



## Parents' Behaviour in Storytelling and Attaining Information of Child Growth and Development

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### Abstract

Early childhood is a critical period for the development of both the physical and mental of an individual. At this age, the growth of a child needs to be monitored so parents can provide correct treatment to their child. This paper depicts parents' behaviour in accessing information regarding their preschool children's growth and development and in boosting their storytelling activities as media to support literacy. This claim was revealed from a study because the prevalence of stunting and malnutrition remains high in recent years. The study applied two phases to gain its data, first using questionnaires involving 51 respondents from an urban area, then continuing with focus group discussion to get more profound evidence. The results indicated that parents are close to storytelling activities with their children. They also believe that literacy on child growth and development is essential. However, the finding shows that the parents tend to use social media as the source of information and storytelling activities are not related to children's growth and development. These findings provide preliminary support for policymakers to provide sufficient information through various media. The results also offer that fact storytelling can be used as media to educate parents and children regarding child development.

**Keywords:** *storytelling*, child growth and development, health literacy media, preschool age

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## Introduction

Early childhood is a critical period for the development of both the physical and mental of an individual. At this age, the growth of a child needs to be monitored so parents can provide correct treatment to their child. Besides, sufficient nutrition must be applied to prevent the child from malnutrition (Inten & Permatasari, 2019). Nutrition even also give an impact on the development of a child's brain and behaviour, ability to be productive, and endurance of infectious disease (Sulistyoningsih, 2011).

In Indonesia, issues on nutrition burden are not only regarding malnutrition but also obesity. The prevalence of stunting remains stagnant in the last decade. Based on *Riset Kesehatan Dasar* (national research on basic health standard) the number of stunting is on 30,8 per cent in 2018 (Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan Kesehatan RI, 2018). This condition shows an indication that parents may not understand the importance of monitoring the growth and development of their children. Therefore, literacy of a child's growth and development is essential for parents, so that they can fulfil their child basic needs.

Among many media provides by the authorities, public health practitioners use many media to promote health issues preventively. Health promotion media is all kinds of efforts or tools created by a communicator to promote health issues (through prints, electronic, or billboards) in order to make the targeted audience changing into positive behaviour (Jatmika et al., 2019). The existing media today is getting varied and one of which is storytelling

which has proven effective to transfer knowledge from one to another (Prasetyo, 2018).

Storytelling is essential for humans especially children as they can learn a lot of things through their imagination from stories. Thus, stories are an inescapable part of our early learning and development (Gitner, 2015). In every story, a child has the opportunity to explore new things such as language, colours, and anything related to their life. Moreover, storytelling makes parents get closer to their children (Adara, 2020). However, there are no research claims that storytelling is useful for parents as well, because basically when parents tell a story about a new thing, they also learn something that they do not know before, including a child's growth and development.

Nowadays, parents have many media to access information regarding parenting. The information even comes sporadically through their communities or social media. Due to the lack of digital literacy, parents may directly believe in the information and even they may get misinformation. Therefore, this research aims to capture parents' behaviour in an urban area to get information about child growth and development and how storytelling activities in their family can be media to get literate on things.

## Method

As a descriptive qualitative study, this research involves 51 respondents and three experts. Data is taken from questioners which cover topics of child's growth and development and storytelling. The questioner listed in Google form and shared with respondents in a week

through WhatsApp groups. The respondents we chose under two categories which are Semarang city inhabitant and as a parent of a child or children age three to five years old. The results of the questioner are then disseminated in focus group discussion, which involved not only respondents' representatives but also experts, a storyteller, a paediatric nurse, and a literature lecturer.

The characteristics of the respondents are female 86% male 14%, their ethnicities are mostly Javanese and only one Sundanese. Their age range is 22 to 44 years old and 48 of them are Muslim, two Catholics, and one Cristian. They come from various professions and nine of them are housewives.

### Result and Discussion

This study found that most parents confessed that they understood child growth and development, only 6% of them doubt it. The proportion of respondents who control their children's growth and development are 19% less than 8 times in a year, 30% 8 to 10 times per year, and 41% control their children more than 10 times in a year. The observation covers mental-emotional, motoric, language, social and early detection of autism. Regarding the place to check the growth, parents prefer *Posyandu* (post of integrated service), doctor, midwife, *Puskesmas* (community-based public health service), hospitals, and most of them independently conduct self-checking.

The interesting part is that respondents consider social media as a reliable source regarding a

child's growth and development as represented in Figure 1.

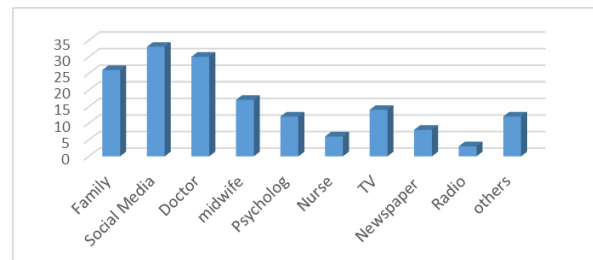


Figure 1. Source of information

While the platform of source information is mostly from social media in form of infographics and video. Parents also prefer to choose YouTube as a source of information. Only a handful of respondents refer to the billboard as their source of information. The detail preference can be in Figure 2.

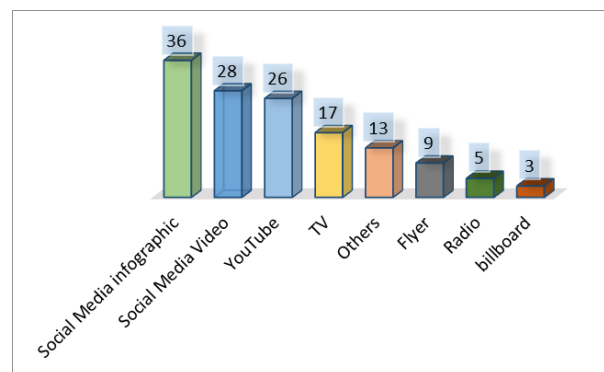


Figure 2. Platform of information

Considering the activity of storytelling, the story around children's daily life or parents reading a storybook. Most of the parents confess that they often have storytelling activities and only 14% sometimes do the activities. While the timing of storytelling, 49% of parents experience it every time and only 37 % every bedtime. How about the topic of the story? Mostly related to

child's feelings and about TV shows or YouTube videos.

Parents are also familiar with storybook reading, yet only half of them do it at any time or during bedtime. The rest of them sometimes or rare reading storybooks for their children. Figure 4 depicts the proportion of parents who has storybook reading behaviours.

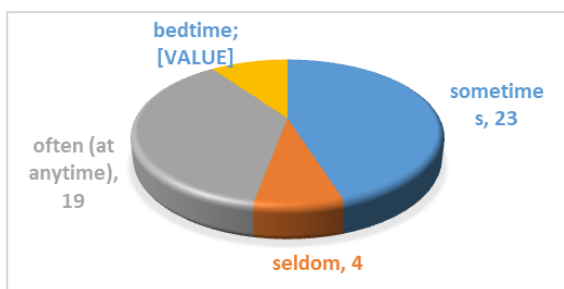


Figure 3. Time for Reading Storybook

Those who read a storybook, commonly familiar with fable, fairy-tale, parts of the body, religious practice. However, none of them mentions books related to child growth and development. When the question specifically as about this topic, only 39 % of them believe that they have read such a related book, but two-third of them did not remember the title of the book. Details regarding the percentage of parents who found books related to child growth and development as in Figure 4.

During the focus group discussion, the expert appreciated the responses of the respondents in order to check their children growth and

development regularly even in pandemic times. However, for several criteria, parents must consult clinicians or psychologists such as the use of the Denver II test for measuring child language acquisition. The expert also mentioned that *Posyandu* or community integrated service is a recommended place to support parents in observing their children's growth, monthly. Different from the growth, the development of the child can be measured every three to six months by checking the function of body parts or cells, as in language, cognition, or motoric. This observation typically by using *KPSP (Kuesioner Pra Skrinning Perkembangan)* or questioner for pre-screening development which can be operated by preschool teachers, parents, or volunteers of *Posyandu*. When the result is atypical or delay, parents can have appropriate treatment with support from related experts.

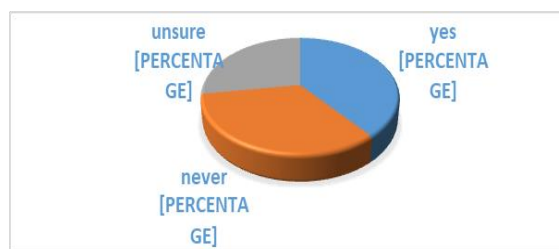


Figure 4. Respondent opinion over child-development-themed book

In terms of storytelling, the expert suggested that parents should see things from their children's perspectives. Children like to play and copy what

people do, therefore providing such a fun environment will enrich children with many experiences. Forcing a child to do things or learn from a story may not interesting for them. When we understand a child's perspective, we can use storytelling as media to deliver certain messages unconsciously. Storytelling stimulates children's imagination and encourages them to create things. Apart from storytelling, reading aloud is necessary for parents to make children copy and internalize certain terms in their brains. Parents also have to pick appropriate books for their children based on their age and needs. As an illustration, Black-white book for an infant, book with short and simple words for preschool, and so forth.

The storyteller also mentioned that having virtuous techniques in sharing a story with children make children more excited to get involve in storytelling. Every child has a specific character and preference to do any activities. However as long as an activity has a 'play' factor, then no child will refuse to get engaged. Children like storytelling as it has a play factor. Parents have to pick which story is appropriate for them based on their age and their level of development. Video and gadgets may be alternatives for them to play, but there will be no emotional bonding with their parents. A book can be media to tell a story. Select books not only for their pictures or artistic features but also for the content. Without a book, both parents and

children can share any story. Listening activities can create confidence as well as imagination in a child. Drawing also can be media to tell a story, particularly when parents want to deliver a message regarding child growth and development. Storytelling basically educates children without preaching to them. It literate change behaviour and motivate children to do certain things as parent's expectation.

### Conclusion

In an urban area, despite the disadvantaged family, parents typically are well educated and digitally literate. They tend to have big opportunities to get access to information. For parents with preschool children, parenting becomes easy as they are close to internet access. They become cyberchondriac, as everything consults to the internet, including issues on child growth and development.

The authority has provided a health care system, not only curative but also preventive. They create various media to promote public health. In terms of informing public with child growth and development, the government has published public service announcements using many media as on TV, radio, social media, even billboard. However, there is no data regarding how parents usually catch information about child growth and development. There is no data as well regarding their behaviour in doing storytelling activities. This study gives data on how parents regularly have storytelling moments with their children. They also realise that observing their child growth and development is essential.

Their behaviour in accessing information become a starting point for policymakers in designing more media from reliable sources. This condition is based on the result that parents in the urban area get parenting information from family or social media. The parenting of their parents of course different from parenting today (for their child). Besides, information from social media is not always correct if it is not from reliable sources. Therefore, information on child growth and development needs to be updated using various media. The findings of this study also provide fact storytelling can be used as one of the media to educate both parents and children regarding child development.

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