

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF STORYTELLING IN PROMOTING SOCIAL- EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN KINDERGARTEN, LOON DISTRICTS, BOHOL

ZENADETTE P. JAQUILMAC *¹,
JELINDA R. FORTICH,²

¹Graduate School, University of Bohol, Tagbilaran City, Philippines

Corresponding Author: jelindafortich@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Article history:

Submission: 29 March 2025

Revised: 30 May 2025

Accepted: 15 July 2025

Publication: 5 Sept 2025

Keywords - modular learning, teachers' practices, parents' satisfaction, academic performance, distance education, school-family partnership

Storytelling has long been recognized as an engaging instructional strategy, yet its contribution to young children's social-emotional development remains underexplored in the local context. This qualitative study examined the role of storytelling in promoting the social-emotional development of kindergarten learners in the Loon Districts, Bohol during School Year 2024–2025. Specifically,

it explored how storytelling contributes to children's emotional and social growth, the social-emotional competencies it nurtures, the influence of culturally relevant stories, the challenges encountered by teachers, the perceptions of teachers and parents, and an action plan based on the findings. Using thematic analysis, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with four kindergarten teachers and twelve parents. The findings revealed that



© Jaquilmac, Z. P., & Fortich, J. R. (2025). Open Access. This article published by ACADEME University of Bohol, Graduate School and Professional Studies is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0). You are free to share (copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format) and adapt (remix, transform, and build upon the material). Under the following terms, you must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. You may not use the material for commercial purposes. To view a copy of this license, visit: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

storytelling serves as an effective medium for fostering emotional expression, empathy, self-awareness, emotional regulation, cooperation, and perspective-taking. Stories grounded in local language and culture strengthened children's sense of identity, belonging, and engagement while reinforcing home-school collaboration. Teachers and parents shared similar perceptions regarding the positive influence of storytelling on children's socio-emotional growth. However, limited instructional materials, insufficient time, and inadequate teacher preparation constrained its implementation. The study concludes that storytelling is a culturally responsive pedagogical approach that supports holistic child development and recommends its systematic integration into the kindergarten curriculum through teacher capacity-building, development of localized story resources, strengthened parental participation, and institutional support.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood social and emotional development sets the stage for a child's ongoing learning, relationships, mental health, and readiness for school. Kindergarten is a time when kids learn to recognize and control their feelings, make friends with adults and other kids, show kindness, and learn the self-control skills they need to do well in school and in their community. These skills affect kids' long-term educational, behavioral, and emotional results, not just how well they do in school (Jones et al., 2015).

Storytelling has long been recognized as one of the oldest and most important ways to teach and learn. Stories have been used for many purposes across countries, not just for fun. They have been used to teach values, keep traditions alive, spark children's imaginations, and help them develop their language, morals, and thinking skills. In early childhood schools, stories give kids a chance to experience a range of feelings, see things from different points of view, and consider how to act in everyday social situations. Children slowly learn empathy, emotional awareness, communication skills, and helpful behaviors through story-based events that support good social and emotional development.

Recent research has placed increasing emphasis on stories as a teaching approach that helps kids grow in all areas. Narrative-based teaching helps kids figure out how characters feel, understand how people interact, resolve conflicts, and make connections between fictional events and their own lives. Such situations prompt people to think more deeply about their actions and to improve their language and social skills simultaneously (Nicolopoulou, 2022). Storytelling also helps kids' brain function by improving their ability to pay attention, remember, see things from other people's points of view, and self-regulate. These are all important skills for social and emotional learning (SEL).

The increased focus on social and emotional learning worldwide makes it even clearer how important it is to use age-appropriate teaching methods in

early childhood education. Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making are core abilities that the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) identifies as important for kids' overall development (Mahoney et al., 2021). More and more people are realizing that these skills go hand in hand with academic learning. They have also been linked to greater interest in school, better behavior, and long-term academic success.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education recognizes the importance of supporting students' overall growth by providing learning experiences that are play-based, child-centered, and culturally sensitive. In addition to cognitive, language, physical, and artistic development, the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide places a strong emphasis on social and emotional growth. So, telling stories has become an important part of teaching because it gives kids real chances to improve their communication skills, learn about their cultural background, and understand social norms through valuable interactions.

Even though storytelling is becoming more popular as a teaching method, there is still little real-world evidence showing how it helps Filipino kindergarteners improve their social and emotional skills. Previous research has mostly examined how stories can support reading comprehension, language learning, or literacy. On the other hand, few studies have examined how teachers intentionally use stories to help students learn to control their emotions, show understanding, build relationships, and act in ways that help others. Also, most of the studies conducted so far have used quantitative methods, which means they do not tell us much about teachers' real-life experiences, how they teach, or the problems that arise when they try to use stories in early childhood classes. Because of these gaps, more in-depth research is needed to understand how kindergarten teachers experience and use stories in real classrooms. Thinking about things from teachers' points of view might help us understand how stories support children's social and emotional growth, as well as the external factors that make it easier or harder to use them.

The current study addresses this gap by examining what kindergarten teachers in the Loon Districts, Division of Bohol, have to say about using stories to help kids improve their social and emotional skills. The study uses qualitative research to examine how teachers teach, how they believe storytelling supports kids' emotional and social development, the problems teachers face when trying to use storytelling in the classroom, and their suggestions for making storytelling a more effective teaching method. The study adds to what is known about early childhood education by providing evidence specific to this situation. It could help develop the curriculum, train teachers, and conduct further studies on social and emotional learning in kindergartens in the Philippines.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Early childhood social and emotional development sets the stage for a child's ongoing learning, relationships, mental health, and readiness for school. Kindergarten is a time when kids learn to recognize and control their feelings, make friends with adults and other kids, show kindness, and learn the self-control skills they need to do well in school and in their community. These skills affect kids' long-term educational, behavioral, and emotional results, not just how well they do in school (Jones et al., 2015). Storytelling has long been recognized as one of the oldest and most important ways to teach and learn. Stories have been used for many purposes across countries, not just for fun. They have been used to teach values, keep traditions alive, spark children's imaginations, and help them develop their language, morals, and thinking skills. In early childhood schools, stories give kids a chance to experience a range of feelings, see things from different points of view, and consider how to act in everyday social situations. Children slowly learn empathy, emotional awareness, communication skills, and helpful behaviors through story-based events that support good social and emotional development.

Recent research has placed increasing emphasis on stories as a teaching approach that helps kids grow in all areas. Narrative-based teaching helps kids figure out how characters feel, understand how people interact, resolve conflicts, and make connections between fictional events and their own lives. Such situations prompt people to think more deeply about their actions and to improve their language and social skills simultaneously (Nicolopoulou, 2022). Storytelling also helps kids' brain function by improving their ability to pay attention, remember, see things from other people's points of view, and self-regulate. These are all important skills for social and emotional learning (SEL).

The increased focus on social and emotional learning worldwide makes it even clearer how important it is to use age-appropriate teaching methods in early childhood education. Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making are core abilities that the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) identifies as important for kids' overall development (Mahoney et al., 2021). More and more people are realizing that these skills go hand in hand with academic learning. They have also been linked to greater interest in school, better behavior, and long-term academic success.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education recognizes the importance of supporting students' overall growth by providing learning experiences that are play-based, child-centered, and culturally sensitive. In addition to cognitive, language, physical, and artistic development, the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide places significant emphasis on social and emotional growth. So, telling stories has become an important part of teaching because it gives kids real chances to improve their communication skills, learn about their cultural background, and understand social norms through

valuable interactions.

Even though storytelling is becoming more popular as a teaching method, there is still little real-world evidence showing how it helps Filipino kindergarteners improve their social and emotional skills. Previous research has mostly examined how stories can support reading comprehension, language learning, or literacy. On the other hand, few studies have examined how teachers intentionally use stories to help students learn to control their emotions, show understanding, build relationships, and act in ways that help others. Also, most of the studies conducted so far have used quantitative methods, which means they do not tell us much about teachers' real-life experiences, how they teach, or the problems that arise when they try to use stories in early childhood classes.

Because of these gaps, more in-depth research is needed to understand how kindergarten teachers experience and use stories in real classrooms. Thinking about things from teachers' points of view might help us understand how stories support kids' social and emotional growth, as well as the external factors that make it easier or harder to use them. The current study addresses this gap by examining what kindergarten teachers in the Loon Districts, Division of Bohol, have to say about using stories to help kids improve their social and emotional skills. The study uses qualitative research to examine how teachers teach, how they believe storytelling supports kids' emotional and social development, the problems teachers face when trying to use storytelling in the classroom, and their suggestions for making storytelling a more effective teaching method. The study adds to what is known about early childhood education by providing evidence specific to this situation. It could help develop the curriculum, train teachers, and conduct further studies on social and emotional learning in kindergartens in the Philippines.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Storytelling and Early Childhood Learning. Previous research has regularly shown that stories are good for kids' language and social development. However, fewer studies have examined how teachers intentionally use stories in culturally responsive kindergarten lessons. Children build their imagination, communication skills, moral knowledge, and humanity through stories that they can relate to their own lives (Nicolopoulou, 2022). Narrative-based teaching also improves brain functioning, including attention, working memory, and understanding of other points of view. This helps kids control their emotions and get along with others.

Storytelling and Social-Emotional Development. Social-emotional learning (SEL) includes teaching kids how to notice their feelings, make friends, control their behavior, and make smart choices. It has been shown that incorporating SEL into regular school activities is good for kids' academic

involvement and health (Mahoney et al., 2021). Storytelling gives people real situations to talk about their feelings, work out their differences, and see things from different points of view, which encourages kindness and helpful behavior.

Teachers' Role in Storytelling. Through expressive narration, guided asking, and thoughtful conversation, teachers play a key part in making the most of storytelling's educational value. Children are more likely to understand what characters are going through, express how they feel, and make connections between stories and their own lives when they are well facilitated. Because of this, having professional knowledge of storytelling, child development, and social-emotional learning improves children's storytelling experiences.

Family and Cultural Context. Telling stories is still an important part of culture because it helps kids understand family traditions, neighborhood ideals, and their own heritage. Children's emotional safety, ethnic identity, and social knowledge are all strengthened by consistent storytelling experiences at home and at school. Culturally relevant stories also help kids learn in a useful way by mirroring their own lives and the situations they live in.

REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

International studies repeatedly show that reading stories to kids improves their emotional intelligence, understanding, speaking skills, and interest in learning (Nicolopoulou, 2022). Narrative-based treatments have also been linked to changes in kids' emotional vocabulary, ability to understand other points of view, and ability to work together. Recent studies also show that teachers' teaching methods have a big effect on how well students tell stories. Role-playing, interactive questions, and reflective conversation all help kids learn more about feelings and social interactions while increasing their involvement in the classroom (Isbell et al., 2021).

Storytelling has mostly been viewed as a way to help people learn to read and write, and to understand what they read, in the Philippines. Fewer studies have examined how it affects social and mental development, especially among kindergarteners. Also, most of the research to date has used quantitative methods, which makes it hard to understand teachers' views and how they work across different settings.

These findings show three important gaps in the study. First, there is little personal research on how kindergarten teachers intentionally use stories to help kids develop social and emotional skills. Second, few studies in the Philippines examine stories from teachers' perspectives. Third, there is not much real-world data on how stories are told in the country's public kindergartens. Filling these gaps could help people develop methods that are more useful in real-life situations and improve the social and emotional learning of young children.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This study employed a **qualitative phenomenological research design** to explore kindergarten teachers' lived experiences in using storytelling to promote children's social-emotional development. A phenomenological approach was considered appropriate because it seeks to understand participants' shared experiences and the meanings they ascribe to them (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Participants and Setting. The study was conducted in selected public kindergartens in the Loon District, **Division of Bohol, Philippines**. Participants were kindergarten teachers selected through purposive sampling for their direct experience implementing storytelling activities. Teachers with at least one year of kindergarten teaching experience and active use of storytelling in classroom instruction were invited to participate.

Data Collection. Data were gathered through **semi-structured, in-depth interviews** using an interview guide developed from the study objectives and validated by experts in early childhood education and qualitative research. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim. Field notes and reflective memos supplemented the interview data to enrich contextual understanding.

Data Analysis. Interview transcripts were analyzed using **thematic analysis** following Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase framework: familiarization, coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and report writing. Trustworthiness was established through member checking, peer debriefing, triangulation, and maintaining an audit trail to enhance credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Considerations. Ethical clearance was secured from the University's Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection. Permission was likewise obtained from the Department of Education and participating schools. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and secure data management were maintained throughout the study in accordance with the **Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173)**.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Storytelling as a Catalyst for Social-Emotional Development. The findings demonstrate that storytelling serves as an effective instructional strategy for promoting children's social-emotional development. Both teachers and parents consistently observed that storytelling provided opportunities for children to recognize emotions, express their feelings, and understand others' experiences. Rather than simply entertaining learners, stories became meaningful learning experiences where children related characters' emotions

to their own lives, thereby strengthening emotional awareness and empathy. These observations support Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that learning develops through social interaction, as well as recent studies highlighting storytelling as a means of enhancing emotional literacy and self-expression (Amin et al., 2024; Costa, 2024).

Cultural Relevance Enhances Children's Engagement. Participants emphasized that stories delivered in the local Bisaya language and grounded in familiar cultural experiences elicited greater participation and emotional involvement among learners. Children were more attentive, enthusiastic, and willing to share personal experiences when they recognized themselves within the stories. Such familiarity strengthened their cultural identity while making social-emotional lessons more meaningful. These findings reinforce the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy, which suggests that learning becomes more relevant when instructional materials reflect learners' cultural backgrounds (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Storytelling Develops Core Social-Emotional Competencies. Analysis further revealed that storytelling cultivates several essential competencies, including empathy, emotional regulation, self-confidence, cooperation, perspective-taking, and interpersonal communication. Teachers observed that guided questioning, role-playing, and reflective discussions enabled children to internalize positive behaviors demonstrated by story characters. Likewise, parents noted improvements in children's emotional expression and relationships at home. These findings correspond with the CASEL framework and previous research suggesting that narratives provide children with opportunities to practice emotional regulation and develop positive interpersonal behaviors (Denham et al., 2012; Nicolopoulou et al., 2015).

Home-School Partnership Strengthens Storytelling Outcomes. An important finding of the study is the strong agreement between teachers and parents on the educational value of storytelling. Parents reinforced classroom storytelling through conversations and shared reading experiences at home, allowing children to transfer lessons learned in school into everyday family interactions. This partnership created a supportive learning environment that promoted consistency in children's social-emotional experiences. Such findings support Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, emphasizing that children's development is strengthened when families and schools work collaboratively toward common educational goals (Sheridan et al., 2010).

Challenges in Storytelling Implementation. Despite its recognized benefits, participants identified practical challenges that limit the consistent integration of storytelling into kindergarten instruction. These include the limited availability of culturally relevant storybooks, inadequate instructional resources, competing curricular demands, and limited opportunities for teacher professional development. Although teachers remained committed to using storytelling, these constraints affected the depth and frequency of implementation. The findings suggest that institutional investments in

localized learning resources and teacher capacity-building would strengthen the effectiveness of storytelling as a social-emotional learning strategy.

Overall, the study demonstrates that storytelling extends beyond literacy instruction. When intentionally integrated into kindergarten classrooms and supported by parents, storytelling becomes a culturally meaningful pedagogical practice that promotes emotional competence, positive relationships, and holistic child development.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that storytelling is an effective and culturally responsive approach for fostering the social-emotional development of kindergarten learners. Through meaningful narratives, children develop empathy, emotional regulation, self-awareness, cooperation, confidence, and positive interpersonal relationships. Stories that reflect local culture and language further strengthen learners' identity, sense of belonging, and engagement, making learning experiences more authentic and meaningful.

The study likewise demonstrates the importance of collaborative efforts between schools and families. The shared recognition of storytelling's value among teachers and parents creates a supportive environment that reinforces children's social-emotional learning across home and school settings. While implementation challenges remain, particularly in terms of instructional resources, time allocation, and teacher preparation, these limitations present opportunities for institutional improvement rather than barriers to implementation.

Overall, storytelling emerges as more than a literacy strategy; it is a holistic pedagogical approach that nurtures emotionally competent, socially responsible, and culturally grounded young learners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Kindergarten teachers may integrate structured storytelling as a regular component of classroom instruction to intentionally promote social-emotional learning.
2. School administrators may provide continuous professional development on storytelling strategies, culturally responsive pedagogy, and social-emotional learning integration.
3. Schools may develop and expand localized storytelling resources, including Bisaya storybooks, puppets, visual materials, and digital storytelling tools that reflect the learners' cultural experiences.
4. Parents may be encouraged to engage in regular storytelling activities at home to reinforce children's emotional development and strengthen home-school partnerships.

5. The Department of Education may consider incorporating storytelling more explicitly into kindergarten learning standards and instructional support programs for social-emotional learning.
6. Future researchers may investigate the long-term effects of storytelling on children's academic achievement, behavior, language development, and emotional well-being using mixed-methods or longitudinal research designs across broader educational contexts.
- 7.

REFERENCES CITED

- Brackett, M. A. (2019). *Permission to feel*. Celadon Books.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Harvard University Press.
- CASEL. (2024). *What is social and emotional learning?* <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- Domitrovich, C. E., Durlak, J. A., Staley, K. C., & Weissberg, R. P. (2017). Social-emotional competence: An essential factor for promoting positive adjustment and reducing risk in school children. *Child Development*, 88(2), 408–416. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12739>
- Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The prosocial classroom. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 491–525. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308325693>
- Isbell, R., Sobol, J., Lindauer, L., & Lowrance, A. (2004). *The effects of storytelling and story reading on the oral language complexity and story comprehension of young children*. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 32(3), 157–163. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:ECEJ.0000048967.94189.a3>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE.
- Mahoney, J. L., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2021). An update on social and emotional learning outcome research. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 103(1), 18–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00317217211055403>

- Nicolopoulou, A. (2008). The elementary forms of narrative coherence in young children's storytelling. *Narrative Inquiry*, 18(2), 299–325. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.18.2.05nic>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.