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Improving Early Literacy Through Kamishibai Storytelling: Action Research in an Indonesian Kindergarten

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of the Kamishibai storytelling method in improving early childhood literacy skills among children aged 5–6 years. A classroom action research design was employed, consisting of two cycles conducted at TK Aisiyah 16 Surabaya. Cycle I was implemented from February 12–13, 2024, and Cycle II from February 19–20, 2024. Each cycle followed the four core stages of action research: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research involved 15 children from Group B1 and utilized participatory observation as the primary data collection technique. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods based on literacy performance indicators, including the ability to appreciate reading, respond to story content, recognize narrative elements, and retell stories. The results demonstrated a substantial improvement in children's literacy development following the application of the Kamishibai method. In Cycle I, 13% of participants were categorized as Beginning, 47% as Achieving, and 20% as Exceeding. By Cycle II, no children remained in the Beginning category, while 66.67% were categorized as Achieving and 33.33% as Exceeding. These outcomes indicate that the Kamishibai method—when applied with appropriate storytelling techniques such as expressive voice, visual cues, and interactive engagement—can significantly enhance children's reading interest, comprehension, and narrative skills. The study contributes to the field of early childhood education by emphasizing the role of expressive, visual-based storytelling in fostering foundational literacy. However, limitations include the small sample size and single-site design, which restrict generalizability. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of Kamishibai through longitudinal and mixed-method studies in diverse educational settings. The findings support the potential of Kamishibai as an engaging and inclusive literacy strategy that integrates narrative structure with multimodal learning to support early language development.

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Introduction

There are many emerging phenomena in society resulting from the rapid advancement of technology. One major issue that requires serious attention—apart from the problem of device addiction—is the low interest in literacy among Indonesians. This disinterest in reading affects both adults and children. Several studies have highlighted a significant gap in children's reading literacy skills. In fact, reading literacy is essential for understanding educational materials and completing academic tasks. Based on research findings, out of 100 students studied, 75% paid little attention to punctuation, 60% had difficulty comprehending the reading content, 10% exhibited low reading fluency, 22% lost meaning due to unreadable letters or words, and 21% made errors when pronouncing letters with similar shapes or sounds (Rahmawati & Nawangsari, 2022). Additionally, the national Alibaca Index categorizes literacy activity as low, with nine provinces falling into the moderate category, 24 into the low category, and one into the very low category. This indicates that no province in Indonesia has yet achieved a high literacy level (Oktaviana et al., 2021).

Kindergarten literacy skills include a variety of early literacy and writing exploration abilities that increase in complexity. These skills comprise both constrained and unconstrained components. Constrained components, also referred to as technical or decoding skills, include print awareness, phonics, and letter recognition. Although essential, these skills are insufficient on their own for achieving full literacy. The most effective approach to teaching and assessing them is within a comprehensive language and literacy framework. Unconstrained or meaning-based components include oral communication, vocabulary, and comprehension. These skills require consistent routines and intentional practice, and they continue to develop throughout a person's life (Maureen et al., 2020).

Furthermore, building meaning-based skills such as vocabulary acquisition, oral language proficiency, and reading comprehension necessitates repeated and meaningful daily activities. Based on observations at Pertiwi 1 Kindergarten in Tirtobangun, Nganjuk Regency, it was found that while some children exhibited strong literacy abilities, limited vocabulary and lack of exposure to meaningful stories hindered their understanding of story content (Nikmah & Darwati, 2021). Therefore, early childhood reading strategies must consider children's local contexts, including their culture, commonly spoken language, and home and school practices.

Because reading requires long-term habituation, it is essential to foster a culture of literacy from an early age. Children should be exposed to reading both at home and at school, with consistent guidance to help them develop interest and enthusiasm for reading. The goal of establishing a literacy culture is to prepare children for school by equipping them with reading and writing skills before entering formal education (Simatupang et al., 2023). Rather than beginning with alphabet instruction, this literacy strategy emphasizes making reading an enjoyable experience. Since early childhood education belongs to the pre-reading phase, changes in literacy practices must be contextual and developmentally appropriate.

According to preliminary observations conducted at Aisyiyah 16 Kindergarten in Surabaya, about 11 of the 15 children observed lacked literacy skills appropriate for their developmental stage. Identified issues included difficulty retelling stories, recognizing story elements, responding to readings, and showing appreciation for reading. Among the observed children, three had an average performance of 60%, four scored 40%, seven scored 25%, and one child reached 80%. These findings were further supported by interviews with group B teachers at the kindergarten, which revealed that storytelling activities were not routinely implemented. Additionally, the media used in storytelling were conventional and less engaging, consisting mainly of storybooks, puppets, and simple videos. The low frequency and limited variety of storytelling media are among the factors that impede children's literacy development. Therefore, there is a need for more interactive and contextually appropriate alternatives—one of which is the Kamishibai method, which teachers can use to effectively improve children's literacy interest and skills.

Storytelling is the act of conveying information or events through audio or visual means to communicate a message. The storytelling method involves improvisational use of words, visuals, and sounds (Anggraeni et al., 2019). It includes verbal narration, pictures, sounds, or body language aimed at influencing or persuading the audience (Rahiem, 2021). Storytelling offers several benefits: it extends children's attention spans, enhances imagination, supports comprehension, improves communication effectiveness, and fosters a love for stories (Suci et al., 2024).

Narratives can stimulate children's cognitive patterns, which may serve as a foundation for behavior. These patterns become embedded in the subconscious and gradually shape thought processes. Picture books with audiovisual elements—integrating text, images, and sound—can be effective tools for delivering messages in the classroom (Supartini & Ambara, 2022). According to Hajrah, storytelling increases children's interest in listening to stories. Moreover, when appropriate aids are used during storytelling, children become more engaged and attentive, making the learning process more memorable and easier to recall (Wirsa & Saridewi, 2020).

The Kamishibai method offers a compelling alternative storytelling technique. Kamishibai is a traditional Japanese form of storytelling that employs illustrated cards to convey narratives visually and interactively (Susilana et al., 2021; Vermeir & Kelchtermans, 2020). One key advantage of Kamishibai lies in its strong visual components, which aid in enhancing children's story comprehension. The method also encourages active participation, making the storytelling process more engaging. Furthermore, its short and simple narrative structure aligns well with the attention span of young children (Susilana et al., 2021). The Kamishibai technique supports visual storytelling in language education and resembles a wooden theater that displays a sequence of illustrated cards (Vermeir & Kelchtermans, 2020).

The interactive and visual nature of Kamishibai storytelling can increase children's interest in reading and learning, especially among those with low literacy levels (Maureen et al., 2020; Wildová & Kropáčková, 2015). The method is adaptable across different age groups and cultural contexts, making it suitable for a wide range of educational settings. Kamishibai also supports the development of narrative skills and contextual understanding, and it promotes inclusivity for learners facing reading difficulties. By incorporating approaches like Kamishibai, more effective literacy strategies can be implemented for children struggling with literacy development (Arsa et al., 2019; K. Novitasari, 2019; Satriana et al., 2022; Utomo, 2020).

Originating in Japan, Kamishibai can be effectively adapted to the Indonesian context due to its integration of images and oral narration, which enhance children's engagement with reading. The method can be tailored to local themes, making it relevant to Indonesian culture and supporting comprehension. Additionally, Kamishibai contributes to early literacy development and offers an innovative strategy to address Indonesia's literacy challenges. Its implementation in teaching provides variation and increases children's motivation to learn and read (Chen & Chen, 2022; Marqués Ibáñez, 2017).

Based on the issues described above, this study seeks to explore the use of the Kamishibai method in storytelling activities aimed at improving the literacy skills of children aged 5–6 years. The objective is to enhance early literacy development, considering that early childhood is a critical phase in language acquisition. The Kamishibai method offers an innovative approach for educators and parents to support children's language growth optimally. This study is therefore important to determine the extent to which Kamishibai can improve the literacy skills of 5–6-year-olds and to identify the factors that support its successful implementation in storytelling practices.

Nevertheless, research on the use of Kamishibai as a storytelling method in Indonesian early childhood education remains limited. Most existing studies have been conducted abroad, and its local application—especially among children aged 5–6—has not been thoroughly investigated. Consequently, this article is expected to contribute theoretically to the advancement of visual and narrative-based literacy strategies in early childhood education, and practically by offering PAUD teachers effective and engaging storytelling methods to improve their students' literacy outcomes.

Methods

This study adopted a classroom action research (CAR) design following the model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart, which consists of two cycles and four main stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Arikunto, 2013). The study was conducted in group B1 of TK Aisyiyah 16 Surabaya, involving 15 children aged 5–6 years as research participants.

Data Collection

Data were collected through documentation, interviews, and structured observation. Observations were conducted during each storytelling session using observation sheets developed based on early literacy indicators to evaluate the children's literacy development. Group B teachers were interviewed to explore their experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the Kamishibai method in classroom practice. Field notes were used to capture critical insights not covered by other instruments, while documentation in the

form of photographs and videos was collected to provide supporting evidence throughout the learning process.

The instruments used in this study are detailed in the table below:

Table 1. Research Instrument

No	Level of Criteria	Score
Literacy skills	Appreciating texts (print motivation)	1-4
	Responding to story	5-10
	Recognizing story (Narrative skills)	11-16
	Re-telling the story	17-20

Source: Hamidatussholihat & Rohmalina, 2023; Y. Novitasari & Fauziddin, 2022

Data Analysis

This study used a combination of descriptive statistics and a quantitative approach. Observation data were analyzed to identify patterns and key themes associated with literacy development. Coding procedures were employed based on indicators such as the ability to comprehend story content, recognize letters, and retell the content of readings (Mardapi, 2008).

To categorize levels of literacy development, the mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SBx) were calculated. Children's performance was classified into four categories: Beginning (BB), Developing (MB), Achieving (BSH), and Exceeding (BSB). Data processing was conducted using SPSS to calculate score distributions, means, and standard deviations, ensuring an objective evaluation of the Kamishibai method's effectiveness in improving children's literacy skills.

Table 2. Assessment Criteria for Literacy Skills

No	Level of Criteria	Score Range
1	Beginning	0%–25%
2	Developing	26%–50%
3	Achieving	51%–75%
4	Exceeding	76%–100%

The success criterion for this study was that at least 75% of participating children reach the "Achieving" category. This threshold is consistent with common practices in classroom action research, where 75% is used as the minimum benchmark for treatment effectiveness. This figure was used to confirm significant improvements in literacy outcomes compared to baseline conditions.

Instrument Validation and Ethical Considerations

After the instruments were developed based on predefined indicators, expert judgment was conducted to ensure validity. The validator for this study was Dr. Ruqoyyah Fitri, S.Ag., M.Pd., a lecturer with expertise in early childhood education. The validation process was completed on March 18, 2024, with a validity score of 97.5%, categorizing the instrument as "Highly Recommended" for research use.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the institutional research ethics board. Written informed consent was secured from the parents or guardians of all participating children. All procedures complied with ethical standards for research involving human subjects, particularly minors.

Result

Initial Condition Before the Intervention

Initial observations were carried out in Group B1 of Aisyiyah 16 Kindergarten Surabaya on February 6, 2024, with the aim of assessing the children's early literacy skills. The observation focused on four key indicators: the ability to appreciate reading, respond to reading, recognize story elements, and retell stories. A total of 15 children participated in the observation. The results revealed that literacy-related activities in the classroom were still minimal. Most children

showed low levels of engagement and interest in reading-related tasks, and several encountered difficulty in understanding and retelling the stories presented to them.

These preliminary findings highlighted the need for more engaging and interactive literacy strategies. Storytelling activities were identified as a promising approach to address this gap, particularly if designed to foster active participation. Table 3 presents the results of the initial observation:

Table 3. Initial Observation Results Before Intervention

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Exceeding	1	6.66%
Achieving	3	20%
Developing	4	26.67%
Beginning	7	46.67%
Total	15	100%

A follow-up observation on September 2, 2024, reinforced the earlier assessment. The majority of children remained in the lower categories, with 46.67% in the Beginning category, 26.67% in Developing, 20% in Achieving, and only 6.66% in the Exceeding category. In response to these findings, the researchers designed a **targeted** intervention using the Kamishibai storytelling method. The primary goal of this intervention was to raise the percentage of children in the Achieving and Exceeding categories to at least 85%, thereby meeting the success indicators set for literacy improvement.

Implementation of the Kamishibai Method

The storytelling intervention using the Kamishibai method was implemented in Group B1 at Aisyiyah 16 Kindergarten Surabaya as a strategic effort to improve children's literacy skills. The activity was structured in two cycles, with each cycle comprising two meetings and following four essential stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The class teacher served as the primary facilitator throughout the storytelling process, while the researcher acted as a supporting observer.

During the storytelling sessions, Kamishibai media featuring colorful and thematic illustrations—primarily adventure stories—were used to encourage children's engagement, comprehension, and verbal interaction. The storytelling was designed to promote not only interest in reading but also active listening and expressive language development.

Implementation – Cycle I

The first cycle was conducted over two consecutive days, from May 6 to May 7, 2024, involving all 15 children (6 boys and 9 girls). Planning included scheduling, preparing the lesson plan based on the Weekly Overview Plan (RPPM), developing Kamishibai media and supporting materials, and creating research instruments such as observation sheets and interview protocols. The criteria for literacy assessment were also finalized at this stage.

The storytelling activity began with standard class openings, including prayer and recitations, followed by the Kamishibai session. The teacher narrated the story while displaying the illustrated cards in sequence, encouraging children to guess the next events, answer questions, and share their opinions. The children responded actively, indicating increased interest and cognitive engagement. One notable moment occurred when the teacher asked, "What do you think Monkichi will do to reach the top of the tree?", and a child responded, "It seems like Monkichi will have trouble reaching the top of the tree!"—demonstrating early signs of narrative inference and critical thinking (Supriatna, 2019).

After the storytelling, the children were asked comprehension questions and invited to retell parts of the story in their own words. This allowed researchers to assess individual understanding and expression. The results of the observation in Cycle I are presented below:

Table 4. Observation Results – Cycle I

Category	Before	
	Frequency	Percentage

Highly developed	3	20%
Developed	7	47%
Emerging	0	0%
Not Yet develop	5	33%
Total	15	100%

Compared to the initial observation, the first cycle showed a substantial increase in literacy outcomes. A total of 67% of children were in the Achieving or Exceeding categories, reflecting a 40.34% improvement from the previous 26.66%. The number of children in the Beginning category decreased from 46.67% to 33%, and no children were classified in the Developing category, indicating upward progress.

Despite this improvement, the intervention did not yet meet the 75% success criterion. The reflection stage identified several strengths and weaknesses. On the positive side, children exhibited strong enthusiasm and interest in the Kamishibai storytelling activities. Their responses, both verbal and non-verbal, indicated attentiveness and emotional connection to the narrative. The teacher was well-prepared, and the materials were used effectively to facilitate storytelling. Moreover, some children began to demonstrate initiative by volunteering responses and engaging with the characters and plot.

However, several areas required refinement. The storytelling technique was not yet fully aligned with the Kamishibai principle. For example, the synchronization between visual aids and narrative timing was occasionally inconsistent, and the pacing of the story sometimes disrupted comprehension. The teacher's feedback was also relatively limited and lacked the depth needed to reinforce children's understanding of the story. Furthermore, the session duration was not sufficiently flexible to allow deeper exploration of the story content or extended discussion with the children.

In light of these challenges, several adjustments were planned for Cycle II. Improvements were aimed at enhancing storytelling coherence by aligning visual elements more precisely with the narrative and refining vocal expression to match the story's tone. Additional time was allocated for post-story discussions, where children could reflect on and retell the narrative in their own words. Teachers were also encouraged to provide more constructive feedback and use more stimulating visual aids to capture attention and deepen comprehension.

Second Cycle

The second cycle was designed to address the shortcomings identified in the previous phase, particularly related to storytelling techniques, the quality of feedback provided, and the level of active participation among children. Although the first cycle had shown promising results, with most children reaching the Achieving and Exceeding categories, a number of them had not yet reached optimal development in literacy. Therefore, in Cycle II, the role of the teacher was strengthened, focusing on better mastery of the Kamishibai technique, especially in synchronizing the visuals with narration and using more expressive vocal intonation. The researcher maintained a supporting role as an observer and assistant throughout the process.

Cycle II was implemented over two sessions on May 13–14, 2024, involving the same group of 15 children (6 boys and 9 girls). The main emphasis during this cycle was on improving the quality of two-way interaction between teacher and students, offering more opportunities for children to express their thoughts, and adopting a more flexible session duration to ensure that every child had an equal chance to participate.

In the planning stage, the implementation schedule was confirmed, and a revised Daily Lesson Plan (RPPH) was created, aligned with the Weekly Overview Plan (RPPM). The Kamishibai storytelling sequence was refined to improve narrative flow and visual impact. Materials such as illustrated story cards were prepared, along with observation instruments and interview protocols to monitor children's participation. Literacy assessment criteria were also reviewed to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention.

The storytelling session began following routine class openings, including prayer, the recitation of short surahs, and Asmaul Husna. The children then gathered in the storytelling area,

where the Kamishibai story was presented using a series of illustrated boards shown sequentially. The teacher narrated the story expressively, invited students to predict the plot, asked questions during the session, and encouraged them to articulate their thoughts about the story. This approach helped deepen children's understanding while simultaneously fostering enthusiasm and engagement.

Following the storytelling session, the teacher assessed the children's comprehension through direct questioning. Selected children were also asked to retell parts of the story, providing insight into their narrative recall and expressive language development. Observations were conducted to record progress in literacy indicators.

Table 5. Observation Results – Cycle II

Category	Before	
	Frequency	Percentage
Highly developed	5	33.33
Developed	10	66.67%
Emerging	0	0%
Not Yet develop	0	0%
Total	15	100%

The results of Cycle II revealed a significant improvement in the distribution of students' literacy skills. A total of 33.33% of students reached the Exceeding category, while 66.67% were classified as Achieving. Notably, no students were found in the Developing or Beginning categories. These results indicate that all participants had met or exceeded the expected standard of literacy skills.

A comparison of the results from the two cycles illustrates a substantial difference in the effectiveness of the intervention, as shown in Figure 1.

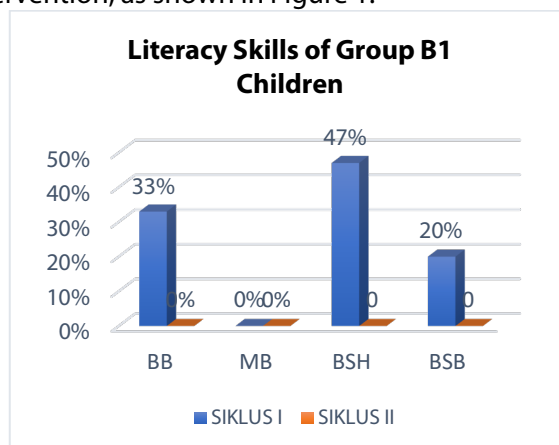


Figure 1. Differences in Results Between Cycle I and Cycle II

In Cycle I, only 20% of children were in the Exceeding category and 47% were Achieving, while 33% were still categorized as Beginning. In contrast, Cycle II demonstrated a complete shift: 33.33% of students were in the Exceeding category and 66.67% were Achieving, with no students remaining in the lower categories. This significant progression affirms the impact of improvements made in the application of the Kamishibai method.

The teacher's preparedness played a vital role in this success. Tools and materials were well-prepared, and a clearer explanation was provided before the story began, which helped improve student understanding. The storytelling delivery was more aligned with Kamishibai principles, making it more engaging for the children. There was a notable increase in student involvement, with many more actively participating in the session. The teacher provided opportunities for students to contribute to the narrative and delivered constructive feedback afterward, further reinforcing their learning. These enhancements reflect that the implementation in Cycle II was more effective than in the previous cycle.

Insights from interviews with teachers at TK Aisyiyah 16 Surabaya supported these findings. Teachers reported that the Kamishibai method had a positive impact on children's literacy development. Students were more enthusiastic during storytelling, more responsive during question-and-answer segments, and demonstrated better comprehension. Teachers noted that the visual elements of Kamishibai helped children follow the storyline and enhanced their ability to retell it coherently.

Moreover, the method contributed to vocabulary development and encouraged connections between the story and the children's personal experiences. Many students asked more questions and expressed greater interest in reading after the sessions. Teachers viewed Kamishibai as a highly effective method for building early literacy skills while increasing classroom interaction and student involvement. The storytelling process using the Kamishibai method in the classroom was documented, as shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Implementation of Kamishibai in the Classroom

The reflection from Cycle II revealed highly positive outcomes. The intervention led to substantial gains in children's literacy skills, with all students achieving either the Achieving or Exceeding levels. Children's enthusiasm was visible during the sessions—they listened attentively, engaged with the story, and participated actively in dialogue and discussion. Teachers also showed significant improvement in managing the activities. The storytelling technique was executed more effectively, with better synchronization between visuals and narration and greater expressive engagement, which successfully held the children's attention.

Importantly, children were given more space to ask questions, respond to the narrative, and express personal reflections. The feedback provided by the teacher was constructive and timely, reinforcing comprehension and supporting group discussions that allowed for deeper reflection on the story content. Although the intervention in Cycle II fully met the success indicators, the experience also suggested that additional variety in storytelling techniques could be explored in the future to enrich children's literacy development and maintain their sustained interest.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of the Kamishibai method significantly enhanced the literacy skills of children in Group B1 of Aisyiyah 16 Kindergarten, Surabaya. A notable improvement was observed in the distribution of literacy development categories: there was a clear reduction in the number of children in the "Beginning and Developing" categories, accompanied by a corresponding increase in those achieving "Achieving and Exceeding" levels. By the second cycle, all participating children had reached or surpassed the targeted literacy development standards. These outcomes align with the study by Widyana et al. (2024), which found that narrative visual media such as Kamishibai can

improve children's language abilities through a visual and participatory learning approach. The success observed in this study was supported by improvements in the teacher's storytelling techniques, increased opportunities for interactive dialogue, and the strategic use of feedback throughout the learning sessions.

Active participation by the children played a crucial role in strengthening contextual literacy understanding. The results affirm that the use of engaging and interactive storytelling methods—like Kamishibai—offers an effective approach in early childhood literacy development (Istiani, 2024). This is consistent with research by Sivara (2020), who emphasized that Kamishibai holds significant potential to enhance both literacy and communication skills in early childhood through active involvement in storytelling. In this study, every child ultimately reached the "Achieving" or "Exceeding" category, suggesting even stronger outcomes than those reported by Sivara. This difference may be attributable to the learning environment at Aisyiyah 16 Kindergarten, which supports participatory and story-based learning models, as well as the proactive role of the teacher as a facilitator of interaction during storytelling activities.

Furthermore, the findings support the assertion by Sari and Riyandini (2020) that expressive storytelling techniques can increase children's interest in learning. However, the present study expands upon this by showing that Kamishibai not only enhances enthusiasm but also contributes to the development of critical thinking skills through story-related discussions. Children were not passive listeners; instead, they actively engaged with the narrative by predicting outcomes and analyzing characters, thus reinforcing their cognitive and language development. These findings underscore that, when applied optimally and contextually, Kamishibai can have a substantial and positive impact on early literacy learning.

In line with these findings, Gulo et al. (2023) emphasized that Kamishibai supports vocabulary acquisition through interactive and enjoyable methods. Similarly, in this study, children were not only listeners but active participants—answering questions, engaging with visual content, and retelling stories in their own words. Literacy improvement was particularly evident when comparing data from the first and second cycles, where every child eventually reached the "Achieving" or "Exceeding" category. This further validates Kamishibai as an effective storytelling tool that enables children to understand content, learn new vocabulary, and practice oral storytelling—key elements in early literacy development.

The effectiveness of Kamishibai in fostering interest and engagement in reading was also confirmed by the children's increased enthusiasm and ability to recall story content. These results resonate with those of Kotas et al. (2023) and Levy (2016), who found that storytelling using visual methods can enhance both attention and memory retention. However, despite the overall success of the intervention, some areas of implementation require refinement. For example, improvements are still needed in making the storytelling process even more interactive and in enhancing the quality of teacher feedback. In addition, more effective time management during storytelling sessions would ensure that each child has sufficient opportunity to participate (Nevo & Vaknin-Nusbaum, 2018; Ulfa & Rakimahwati, 2020).

These findings contribute novel insights to the growing body of research on visual storytelling in early childhood education by demonstrating that, when implemented with carefully structured interaction, feedback, and teacher preparation, the Kamishibai method can produce universal improvements in literacy—without leaving behind any learners in lower development categories. This distinguishes the present study from previous works such as Sivara (2020), where improvements were noted but not all participants reached target literacy levels. The success of this method in achieving consistent outcomes across all participants, regardless of initial ability, suggests that Kamishibai—when used with high instructional fidelity—can serve as an inclusive and equitable pedagogical approach.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study also reinforces Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, particularly the role of mediated interaction and scaffolding in language development. The dialogic nature of Kamishibai, which allows children to co-construct meaning with teachers and peers, exemplifies how guided participation in meaningful literacy events facilitates

internalization and cognitive growth. These dynamics underline the potential of Kamishibai not merely as a storytelling tool, but as a structured learning environment that supports the development of both receptive and expressive language skills (Vygotsky, 1978).

Beyond the classroom, findings from other studies emphasize the complementary role of the family environment in developing children's literacy. Although this study did not directly measure parental involvement, previous research by Amalia and Maryatun (2024) indicates that storytelling habits at home can enhance children's interest and comprehension. Similarly, Wirsu and Saridewi (2020) found that family-based literacy practices help strengthen vocabulary and story comprehension. Therefore, it is theoretically plausible to suggest that a supportive home environment rich in literacy activities—such as routine storytelling—could significantly amplify the effectiveness of classroom-based methods like Kamishibai (Hayyu et al., 2024; Suratmi et al., 2024). Future research should consider examining the correlation between at-home reading habits and the success of classroom storytelling interventions.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Kamishibai storytelling method can significantly enhance the literacy skills of children aged 5–6 years in early childhood education settings. Following two action research cycles, all participating children in Group B1 at Aisyiyah 16 Kindergarten Surabaya achieved literacy development levels categorized as Achieving or Exceeding, marking a clear progression from the initial observation. Improvements in storytelling delivery—particularly the use of expressive voice, facial expression, and interactive dialogue—played a critical role in fostering children's engagement and comprehension.

Despite its promising outcomes, the study is limited by its single-site scope and lack of long-term follow-up. Future research should involve multi-site studies across diverse educational contexts, apply mixed-method approaches, and explore longitudinal impacts of visual-narrative-based literacy strategies. The findings underscore the practical potential of Kamishibai as an engaging, culturally adaptable, and pedagogically sound approach to improving early literacy. When applied with thoughtful instructional design and contextual sensitivity, Kamishibai can serve as an effective component of early literacy programs, particularly in settings where active participation and multimodal learning are emphasized.

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