



Parents' Perception of Bedtime Stories as An Effort to Build Early Literacy

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Abstract

Early literacy is a child's ability to interact with information across media, forming a foundation for cognitive, language, and social development. Research highlights that bedtime storytelling plays an important role in stimulating children's literacy development. However, do parents have the same perspective? This study aims to explore parents' perception of bedtime storytelling as a tool to foster early literacy in children. A mix method was used, with data collected through surveys containing indicators to measure parental perceptions. These findings reveal three important points: First, parents generally have the same and conceptually accurate that bedtime storytelling is important. Second, there is variation in parents' understanding of early literacy, with few fully understanding the concept. Third, parents have a positive perception of the role of bedtime storytelling in building early literacy, although they face challenges such as limited leisure time and a lack of effective storytelling techniques. The study emphasizes the importance of proactive efforts by parents and other stakeholders to overcome these barriers and include bedtime storytelling as a routine habit. This practice can serve as a powerful and fun way to improve children's early literacy skills, fostering a lifelong love of learning and reading.

Keywords: Bedtime Storytelling, Early Literacy, Parents' Perception

Introduction

Literacy skills in Indonesia are still relatively low. The latest survey conducted by PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) in 2022 stated that the country ranked 69th out of 80 countries surveyed in literacy, science, and mathematics (Yusmar & Fadilah, 2023). This data shows that education in Indonesia has generally not succeeded in shaping students to have the expected literacy skills (Suparya et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the government has a vision of achieving the "golden generation" by 2045. It is said that Indonesia can create a golden generation that is potential, brilliant, productive, literate, competent, characterful, and competitive (Prameswari, 2020). In this context, the "National Literacy Movement" is a visionary step taken by the government in an effort to achieve a golden Indonesia 2045. One of the goals of this movement is to make the community 'literate' as a provision to compete in the future. The National Literacy Movement is a visionary step taken by the government in an effort to achieve a golden Indonesia 2045. The purpose of this movement is to make the community 'literate' as a provision to compete in the future.

In early childhood, literacy is more directed at recognizing and understanding letters and numbers through the stages of play and learning, which ultimately shapes them into creative and independent children who are able to produce works according to their age and development. Therefore, teachers and parents are required to provide encouragement and stimulus through special methods to help children successfully learn literacy culture. There are six basic literacy namely reading and writing, arithmetic, science, digital, citizenship, and financial literacy.

(Wijayatiningsih et al., 2019). Therefore, education about literacy needs to be introduced from an early age.

The opportunities, motivation, and facilitation provided by parents in developing early literacy at home are quite high. However, it has been acknowledged that there is a lack of parental support for early literacy such as storytelling with children, and the habit of parents to introduce letters or numbers encountered around children (Astuti, 2022). Parents can use bedtime story time to learn early literacy. Bedtime routines can contribute to a variety of positive developmental outcomes in addition to improving sleep quality, including language development, literacy, emotional regulation and child behavior, parent-child attachment, and family functioning (Kemala et al., 2022). Storytelling activities for parents to be role models for children in loving the world of literacy (Sufiati & Paramita, 2021).

Previous research has shown that parents' perceptions of the importance of storytelling vary widely. Most parents understand the benefits of storytelling conceptually, but not a few face obstacles in its implementation, such as time constraints and a lack of storytelling skills. This study aims to explore parents' perception of bedtime storytelling activities as an effort to build early literacy in children. By understanding this perception, it is hoped that effective strategies can be found to encourage parental involvement in improving children's literacy skills from an early age, which can ultimately have a positive impact on student literacy outcomes in the future.

Literature Review

Early literacy development is a foundational stage where children are introduced to letters, numbers, and the basic skills required for reading and writing. Research suggests that early exposure to literacy activities significantly influences a child's ability to comprehend, interpret, and engage with texts as they grow (Teale et al., 2020). Piaget's cognitive development theory emphasizes the importance of play and interaction in facilitating children's understanding of abstract concepts like letters and numbers (Piaget, 2005). Vygotsky also highlights the role of social interactions, including parental involvement, in shaping early literacy (Vygotsky, 2006).

Bedtime storytelling is widely recognized as an effective strategy for developing early literacy skills. It not only introduces children to new vocabulary but also enhances their imagination, listening skills, and emotional connection with stories. Studies by (Landrum et al., 2019) and (Syamsiyah & Hardiyana, 2021) demonstrate that storytelling provides a language-rich environment, essential for literacy development. Moreover, storytelling fosters bonding between parents and children, making the learning process more engaging and meaningful.

Parents play a crucial role in early literacy, as their perceptions and attitudes influence the implementation of literacy activities at home. Previous studies reveal that while many parents acknowledge the benefits of storytelling, practical challenges such as time constraints, lack of resources, and inadequate storytelling techniques hinder consistent practice. Research (Choirina, 2020) indicates that parental involvement is most effective when paired with strategies that address these challenges.

The occurrence of perception of parents as an individual does not just take place, but through a process. The process of perception is a two-way event, namely as a result of action and reaction (Wardana et al., 2018). In order for individuals to be aware and perceive, there are several conditions that need to be met, namely: the object being perceived, the sensory apparatus or receptors, and the presence of attention. Perception has several indicators, namely: 1)

Absorption of stimuli or objects from outside the individual, 2) Understanding or understanding of objects, and 3) Assessment or evaluation of individuals towards objects (Hamlyn, 2022).

Based on the SOR (Stimulus Organism Response) theory, there are three elements that form perception. Where the elements in this theory are: 1) Messages (Stimulus) are symbols both verbal and nonverbal that contain certain meanings, 2) Communicators (Organisms) are people who are targeted to receive certain messages, and 3) Effects (Response) are the reactions of communicators to the messages obtained (Duong, 2023). The process of forming perception that occurs in an individual is influenced by the response to the stimulus received by the five senses or an individual's point of view on an object (Wardana et al., 2018). If it is associated with SOR theory where the stimulus or message conveyed is about information related to bedtime storytelling variables as an effort to build early literacy. The message in this information can be accepted or rejected, then digested by the communicator (parent) through absorption, understanding or understanding and judgment (Wardana et al., 2018).

The desire to build literacy through storytelling activities with children can grow from parents' own perception of the importance of storytelling in an effort to build early literacy. Perception is basically the process by which individuals evaluate certain objects or events. Perception begins with a stimulus, such as a phenomenon that occurs in the social environment, which then attracts attention and forms a different perception in each individual (Siregar, 2022). Perception has three indicators: the absorption of stimuli or objects from outside the individual, the understanding or understanding of objects, and the individual's assessment or evaluation of objects (Zahrawanny & Fitria, 2019).

In the first indicator, the stimulus or object is received and absorbed by the senses, generating an image in the brain; In the second indicator, images in the brain are interpreted to form an understanding of an object; In the third indicator, after forming an understanding in the brain, the individual then conducts an assessment (Wardana et al., 2018). It can be concluded that perception is an individual's belief about something, which arises through his interaction with the environment regarding an object as a stimulus. Therefore, individuals who receive stimuli associated with activities such as storytelling and their relationship to early literacy will also develop a positive perception of these activities. Although in reality between perception and the role performed can also be different (Solichah et al., 2022). In this case, the researcher formulated the problem, namely how parents perceive storytelling before bed as an effort to build early literacy.

Methods

This study used a quantitative and qualitative approach to explore parents' perception of bedtime storytelling activities in building children's early literacy. This mix method was chosen because it was able to dig deep into data regarding parents' views, understandings, and experiences related to the research topic. Data was collected through surveys using questionnaires designed with specific indicators to measure parental perceptions, including understanding of early literacy, the benefits of storytelling, and the challenges faced in practice. A number of questionnaire statements used a Likert scale with the following options: SS (strongly agree), S (agree), N (neutral), TS (disagree), and STS (strongly disagree).

As the purpose of this study is to find out how parents' perception of bedtime storytelling activities as an effort to build early literacy, the data source selected in this study is 45 parents who have early childhood (3-7 years). Data was collected through questionnaires and likert scales that contained statements and questions to measure each research variable. In-depth interviews were conducted with a number of respondents to strengthen the research findings.

This interview aims to get more detailed information about the obstacles and solutions proposed by parents in integrating storytelling as a habit.

Data analysis techniques are carried out through thematic analysis with steps including data organization, initial coding, identification of key themes, and interpretation of results. Data from questionnaires are categorized based on predetermined indicators, while data from interviews are analyzed to add context and depth to the survey results. Once the main themes are identified, the data is presented in the form of narrative descriptions to show patterns and relationships between variables. The analysis process is carried out iteratively to ensure the compatibility between the data and findings, so as to produce valid conclusions and support the research objectives.

Results/Findings

Perception of Bedtime Stories

As stated in the previous discussion, perception begins with the process of absorbing stimulus to an object. The better the stimulus that an individual receives for an object, the better his perception of the object. In this case, the object or stimulus given is a fairy tale before bedtime. The researcher tried to dig up information about how parents perceive objects by providing a number of statements that contain indicators of parental absorption, understanding and assessment of the variables of fairy tales before bedtime.



Fig. 1. The absorption of fairy tales

Figure 1 shows the intensity of experiences that parents have related to listening/reading/watching fairy tales. Parents' statements were dominated by 'sometimes' choices with a percentage of 55%. As many as 13% stated 'rarely', and 20% of parents stated 'frequently'. Based on these statements, it can be concluded that with different levels of intensity, almost all respondents have had experience with matters related to fairy tales. That is, most parents have fulfilled the first indicator in the formation of a perception of fairy tales before bedtime. In this case, the parent has experienced absorption of stimuli or stimuli from an object.

Furthermore, the researcher tried to delve information on how parents understood and judged related to the variables of bedtime stories. The researcher provided a number of statements in the form of a likert scale that contained the respondent's answers with choices. The researcher provides two statements about the meaning of fairy tales and the most effective time for fairy tale activities as seen in table 1. The data showed that respondents' understanding and assessment of bedtime fairy tales was quite positive. This can be seen from the percentage

of 64% strongly agree and 16% of parents stating that they agree with the comprehension indicator. 58% strongly agree and 16% of parents agree with the valuation indicators.

Table 1. The understanding of Bedtime Stories

Perception Indicators	Statement	SS	S	N	TS	STS
Understanding	Fairy tales are stories for children.	16%	64%	18%	2%	
	The most effective time to give fairy tales to children is before bedtime.	24%	67%	9%		
Valuation	Bedtime fairy tales are important and provide benefits for children.	27%	53%	18%	2%	
	Bedtime fairy tales are also beneficial for parents	16%	58%	22%	4%	

The data indicates that most parents believe bedtime fairy tales play a crucial role in their children's development. This belief is founded on the various benefits that children gain from listening to stories before sleep, such as enhanced imagination, language skills, and the development of moral values. Additionally, bedtime stories provide a precious opportunity for parents and children to strengthen their emotional bond. By sharing stories, parents can create a cozy and safe environment for their children, which can help them feel calm and ready for sleep. Therefore, the benefits of bedtime fairy tales are not only experienced by children but also provide a positive experience for parents in building a closer relationship with their children.

Perception of Early Literacy

Perception of early literacy is crucial as it influences the support from parents, educators, and the community for children's reading and writing skills development from an early age. Positive perceptions help build a strong educational foundation, encourage parental involvement in reading activities, and contribute to children's cognitive and emotional development. Furthermore, awareness of the importance of early literacy can impact educational policies and resource allocation, creating a better environment for children's holistic growth and development.



Fig. 2. The absorption of early literacy

The data in figure 2 shows that the respondents' perception, especially in the aspect of absorption indicators for early literacy. Almost all respondents admitted that they had obtained

information about early literacy. In other words, parents have fulfilled the initial indicator of the formation of perception, namely the absorption of stimuli from an object, which in this case is early literacy. Of the 45 parents who were respondents, 35 (78%) of them stated that they obtained information about early literacy through social media. 7 (16%) respondents obtained information through schools, 7 (16%) others through books/magazines, 6 (13%) respondents obtained information through seminar activities and there were 2 (4%) respondents admitted that they had never obtained information about early literacy.



Fig. 3. The understanding of early literacy

Data results obtained the aspect of parents' understanding of early literacy. The data shows that 71% of respondents interpret early literacy only in the aspects of reading, writing and arithmetic skills. It shows that there are still many parents who do not understand early literacy conceptually. This lack of comprehensive understanding highlights the need for targeted educational programs and resources to inform parents about the full spectrum of early literacy and its critical role in children's overall development.



Fig. 4. The assessment indicators of early literacy

Parents' perception of the importance of early literacy can be seen through statements that contain indicators of individual assessment of early literacy. This chart shows that 36% of respondents strongly agree and as many as 64% agree. Thus, it can be concluded that all respondents have a positive perception regarding the importance of early literacy for every aspect of child development.



Fig. 5. The perception of parents' role in building early literacy

The data indicates that all respondents believe parents play the most crucial role in fostering early literacy. Based on the findings presented in Figure 4, it can be concluded that parents have an appropriate perception of their responsibilities in this domain. This consensus highlights the importance of parental involvement in early literacy initiatives and suggests that parents recognize their influence in shaping their children's reading and writing skills, underscoring the need for continued support and resources for parents to enhance their role in literacy development.

Perception of Bedtime Stories as an Effort to Build Early Literacy

The perception of storytelling before bed as an effort to build early literacy is increasingly recognized as a valuable practice by parents and educators alike. This nightly routine not only fosters a love for reading but also enhances children's language skills, vocabulary, and comprehension. The intimate setting of bedtime storytelling encourages engagement and interaction, allowing parents to model expressive reading and introduce new concepts in a relaxed environment.

Table 2. Perception of storytelling before bed as an effort to build early literacy

Statement	SS	S	N	TS	STS
Early literacy can be done by inviting children to read or listen to fairy tales before bed.	20%	71%	7%	2%	
I try to invite children to read/listen to fairy tales with the aim of building early literacy for my children	13%	80%	5%	2%	
I find it easier to teach children through fairy tale activities compared to direct learning activities	9%	43%	44%	4%	

Table 2 provides an overview of the perception that parents have towards fairy tales before as one of the efforts in the development of early literacy. The results of the data analysis showed that the respondents' answers were 20% strongly agreeing, 71% agreeing, and 7% answering neutrally and there were 2% who stated that they disagreed. Thus, it can be said that

most parents have a fairly good perception of early literacy. Previous research has found the role of fairy tales in the formation of literacy. Giving bedtime story that are carried out regularly and appropriately by parents to their children at an early age will be able to optimize children's communication skills.



Fig. 6. Perception of developmental aspects

Parents can cultivate children's interest in literacy through simple fairy tales or stories that are told every night to early childhood before they go to bed. For example, stories or fairy tales about animals, legends, folklore, and others. This can be done so that it becomes a habit for children to listen to stories. Based on the data obtained, almost all respondents tried to invite their children to read or listen to fairy tales with the aim of building children's literacy from an early age.

The data in figure 6 shows parents' perception of aspects of child development that can be awakened by early literacy stimulation. Most parents think that bedtime fairy tale activities can improve aspects of language and social-emotional development. In line with other studies that state that in addition to improving sleep quality. Although all respondents are well aware of the importance of fairy tales to optimize aspects of child development, most of them admitted that they experienced obstacles in their implementation.



Fig.7. Parents' challenges in implementing bedtime stories as early literacy

The data obtained, from 45 respondents, there were 22 parents (48.9%) who experienced difficulties due to a lack of mastery of good storytelling techniques. 13 parents (28.9%) stated that they did not have free time to do fairy tale activities with their children. 8 parents (17.8%) admitted that it was difficult to invite their children, and only people felt that they had no problems when inviting their children to read or listen to fairy tales. The data in figure 1 in the previous discussion has shown that the frequency index of parents in reading or listening to fairy tales is dominated by the frequency sometimes. It can be concluded that most parents do not have good storytelling techniques related skills to apply to children.

Discussion

The results of the study showed that parents' perception of storytelling activities before bed was quite positive. Most parents realize that storytelling has benefits for children, such as strengthening emotional connections, developing imagination, and providing a fun learning experience. These findings are in line with research (Kemala et al., 2022) who emphasized that storytelling plays an important role in creating a language-rich learning environment. However, respondents still view storytelling more as an entertainment activity than using it as an early literacy introduction strategy.

Furthermore, parents who have a positive perception tend to make storytelling a regular part of their daily activities, even if it is done in a simple way. However, for some parents, storytelling has not been considered a priority in the parenting process for various reasons, such as busyness or lack of understanding of effective storytelling techniques. In fact, research (Chilvers et al., 2021) stated that consistency in storytelling contributes to children's ability to understand story structure, improve vocabulary, and build reading habits. Therefore, there is a need to raise parents' awareness of the importance of storytelling not only as entertainment, but also as an integrated means of learning.

Although the perception of storytelling is quite positive, parents' understanding of early literacy is still limited. Many parents do not understand early literacy conceptually, so they tend to associate it only with reading and writing skills. In fact, early literacy includes broader aspects, such as the ability to understand, manage information, and build effective communication. This shows the need for further socialization and education about early literacy, as expressed by (Solichah et al., 2022). which states that parents' understanding of early literacy affects the effectiveness of their role in supporting children's literacy development.

Parents' perception of early literacy stimulation is important for early childhood (Solichah et al., 2022). The results of other studies show that there is a relationship between early childhood literacy activities and higher cognitive abilities in the following phases (Ne'eman & Shaul, 2023). The importance of literacy from an early age gives parents a great responsibility to achieve optimally. Building a literacy culture can be done in various ways, including involving parents, families, and the community (schools, the public) as inspirations to build a literacy culture (Yansyah et al., 2021). Parents are the party that plays the most role in efforts to build early literacy.

Literacy in early childhood is at the basic stage. The basic literacy concept used in the national literacy movement is six types of literacy; literacy, numeracy literacy, science literacy, financial literacy, digital literacy, cultural literacy and citizenship (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017). The benefits of literacy, among others, are that it can stimulate the mind, add new insights and information, improve the quality of memory, develop verbal skills, practice writing and also string meaningful words, train skills to think and analyze, and foster noble ethics (Astuti, 2022). Early childhood literacy skills are possessed by children because of

stimulation in the family (Nuryati et al., 2021). Literacy in early childhood does not only involve reading and writing skills. Early literacy involves several communication processes in children, including; reading, writing, speaking, listening or listening, seeing and teaching children to think logically and critically (Kargiotidis & Manolitsis, 2024).

The characteristic of early literacy is informal learning, that is, children do not feel that they are learning and what is taught is things that are close to children's lives (Permatasari et al., 2017). Literacy is not just an achievement of children's cognitive abilities. Literacy is a child's participation in the social and cultural environment that shapes their perspectives, knowledge, values, and communication skills (Barratt-Pugh and Mary Rohl, 2000). Early childhood literacy skills can be stimulated at home through parent-child literacy activities (Ulfadhilah, 2021). The role of parents is very important for early childhood development, this is because the learning that has been carried out at school can produce maximum ability when parents repeat the learning that has been given at school (Solichah et al., 2022).

Most parents have a good perception of bedtime storytelling as a way to build early literacy. This finding is in line with research that states that the benefits of storytelling activities include improving cognitive skills, language skills, imagination for children and strengthening the bond between parents and children (Zivan & Horowitz-Kraus, 2020). Not only for children, the benefits of bedtime fairy tales are also beneficial for parents. Another study states that the benefits felt by parents who get used to bedtime fairy tales are increased informational, visual, verbal, and written literacy. The increase in information literacy is felt from telling stories before bedtime which makes children add new experiences and knowledge (Butauski & Horstman, 2020).

Literacy culture can be fostered from an early age in the family, school and community. The family environment is the basis for children's learning, especially the involvement of parents in supporting and assisting children in the learning process (Marsh et al., 2020). One form of parental stimulation in children is storytelling. Storytelling in early childhood should be done by using texts or reading books to children and teaching children to like reading and developing language structures (Otoluwa et al., 2022). The treatment of storytelling is able to provide changes and improve children's early literacy skills (Hasannah, 2019).

The provision of stimulus to early literacy skills is highly dependent on the perception that parents have. Reflecting on previous research that states that parental perception affects children's schooling support (Zahrawanny & Fitria, 2019). In this study, it is feared that there is an inappropriate perception of the purpose of early literacy will affect the role played by parents (Solichah et al., 2022). Bedtime fairy tales have a good impact on language development, literacy, children's emotions and behaviors, parent-child attachment, and family function (Sufiati & Paramita, 2021). The same thing is stated in the research (Kemala et al., 2022) that bedtime storytelling activities were shown to have a significant relationship with the social-emotional development of children aged 4-5 years, with a strong level of close relationship.

However, the results of the study also show that most parents have not mastered good storytelling techniques, such as the use of intonation, expressions, and props to attract children's attention. In line with other studies that state that there are still few parents who always tell stories or tell stories to their children (Oktaviani et al., 2022). This shortcoming can be an obstacle in optimizing the benefits of storytelling for early literacy. Therefore, it is necessary to hold training or mentoring for parents to improve storytelling skills, so that this activity is not only fun, but also supports the development of children's literacy holistically.

As important as bedtime fairy tales in building early literacy, parents are expected to be able to master good and targeted storytelling techniques. Parents can tell stories effectively

through clear goals, appropriate materials, age-appropriate media, engaging improvisation, and child feedback (Sumaryanti, 2018). How to choose a good fairy tale includes knowing the child's interest in fairy tales and choosing fairy tales that are appropriate for the child's age. These efforts so that early literacy can be applied with a sense of happiness in the mind of every child. It can be implied that learning for children is not something difficult but a fun thing.

Conclusion

Perception is essentially the process of a person's assessment of a certain object or event. Perception begins with stimuli such as phenomena that occur in the social environment, then attention arises so that it forms different perceptions in each individual. Perception has 3 indicators, namely absorption of stimuli or objects from outside the individual, understanding or understanding of objects, and individual assessment or evaluation of objects. Perception is always related to experience and understanding. The more experience and knowledge, the more and stronger the perception will be, and vice versa.

Based on the results of the study, parents' perception of fairy tales before bedtime is almost entirely met the indicator of absorption of information about fairy tales before bedtime. In the next aspect of indicators, the understanding that parents have about bedtime fairy tales is quite positive. Meanwhile, in terms of assessment indicators, parents think that bedtime fairy tales are very important and can provide benefits for children and parents. Regarding early literacy, parents' perceptions show different understandings. Most of them understand early literacy only limited to the ability to read, write, and count. Only a small percentage understand well the aspects of children's abilities in early literacy. The majority of parents agree that bedtime fairy tales can build early literacy. However, in terms of implementation, it is still not as expected. Two things that are very visible as the cause of parents having difficulty in inviting their children to listen to or read fairy tales are the lack of free time and the lack of storytelling techniques skills that parents have.

Based on this conclusion, the researcher recommends fostering a culture and habit of sharing fairy tales before bedtime as a vital approach to promoting early literacy. Integrating storytelling into their nightly routines can effectively support children's reading and language development from a young age. This practice not only nurtures creativity and imagination but also emphasizes the joy of reading and learning. To maximize the benefits, parents are encouraged to take a proactive stance by educating themselves on effective storytelling techniques. This includes varying their vocal tones, using engaging expressions, and choosing age-appropriate stories that capture their children's interests. Additionally, parents can create interactive storytelling experiences by involving their children in discussions about the stories, asking questions, and encouraging them to predict what might happen next. Through these efforts, the goal of fostering early literacy can be achieved more effectively, setting a strong foundation for children's future educational success and instilling a lifelong love for reading.

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