

Shaping Prosocial Behavior in Kindergarten Children Through Bedtime Storytelling

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: March 18, 2025

Revised: May 20, 2025

Accepted: May 23, 2025

Keywords:

Bedtime storytelling;

Prosocial behavior;

Kindergarten children.



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ABSTRACT

Background of the study: Prosocial behavior typically begins to emerge when a child is around two years old, an age that falls within the early childhood stage. Children of kindergarten age are also considered to be in early childhood. At this stage, children tend to exhibit prosocial behaviors primarily toward those closest to them, such as family members, teachers, and classmates. The development of prosocial behavior is crucial for early childhood, as it prepares children to become members of a community and helps them adapt and interact within a broader social environment in the future. Factors that support the emergence of prosocial behavior include a positive environment, effective communication, observable role models, good habits, and parental involvement. One way parents can contribute is by engaging in bedtime storytelling.

Aims and scope of paper: This study aims to explore and understand prosocial behavior in kindergarten-aged children who are regularly told bedtime stories.

Methods: This research employs a qualitative method with a case study approach. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, involving three participants aged 4–6 years who are enrolled as students at TK Anak Sholeh, Bangkalan. Data were collected through interviews and analyzed using Stake's data analysis model. The validity of the data was ensured through source triangulation.

Results: The study found that all three participants demonstrated prosocial behavior across several key aspects. These behaviors include the ability to express empathy, collaborate, share tasks with peers, help others, donate willingly, and acknowledge their mistakes. In summary, the results indicate that the three kindergarten-aged participants exhibited prosocial behaviors such as sharing, cooperation, helping, donating, and honesty.

Contribution: This study concludes that bedtime storytelling can effectively foster prosocial behavior in kindergarten-aged children. Therefore, it is recommended that parents pay closer attention to their children's prosocial development and support it by establishing a consistent bedtime storytelling routine.

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INTRODUCTION

One aspect of children's growth and development that requires attention is their social and emotional development. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, social-emotional development refers to a child's ability to understand, manage, and express emotions—both positive and negative—form relationships with peers and adults around them, and actively explore their environment through learning (Nurmalitasari, 2015). Based on this statement, it is clear that social-emotional development is closely related to how children interact with others and their surroundings. Moreover, the social-emotional aspect is one of the key developmental components needed by children to achieve success in their future lives. This aligns with Firmansyah's (2021) statement that a child's social-emotional competence is a determining factor in the success of their future careers.

The development of social-emotional skills in children can be observed through specific developmental achievement indicators. One of the indicators of early childhood social-emotional development is prosocial behavior. This is supported by Carolin and Ekawati (2021), who state that prosocial behavior is one form of behavior that reflects an individual's social-emotional intelligence. Prosocial behavior refers to actions intended to help or support others without expecting any specific reward. This is in line with Carlo and Randall's (2002) definition of prosocial behavior as voluntary helping actions motivated by various factors to benefit others. Similarly, Eisenberg and Mussen (1989) define prosocial behavior as voluntary actions aimed at helping or benefiting another individual or group of individuals.

Prosocial behavior in early childhood typically begins to emerge around the age of two. Dunfield et al. (2011) assert that by the age of two, children start to show various types of prosocial behavior, including helping, sharing, comforting, and cooperating. Young children tend to display prosocial behaviors primarily toward those closest to them. Most recipients of preschool children's prosocial behavior are individuals who frequently interact and are emotionally close to the child, such as family members, teachers, and classmates (Susanti et al., 2013). The development of prosocial behavior is essential for young children as it serves as preparation for becoming members of society and helps them adapt and interact in broader social environments in the future. Factors that support the emergence of prosocial behavior include a nurturing environment, effective communication, observable role models, positive habits, and parental involvement (Nadhifah, 2020).

Although prosocial behavior begins to emerge at around two years of age, its development is not always optimal. Research by Rizqiyani and Asmodilasti (2020) found that children in schools still face various challenges related to prosocial behavior. For instance, some children are unwilling to share, take others' belongings without permission, refuse to play with peers during recess, act aggressively toward others, and lack responsibility in group activities. The low level of prosocial behavior can also be seen in the increasing prevalence of aggressive behaviors among children, including bullying. According to Swit and McMaugh (2012), children involved in relational aggression are more likely to exhibit relatively low levels of prosocial behavior. This presents a contradictory reality: while children are expected to show prosocial behavior after the age of two, in practice, some still struggle to demonstrate such behaviors effectively. Therefore, it is necessary to provide appropriate stimulation to help children exhibit prosocial behavior according to their developmental stage.

A study by Anggraini (2016) found that prosocial behavior can be enhanced through storytelling activities. Storytelling is an activity where a storyteller conveys a story to listeners with the aim of providing information that helps them recognize both their own and others' emotions, as well as develop problem-solving skills (Ayuni et al., 2013). In addition to general storytelling practices, there is also a specific tradition known as bedtime storytelling. According to Hidayati (2013), bedtime storytelling involves stories read aloud—typically by parents—to children before they sleep. This tradition serves not only as entertainment but also as a means for parents to bond with their children. Implementing storytelling as a nightly routine can provide

numerous benefits for children. Rochmawati (2019) states that children who are regularly told bedtime stories experience improvements in their emotional regulation and behavioral patterns.

Bedtime routines can contribute to various positive developmental outcomes beyond improved sleep quality, including enhanced language skills, literacy, emotional development, behavior regulation, parent-child attachment, and overall family functioning (Sufiati & Paramita, 2021). Listening to bedtime stories also coincides with the brain's alpha wave state, which is the optimal time for children to absorb positive moral messages conveyed through stories (Hidayati, 2013). However, research on the specific manifestations of prosocial behavior in children who are regularly told bedtime stories remains limited. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how prosocial behavior is exhibited by early childhood children who experience bedtime storytelling.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research method with a case study approach.

Participants

The participants in this study were three early childhood children enrolled at TK Anak Sholeh Bangkalan. The selection criteria for participants were as follows:

- (1) Children aged approximately 4 to 6 years old; and
- (2) Children who have a bedtime routine that includes being told stories by their parents or guardians.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and documentation.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Stake's model of analysis, which consists of: (Wahyuni, 2020)

- (1) Categorical aggregation;
- (2) Direct interpretation;
- (3) Identifying patterns; and
- (4) Developing naturalistic generalizations.

To ensure data validity, the researcher applied credibility, dependability, and confirmability tests.

RESULT

Based on the results of data analysis, the three participants demonstrated themes related to the sharing aspect of prosocial behavior, with two emerging themes: the ability to share feelings with others and the ability to listen attentively when others are speaking. For Participant 1 (AR), only one theme emerged in the sharing aspect, namely the ability to listen attentively when others are speaking. For Participant 2 (SRA), both themes emerged—sharing feelings with others and listening attentively to others. Similarly, Participant 3 (AKA) demonstrated both themes in the sharing aspect.

In the cooperation aspect, two themes were identified: the ability to work with others and the willingness to share tasks. Participant 1 (AR) demonstrated both of these themes, as did Participant 2 (SRA) and Participant 3 (AKA). All three participants were able to cooperate and were willing to share responsibilities with others.

In the helping aspect, two themes consistently emerged across all participants. Participant 1 (AR) exhibited the ability to help others in difficulty and the willingness to lend belongings to those in need. Participant 2 (SRA) and Participant 3 (AKA) showed the same two themes, indicating that all three participants demonstrated both the willingness to assist those experiencing difficulties and to lend items when needed.

Regarding the generosity aspect, two themes also emerged across all three participants. Participant 1 (AR) demonstrated both themes, as did Participant 2 (SRA) and Participant 3

(AKA). The two themes that emerged in this aspect were the willingness to donate to those in need and the willingness to share food with others.

In the honesty aspect, three themes were identified. Participant 1 (AR) showed two themes: the ability to admit mistakes and the willingness to return borrowed items. Meanwhile, Participants 2 (SRA) and 3 (AKA) exhibited all three themes: the ability to admit mistakes, the willingness to return borrowed items, and the ability to speak truthfully.

Table 1. Theme Results Comparison of Participants 1, 2, and 3

No	Emergед Themes	Participant		
		P1 (AR)	P2 (SRA)	P3 (AKA)
	Sharing			
	Able to share feelings with others		✓	✓
	Able to listen attentively when others speak	✓	✓	✓
	Cooperative			
	Able to work together with others	✓	✓	✓
	Willing to share tasks with others	✓	✓	✓
	Helping			
	Able to help others in difficulty	✓	✓	✓
	Willing to lend belongings to those in need	✓	✓	✓
	Generosity			
	Willing to donate to those in need	✓	✓	✓
	Willing to share food with others	✓	✓	✓
	Honesty			
	Able to admit mistakes made	✓	✓	✓
	Willing to return borrowed items	✓	✓	✓
	Able to tell stories honestly		✓	✓

Based on findings from a study involving three early childhood participants, it was found that children who regularly listen to bedtime storytelling tend to exhibit consistent prosocial behaviors. Although not all behavior themes appeared in the first participant, overall results suggest that bedtime storytelling supports the development of positive social traits. A common pattern among all three children was that their prosocial actions were primarily directed toward close individuals such as family members, teachers, and peers. This indicates that children are more likely to show kindness and cooperation in familiar and emotionally secure environments.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the forms of prosocial behavior were diverse yet shared common themes of empathy, kindness, and collaboration. In terms of sharing, one child spoke about the sadness felt after a pet's death, another shared an enjoyable vacation story, and another showed attentiveness by listening to a friend's story. These examples highlight how storytelling encourages both emotional expression and active listening—key aspects of prosocial development.

In cooperative behavior, all three participants were willing to work with peers in completing tasks. This reflects an early sense of teamwork and mutual responsibility, which may be influenced by the moral messages conveyed in bedtime stories. Cooperation at this stage of development helps children learn how to function in group settings and contributes to positive peer relationships.

Helping behaviors also appeared across all participants. One child helped a friend who had fallen, another lent personal belongings, and one child intervened to stop a conflict. These actions suggest the presence of empathy, a desire to assist others, and early conflict resolution skills.

Regarding generosity, each participant reported donating money to help children in Palestine, reflecting moral sensitivity and concern for others beyond their immediate social circle. Lastly, all participants demonstrated honesty by admitting their mistakes, indicating integrity and self-awareness. Overall, the variety and consistency of prosocial behaviors shown by the children suggest that bedtime storytelling plays a meaningful role in nurturing social and moral development in early childhood.

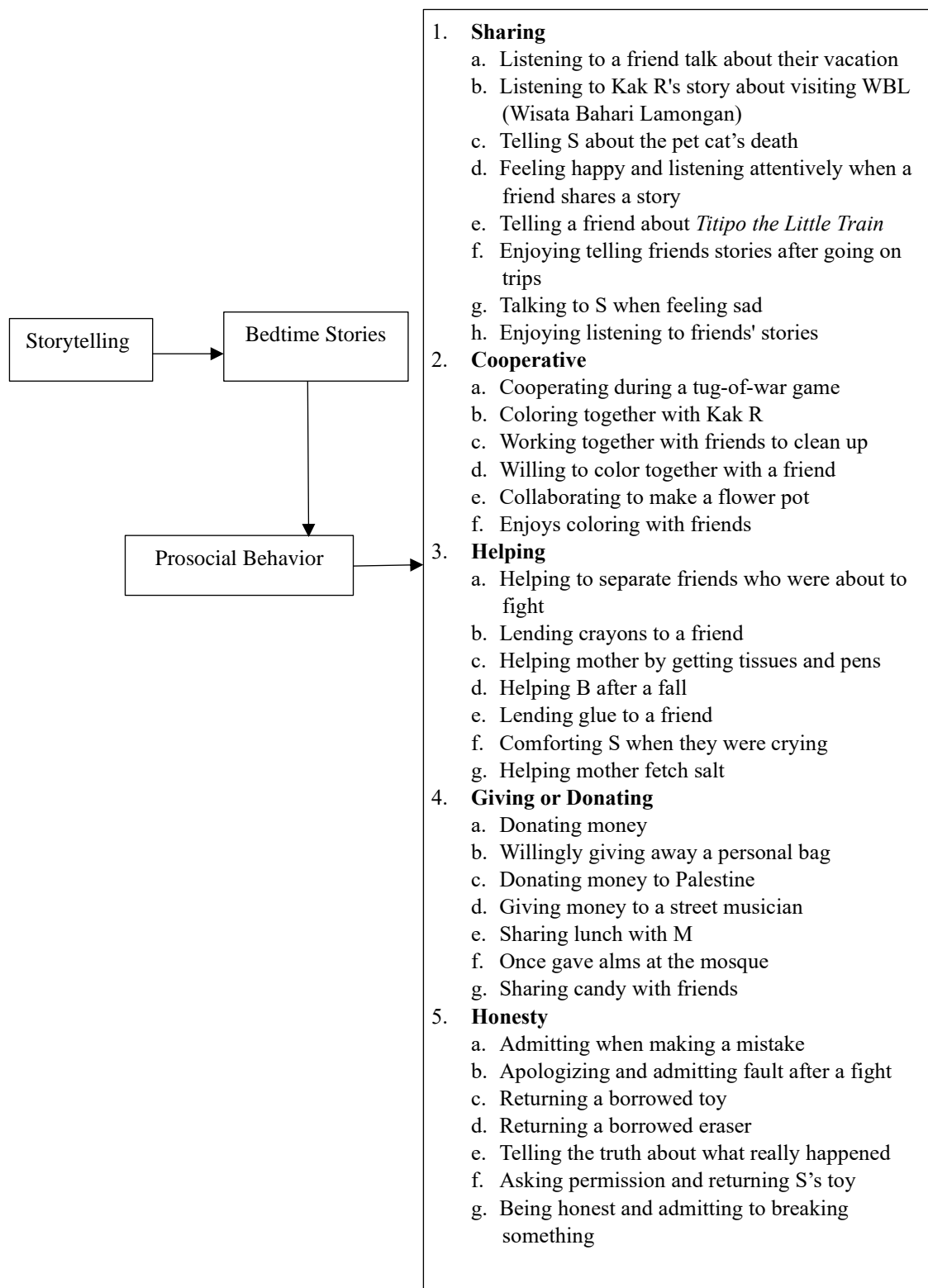


Figure 1. Diagram of Prosocial Behavior in Early Childhood Children Who Are Told Bedtime Stories (Bedtime Storytelling)

DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore the development of prosocial behavior in early childhood through bedtime storytelling, focusing on five core aspects of prosocial behavior. The participants consisted of three early childhood children attending the same educational institution, all of whom had the habit of being read bedtime stories by their parents. Information regarding this routine was obtained through interviews with their teacher. The findings indicate that bedtime storytelling can stimulate the emergence of prosocial behavior. This aligns with research by Anggraini (2016), which found that storytelling activities can enhance children's prosocial tendencies. Additionally, storytelling offers various other benefits, such as fostering proactive attitudes, strengthening parent-child bonds, enriching vocabulary, promoting concentration and critical thinking, and stimulating children's imagination and creativity (Rukiyah, 2018).

Eisenberg and Mussen (1989) define prosocial behavior as voluntary actions intended to benefit others, while Carlo and Randall (2002) emphasize that such behavior is driven by diverse motivations and is not carried out for personal gain. The five key aspects of prosocial behavior identified by Eisenberg and Mussen include sharing, cooperation, helping, generosity, and honesty. Based on the data analysis, all three participants exhibited developing prosocial behaviors, although not every theme was equally represented across participants.

In the aspect of sharing, two participants demonstrated the ability to share their emotions and actively listen to others, while the third participant admitted to feeling shy when expressing sadness but still showed empathy as a listener. In terms of cooperation, all three participants showed readiness to collaborate with peers in games, group assignments, and school clean-up activities. The helping aspect was evident in each child's willingness to assist peers in distress and to lend materials. Regarding generosity, all participants willingly shared food and participated in charitable donations, including school-led fundraising efforts. However, for the honesty aspect, only two participants consistently displayed honest behavior—admitting mistakes, returning borrowed items, and telling the truth. The first participant's honesty, however, was conditional and influenced by how others treated them.

These findings underscore the importance of bedtime storytelling in promoting prosocial development in young children, particularly those in the kindergarten age range (4–6 years). Given the integral role of prosocial behavior in social-emotional development and its contribution to future success, bedtime storytelling is recommended as an enjoyable and effective educational strategy to nurture positive character traits from an early age.

Implications

The findings of this study highlight the importance of bedtime storytelling in shaping prosocial behavior among young children, particularly those in the kindergarten age group (4–6 years). As discussed earlier, prosocial behavior is a vital component of children's emotional and social development and is considered one of the key factors contributing to future success, both academically and socially.

Research Contribution

This study contributes to the field of early childhood developmental psychology by providing empirical evidence that bedtime storytelling positively influences prosocial behavior in young children. Furthermore, it offers valuable insights for researchers, educators, and policymakers in designing bedtime storytelling practices that are aligned with the demands and opportunities of the digital age.

Limitations

The study's limitation lies in its small sample size, involving only three kindergarten-aged children, which does not adequately represent the diversity of early childhood populations in Madura, particularly in the Bangkalan Regency. Although the study provides rich qualitative insights, its findings are not generalizable in the way that quantitative studies might allow.

Suggestions

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to create consistent bedtime storytelling routines to stimulate the development of prosocial behavior in children. Future researchers are advised to conduct more extensive and in-depth studies on prosocial behavior by including a larger and more diverse participant pool and employing varied research methodologies to enhance the generalizability and validity of the findings.

CONCLUSION

The three participants exhibited various forms of behavior that reflect the characteristics of prosocial behavior. This was evident through the fulfillment of several key aspects of prosocial behavior identified in the study. In the sharing aspect, participants were able to express their feelings to others and demonstrated active listening when others shared their stories. Regarding cooperation, they were capable of working collaboratively and were willing to share responsibilities during joint activities. In terms of helping, participants were willing to assist those in need and share items or food. In the generosity aspect, participants showed readiness to donate to those in need and to share food with others. Lastly, in the aspect of honesty, participants were able to admit their mistakes, return borrowed items, and communicate truthfully. These findings suggest that bedtime storytelling has positive potential in fostering the development of prosocial behavior in early childhood. Future research is encouraged to involve a larger and more diverse sample to enhance the generalizability of findings. Additionally, quantitative or mixed-method approaches can be employed to complement qualitative data and strengthen the validity of the results. Further studies may also explore the influence of story types, digital storytelling media, and parental involvement during storytelling on the development of children's prosocial behavior.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors express their gratitude to the Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat (LPPM) of Universitas Trunojoyo Madura for their support and assistance throughout the research process, which contributed to the completion of this article.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

EYI conceived the idea and carried out data collection. YB and WPW contributed to the literature review, final manuscript revision, and drafting. All authors have reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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