interactions between characters that require deep emotional understanding. This selection of stories is designed to introduce a variety of emotions such as happiness, sadness, fear, and anger and all feelings that children can identify in their daily lives. The stories chosen focus on universal themes such as friendship, helping each other, and sharing that can be examples for children to feel empathy for others.

The implementation of this story selection begins with a careful selection process by the teacher. The teacher chooses stories that are age-appropriate for the children and have clear moral values. One story that is often used is about two friends sharing food. In this story, a child shares his food with his hungry friend, and his friend feels very happy and grateful. The teacher chose this story because the situation in the story is easy for children to understand and they can immediately relate it to the act of sharing that is around them. Through this story, the teacher wants to teach the importance of caring for others and how a person's feelings can change depending on the actions we take towards them.

The implementation of the storytelling method in Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten has so far been very effective in fostering a sense of caring and social awareness among children. Through stories that tell about kindness and empathy, teachers guide children to recognize the importance of being kind to others. In each storytelling session, teachers emphasize positive values such as sharing, helping, and supporting each other. One of the stories used is a story about a child who sees a friend who is less fortunate and decides to share his food. After telling the story, the teacher invites the children to discuss what they can do if they see a friend in need. Children are asked to think about actions they can take to help their friends, such as sharing toys or paying attention when a friend is sad.

This is as in previous research (Fedotova, 2023) explains that choosing relevant stories also helps children to more easily understand and identify their own and others' feelings. Teachers choose stories that describe a variety of social situations, both pleasant and challenging, so that children can learn to recognize different feelings. Through these stories, children not only learn about the characters in the story, but also about themselves and others around them. For example, after listening to a story about a child who feels hesitant to speak in front of the class, the teacher invites the children to talk about their feelings of fear and how they can overcome that fear.

Through stories, teachers at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten have successfully helped children understand that the feelings they experience are normal, and that these feelings can be understood and appreciated by others. Teachers encourage children to talk about their feelings, both positive and negative, in open group discussions. These discussions provide space for children to express their feelings without fear of being judged so that they can learn to appreciate and accept the feelings of others. Choosing stories that are relevant to the development of children's empathy is essential in strengthening their ability to understand and feel the feelings of others. In *Theory of Mind* (ToM), Doherty (2018) explains how children develop to understand that others have different thoughts, feelings, and perspectives. Stories that contain characters with diverse emotions and situations help children practice identifying and feeling the feelings of others, which is the foundation of empathy. In addition, the *Empathy Development Theory* put forward by Johnson (2015) emphasizes that empathy develops through social interactions that involve observing the emotions of others. By reading or listening to stories that depict emotional conflicts and interactions between characters, children learn to

identify emotions, feel sympathy, and ultimately understand other people's feelings more deeply.

2. Storytelling With an Interactive and Participatory Approach

The implementation of the storytelling method in Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten is carried out with an interactive and participatory approach to facilitate the development of empathy in children aged 5-6 years. Teachers do not only act as storytellers who tell stories, but also invite children to be directly involved in the storytelling process. This approach aims for children not only to be passive listeners, but also to actively participate in the story. Teachers often ask children open-ended questions during storytelling sessions to encourage them to think more deeply about the feelings experienced by the characters in the story and how they would act in similar situations.

One concrete example of the implementation of this approach can be seen in the storytelling activity about a child who is feeling sad because his friend does not invite him to play. During the story, the teacher not only conveys the storyline, but also stops at several points to ask the children. Through questions, children are invited to think about the child's feelings in the story and feel the situation. This process requires children to actively empathize, understand the character's emotions and find solutions that they can apply in their lives. This discussion also gives children the opportunity to share relevant personal experiences so that they can more easily connect the story to their real world.

In the study (Nurhasanah & Rasmani, 2020) it was stated that this interactive approach teachers also involve children in various activities that strengthen their understanding of the story and empathy. After listening to the story, children are invited to do group activities, where they act as characters in the story. For example, in a story about sharing toys, the teacher invites children to play roles by becoming a friend who shares or a friend who receives help. Children are shown how sharing toys or helping each other can make them feel happy and appreciated. This role-playing activity strengthens their understanding of how the feelings of the characters in the story can be experienced by them and how they can act with empathy towards others.

Storytelling with an interactive and participatory approach involves the audience in the narrative process which increases engagement and understanding. This is as in the *Constructivist Learning Theory*. (Shin, 2016) pioneered by Piaget and Vygotsky supports the importance of interaction in learning. According to this theory, children build their knowledge through active and social experiences. In interactive storytelling, children not only listen, but also participate in determining the storyline or interacting with characters that deepen their understanding of the story and the values conveyed. Meanwhile, the participatory approach also refers to Bandura's *Social Learning theory* as in his research Amin (2024), which emphasizes the importance of behavioral models in a social context. When children are actively involved in storytelling, they learn through observation, imitation, and direct experience, which enriches their cognitive and social processes.

In implementing interactive storytelling, teachers at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten always create a fun and active atmosphere. Instead of relying solely on verbal narration, teachers use props such as pictures, puppets, and music to make the story more lively and interesting for children. After telling a story about a child who feels anxious, the teacher uses puppets to show the expressions of fear felt by the characters in the story. These puppets are then used to invite children to talk about their own feelings when they feel afraid or anxious. This gives children the opportunity to interact directly with the characters in the story and feel the same feelings. The teacher also invites children to describe what they would do if they were in a similar situation so that they can think about ways to respond with empathy.

The interactive and participatory approach in this storytelling method has proven to be very effective in developing empathy in young children. Children not only listen to stories, but they are also invited to play an active role in developing the story and finding solutions to the problems faced by the characters. In this activity they learn not only to recognize their own

feelings, but also to understand and feel the feelings of others. This can be seen in their daily interactions where children more often show concern for their friends to offer help or share when their friends are in need.

3. Using Visual Media and Puppets to Deepen Understanding

The use of visual media and puppets in Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten is one of the important strategies implemented by teachers in developing empathy in early childhood. The use of these props is not only intended to attract children's attention, but also to deepen their understanding of emotions and relationships between characters in the story. Visual media such as pictures or illustrations of the story, as well as puppets that represent characters in the story can help children recognize facial expressions and body movements that reflect the character's feelings. In this way, children are expected to be able to more easily understand the feelings in the story and can feel empathy for the feelings experienced by the characters in the story.

The use of visual media and puppets in storytelling is effective in deepening children's understanding, especially in the context of cognitive and emotional development. This is as explained in the writing of Anderson & Peterson, (2022) in the *Dual Coding theory* developed by Allan Paivio explaining that information conveyed through a combination of images and words is easier to understand and remember. Visual media such as images and puppets provide a concrete representation of the story, which helps children connect abstract information with physical objects. This increases their understanding of the narrative and characters. In addition, Vygotsky's *Sociocultural Learning theory* (Newman & Latifi, 2020) states that learning occurs through social interaction and the use of cultural tools, such as puppets, which function as aids to represent complex feelings or situations.

The implementation of the use of visual media in Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten can be seen in storytelling activities that use pictures and picture cards. Every time the teacher tells a story, the teacher shows pictures that depict the main character's expression, including happy, sad, angry, or scared faces. When children see these pictures, they are encouraged to guess and discuss what feelings the characters in the story are experiencing. This is explained by Dunn (2021) in the study, namely This activity not only introduces certain feelings, but also invites children to identify and understand the feelings of others in various situations. For example, after a story about a child who feels scared when he first goes to school, the teacher shows a picture of a character who looks anxious. The teacher then asks the children, "What can we do if our friend feels scared like this?" The children then discuss how they would help a friend who is scared by providing support or encouragement.

In addition to using pictures, teachers at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten also use puppets as storytelling aids. These puppets are used to depict characters in the story and give children more realistic visual expressions. Each puppet is given special characteristics that match the story being read, such as the clever Kancil puppet or the big and kind elephant puppet. These puppets are used to display facial expressions and body movements that depict the character's emotions when experiencing certain situations. In the story about sharing food, the puppet that is the main character will show a happy expression when he gets help from his friend. The teacher also asks the children to imitate the expression using the puppet.

The use of visual media and puppets provides space for children to be more active in the storytelling process. They are invited to play a direct role in the story by using puppets to describe the feelings of the characters being told. After telling the story, children are given the opportunity to play roles using puppets, so that they can directly feel the feelings experienced by the characters in the story. The application of this method is when telling stories about feelings of anger and how to overcome them. The teacher uses puppets to show excessive expressions of anger, then asks the children how they can help a friend who is angry. Children are invited to play roles with angry puppets and try to solve problems by talking or apologizing.

The success of using visual media and puppets in developing empathy in children at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten can be seen in changes in their daily behavior. Children are

increasingly able to recognize and express their own feelings, as well as understand the feelings of their friends. They are more sensitive to the feelings of others and tend to be more willing to help friends who are having difficulties or feeling sad. After telling a story about a child who feels lonely and is not invited to play, children in the class began to pay more attention to friends who are lonely or isolated. They more often invite friends to play together and show attention that shows that they not only understand the story but can also apply the empathy lessons learned in their daily lives.

By using visual media and puppets, the teacher managed to make the story more lively and easier for children to understand. The use of these props helps children to more easily recognize and understand the feelings of the characters in the story, then makes it easier for them to connect the feelings of the characters with their own experiences. This shows that the approach involving visual media and puppets is very effective in deepening children's understanding of emotions and relationships between characters, then in building strong empathy skills at an early age.

4. Activities To Improve Social Empathy

Role-playing activities at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten are one of the most effective methods in increasing social empathy in early childhood. Teachers integrate this activity after each storytelling session, which aims to invite children to experience the role of the characters in the story directly. Role-playing provides an opportunity for children to enter the world of the story and bring to life the feelings and situations experienced by the characters in the story. Through this activity, children not only listen to and understand the emotions of the characters, but also feel them directly, which in turn improves their ability to understand and respond to the feelings of others.

In previous research conducted by Hasan & Zaini (2021), it was explained that in implementing role-playing, teachers also invite children to interact with their friends in various social roles. In the story about sharing food, children are invited to play the role of two friends who share food with each other. Each child is asked to play the role of a friend who gives or receives help while practicing facial expressions and words that show gratitude or happiness. Through this role-playing, children can feel how important it is to share and how empathy arises when someone feels appreciated or cared for. This activity also helps children practice social skills, such as speaking politely, saying thank you, and showing concern for others.

Role-playing activities are one of the effective ways to increase social empathy, because they involve children in the experience of pretending to be someone else and experiencing someone else's perspective. George Herbert Mead's *Role-Taking Theory* (Mureşan & Turda, 2022) explains that by playing the role of someone else, individuals learn to understand how others think, feel and act. This is important for the development of social empathy, because children learn to see the world through the eyes of others. In addition, in the theory of *Empathy Development* by Hoffman in his writing Decety (2018) states that children develop empathy through recognizing and responding to the emotions of others, which can be practiced in role-playing activities. When children interact in the context of social roles, they can feel the feelings and needs of others, and learn how to respond in an understanding way.

Role-playing activities at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten often involve more complex situations that test children's ability to respond to their friends' emotions. In a story about a friend who feels sad because he lost his toy, children are invited to play the role of a friend who tries to comfort or help the sad friend. Children are asked to think of words or actions that can comfort their friend. The teacher provides examples using puppets or other props and then asks the children to express their feelings verbally and non-verbally. This activity gives children the opportunity to show their empathy through real actions, which equips them with important social skills for their daily lives.

Through role-playing, children not only learn to recognize and respond to their friends' feelings, but also understand the importance of working together and supporting each other in

various social situations. At Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten, role-playing is not just a game, but a means to build children's characters who are more caring, attentive, and empathetic to the feelings of others. This activity has been shown to help children become more sensitive to the emotional states of their friends, as well as encourage them to act in a more positive and caring way. When children are given space to feel and express the feelings of the characters in the story, they become more open and ready to apply empathy in their daily social lives.

The results of this study have significant implications for practical, theoretical and methodological aspects in the field of early childhood education. Practically, the findings provide concrete guidance for educators and parents in developing children's empathy through the storytelling method. Appropriately chosen stories can be an effective medium for instilling the values of caring, understanding the feelings of others, and encouraging prosocial behavior from an early age. This contributes to improving the quality of children's social interactions in both school and family environments. Theoretically, this study strengthens the view that children's empathy development can be fostered through a narrative-based approach. The findings support the theory of social-emotional development, especially in the context of Vygotsky, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and language in children's learning process (Bailey & Im-Bolter, 2024). Thus, this research enriches conceptual studies on the relationship between learning methods and social character building in early childhood.

Methodologically, this study shows that a qualitative-descriptive or classroom action approach can be used effectively to evaluate changes in children's social behavior. This opens up opportunities for further research to develop more structured and applicable story-based learning models and explore other forms of storytelling (such as puppets, digital media or drama) as a strategy to strengthen empathy. Overall, these findings provide new directions in designing a comprehensive character education strategy from an early age.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the implementation of the storytelling method in Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten has proven effective in developing empathy in early childhood, especially children aged 5-6 years. Through various forms of activities such as selecting stories that are relevant to the development of empathy, storytelling with an interactive and participatory approach, the use of visual media and puppets, and role-playing activities, children not only listen to stories but are also directly involved in feeling and experiencing the feelings of the characters in the story. Teachers at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten consistently utilize these methods to introduce, deepen, and strengthen children's understanding of feelings and empathy which are very important for their social-emotional development.

Role-playing activities, in particular, have been shown to be very effective in enhancing children's social empathy. Children are encouraged to not only recognize their own feelings, but also respond to and understand the feelings of others in different social situations. This storytelling process involving direct interaction gives children the opportunity to explore emotions more deeply and practice empathy in a more real context. Overall, the implementation of interactive and fun storytelling methods at Bani Insan Rabakodo Kindergarten not only strengthens children's empathy abilities, but also helps them develop important social skills in their daily lives.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that early childhood educators routinely integrate the storytelling method into learning activities, especially those that focus on developing social-emotional aspects. The stories used should be selectively chosen that contain empathy values and are tailored to the level of cognitive and emotional development of children aged 5-6 years. Schools are also advised to develop thematic story guides or modules that support children's character building. For further theoretical development, researchers can examine the relationship between the type of story, duration, and intensity of storytelling on children's empathy levels. In addition, further research involving a variety of storytelling media,

such as puppets, audio-visual or interactive digital, is recommended to expand the understanding and effectiveness of this method.

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