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Reconceptualizing Storytelling as Social Constructivist Literacy Practice in Nonformal Education Settings

[1]Desika Putri Mardiani*, [1]Tri Lestari, [1]Gunarti Dwi Lestari, [1]Tri 'Ulya Qodriyati
Corresponding Author: *desikamardiani@unesa.ac.id
[1] Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The study explores storytelling as a social constructivist literacy practice in a non-formal education setting, specifically within a community library in Surabaya. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation involving library coordinators, tutors, parents, and children aged 7–12. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings reveal that storytelling functions as a dialogic literacy space where children actively participate in narrative reconstruction, collaborative meaning-making, and socially mediated interaction. Through expressive storytelling, reflective questioning, and storytelling practices, children demonstrated improvements in reading comprehension, oral communication, confidence, and participation in literacy activities. The study highlights the role of tutors, peer interaction, and family support in shaping a literacy ecosystem that enhances children's reading comprehension, communication skills, and confidence. The research contributes to the conceptual understanding of literacy as a socially mediated and contextually grounded practice in non-formal education.

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Introduction

The global contemporary literacy crisis among children has become a major concern across educational systems, particularly regarding children's declining capacity for deep reading, contextual understanding, and reflective interpretation. Although access to information has increased significantly through digital technology, children's literacy engagement is increasingly characterized by fragmented attention, passive information consumption, and surface-level comprehension. Recent findings [1] indicates that Indonesian children's literacy skills are experiencing difficulties in identifying implicit meanings, interpreting complex texts, and constructing critical understanding from reading materials. These findings suggest that literacy challenges are no longer limited to technical decoding abilities, but extend to higher-order interpretive and communicative competencies required in contemporary learning environments [2].

The rapid expansion of digital technology has transformed children's patterns of interaction and learning. School-aged children access information quickly through devices, dominated by visual and audiovisual content. Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) shows that 71.3% of school-aged children own devices, and more than 55% use them for gaming. A CNN Indonesia survey reported that 19.3% of adolescents are addicted to the internet. Visual and audiovisual media through smartphones and digital platforms are increasingly exposed, which frequently prioritize immediacy and entertainment over reflective engagement. Excessive gadget use has been associated with reduced concentration, limited verbal interaction, and weakened communicative development among children. Recent studies further indicate that prolonged exposure to passive digital consumption may negatively affect children's language development [1], narrative comprehension, and social interaction skills. Consequently, literacy education in the digital era requires approaches that not only strengthen reading proficiency but also foster dialogic participation, reflective communication, and collaborative meaning-making processes [2].

Contemporary literacy scholarship increasingly emphasizes that literacy should not be understood merely as an autonomous technical skill, like reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, as integrated language competencies [3]. Literacy practices require interpretation, negotiation of meaning, and active involvement in social interactions shaped by communication and cultural participation. Literacy practices are embedded within social relationships and ideological contexts rather than functioning solely as neutral cognitive competencies.

This perspective highlights the importance of creating literacy environments that support interactional and participatory learning experiences. Non-formal education plays a

strategic role in expanding literacy practices beyond formal schooling contexts. It is a fundamental right for every individual, guaranteeing access to knowledge and skill development. The formal education system provides an organized learning structure. Non-formal education complements this function by providing flexible and contextual learning spaces, and the community libraries, reading parks, and other community-based learning spaces are examples. Those communities provide learning spaces that expand literacy access for the community. They provide information collections, educational services, and literacy programs that encourage lifelong learning [3] . Libraries are formally recognized through Law Number 43 of 2007, as institutions that support lifelong learning and community participation in education, and provide social spaces that enable children to interact, discuss, and build collaborative learning experiences [4].

Beyond functioning as repositories of books, libraries increasingly serve as interactive social spaces where children participate in discussion, communication, and collective learning experiences. A study [5] confirmed that integration between libraries, families, and communities creates a literacy ecosystem oriented toward active participation and sustainable learning practices [6], and trigger an effective communication that is able to be prepared through storytelling, which involves listening to the story, understanding the narrative structure, identifying the message, and verbally reconstructing the plot.

This process develops coherent thinking skills, enriches vocabulary, and increases children's confidence in speaking. The interaction between the facilitator and the children creates a dialogue space that allows for clarification, elaboration, and shared reflection [7]. Through storytelling, children are encouraged not only to comprehend stories but also to negotiate meanings, express perspectives, and connect narratives with their own experiences. Furthermore, storytelling creates dialogic spaces that facilitate collaborative reflection, interpretive engagement, and interpersonal communication among children, tutors, and peers.

A participatory approach to storytelling gives children the opportunity to interpret and retell stories from their own perspective. This approach increases children's engagement, creativity, and language skills [8]. The theoretical significance of storytelling can be further understood through the lens of social constructivism, developed by [3], which positions language and interaction as central mechanisms in cognitive development.

This research examining storytelling as a dialogic literacy practice embedded within community-based nonformal education remains relatively limited [4]–[5]. Existing literacy interventions also tend to emphasize individual cognitive achievement while overlooking the relational and interactional dimensions of literacy practices occurring within community environments. Consequently, libraries are frequently understood merely as spaces providing reading materials rather than as literacy ecosystems facilitating collaborative meaning-making

and socially mediated literacy participation. This orientation has not fully integrated the dialogic dimension that emphasizes social interaction in the literacy process. The implementation of storytelling as a dialogic literacy strategy in the context of community library-based non-formal education remains limited [9].

This gap indicates the need to reconceptualize storytelling beyond its conventional function as a literacy instruction method, but also to bridge dialogic interaction, narrative reconstruction, and collaborative meaning-making processes within community-based literacy environments. Such reconceptualization is particularly important within nonformal education contexts where literacy learning is shaped by social relationships, participation, and cultural interaction rather than standardized instructional structures alone.

This study contributes theoretically by extending the understanding of storytelling from a merely instructional literacy strategy toward a social constructivist literacy practice embedded in participatory and community-based learning processes. Empirically, the study provides insight into how community libraries can function as dialogic literacy ecosystems that support children's communicative competence, literacy engagement, and collaborative meaning-making. The findings are expected to broaden current discussions on literacy development in nonformal education and offer practical implications for community-based literacy programs in the digital era. To clarify the conceptual relationship in this study, the researchers developed a conceptual framework, below on figure 1:

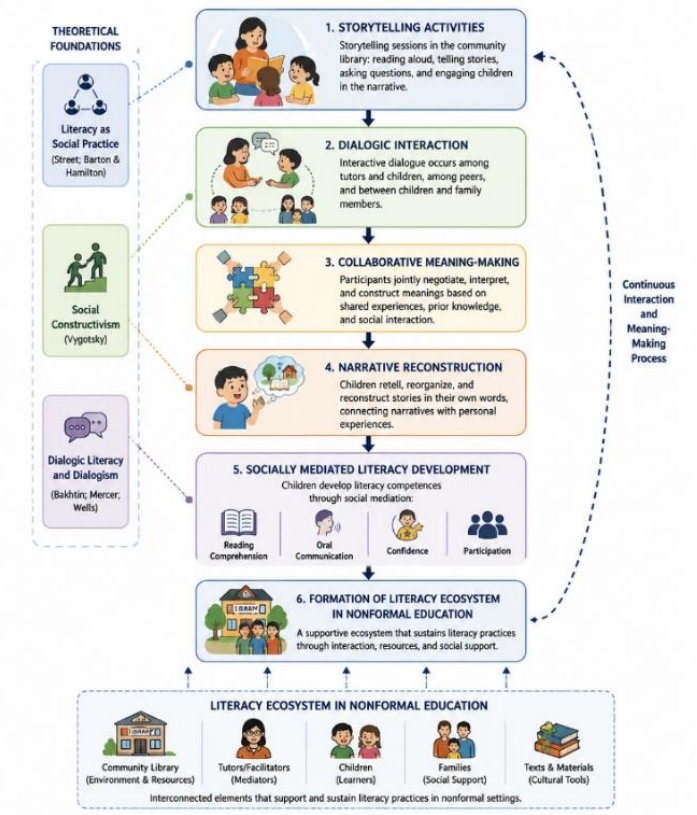


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework of Storytelling as Social Constructivist Literacy Practice in Nonformal Education Settings

The framework illustrates how storytelling activities facilitate dialogic interaction, collaborative meaning-making, narrative reconstruction, and socially mediated literacy development, ultimately contributing to the formation of a community-based literacy ecosystem.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive type to explore how storytelling functions as a dialogic literacy practice within a community-based nonformal education setting. This approach was considered appropriate because it aimed to understand in depth how the storytelling method as a dialogic literacy practice in the context of non-formal education through interactions and social engagement during the activities [10]. The research was conducted at the Rungkut Community Library in Surabaya (Rungkut Asri Tengah No. 5-7, Rungkut Kidul, Rungkut District, Surabaya City, East Java Province 60295) in an effort that was purposively selected because it actively organizes storytelling-based literacy programs. Researchers attempt to comprehensively interpret the informants' processes and experiences to illustrate how storytelling is implemented and how it contributes to children's literacy development [11].

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that all informants possessed direct experience related to the storytelling literacy program. The participants consisted of one library coordinator, two storytelling tutors, two library staff members, four parents, and twelve children aged 7–12 years who regularly participated in storytelling activities. Children were selected based on active participation in storytelling sessions for at least three months and regular involvement in library literacy programs.

Data were collected over three months through semi-structured in-depth interviews to gather information regarding program planning, storytelling implementation strategies, supporting and inhibiting factors, and perceptions of the impact of activities on children's literacy skills; participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews explored storytelling implementation, literacy facilitation strategies, interactional dynamics, and perceptions regarding children’s literacy development. Participatory observation was conducted during six storytelling sessions to capture dialogic interaction, collaborative meaning-making, narrative reconstruction, and children’s verbal participation during literacy activities to capture the dynamics of interactions during storytelling activities, including children's responses, aiming to directly observe how tutors manage the class and provide literacy stimulation; Documentation included photographs, literacy activity records, field notes, and story-related

learning materials to strengthen data from interviews and observations, including photographs of activities [12].

The data analysis employed the interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, conducted simultaneously with the data collection process [13]. To strengthen analytical rigor, the researcher implemented open coding, axial coding, and thematic categorization systematically across interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation data. Initial codes such as dialogic interaction, peer collaboration, questioning practices, narrative retelling, family involvement, and literacy participation were grouped into broader conceptual categories and refined into major themes. The final themes identified included storytelling as dialogic interaction, collaborative meaning-making, narrative reconstruction, socially mediated literacy participation, and the formation of community-based literacy ecosystems.

To ensure trustworthiness, this study employed source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing findings across interviews, observations, and documentation. Member checking was conducted with selected participants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations and thematic findings, while prolonged engagement enabled deeper contextual understanding of literacy interactions within the library environment. Thick description was used to provide detailed contextual explanations regarding storytelling practices and participant interactions. Ethical considerations were prioritized because the study involved children aged 7–12 years. Written informed consent was obtained from parents prior to participation, and pseudonyms were used throughout the study to protect participants' identities and confidentiality.

Results and Discussions

A. Storytelling as Dialogic Literacy Space

Storytelling as a dialogic literacy space, reflects a learning practice that places interaction, dialogue, and collaborative meaning-making at the core of literacy development. From this perspective, literacy is understood not only as the technical ability to read and write, but as a social process involving the exchange of ideas, reflection, and negotiation of meaning between the facilitator and the child. Dialogic literacy spaces enable children not only to receive information but also to actively interpret, re-express, and construct understanding through two-way communication, as illustrated in Fig. 2.

Based on Fig. 2, the storytelling activities conducted at the Rungkut Community Library illustrate how literacy practices in nonformal education settings can function as participatory communicative spaces where children actively engage in dialogue, reflection, and narrative interpretation. This program is implemented through regularly scheduled storytelling classes,

twice a month, with a duration of one hour each. The number of participants is limited to ensure optimal mentoring and intensive dialogic interaction between tutors and children.



Fig. 2. Storytelling Class Activity at the Rungkut Library, Surabaya

Storytelling activities in the library are organized not as one-directional reading instruction, but as participatory literacy interactions involving tutors, children, and peer groups. The interactional arrangement observed during storytelling sessions demonstrates the dialogic nature of literacy engagement, where meaning is collaboratively negotiated through questioning, reflective discussion, expressive reading, and narrative retelling. This finding indicates that literacy participation emerges through social interaction rather than through isolated reading activities alone.

The storytelling activity begins with a preparation phase, which includes creating a schedule, determining a theme, selecting storybooks, and creating a lesson plan or starter kit, which the tutors use as a reference during the activity. The activity is published through social media and the community reading park (TBM) network to reach the surrounding community. During the activity, the tutor begins with a prayer, an icebreaker, and light communication to build an emotional connection with the children.

The storytelling method is implemented through several stages: reading books independently or with guidance, understanding the content using the 5W+1H approach, and then retelling the story in the child's own words. Tutors first provide storytelling examples, either through expressive reading or hands-on practice, so the child has a model for telling the story. Children are also given the opportunity to perform in turns, either in front of their peers or through video recordings for documentation and evaluation.

Activity evaluations are conducted periodically by administrators and tutors, not only to assess children's progress but also to review the effectiveness of the methods, the readiness of

facilities, and any challenges that arise during implementation. With this system, storytelling at the Rungkut Library is not implemented spontaneously, but rather through continuous planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Literacy skills are a crucial foundation for the academic development of elementary school-aged children. Literacy is not only defined as the technical ability to read and write, but also encompasses the ability to understand the meaning of reading, convey ideas, and build understanding of the information obtained. In the context of this research, the implementation of storytelling methods at the Rungkut Library in Surabaya is a non-formal learning strategy designed to strengthen the literacy skills of children aged 7–12 in a fun and meaningful way.

Based on observations and interviews with library coordinator Mr. Awe Jandris, he stated,

> *"The implementation of the storytelling method has had a positive impact on increasing reading interest and the ability to understand the content. The children demonstrated high enthusiasm throughout the activity. They were more active in asking questions, expressed their opinions, and were able to deduce the moral message from the stories."* (W/KP/08-1-26).

This demonstrates that the storytelling method serves not only as a form of entertainment but also as an effective means of stimulating literacy.

The storytelling method is understood as the process of conveying messages, values, and information through narratives packaged in an interesting way so as to stimulate children's cognitive, language, social, and emotional aspects. This activity is carried out on a schedule by involving librarians and literacy facilitators as the main resource persons. Children not only listen to the story, but are also invited to discuss, answer questions, and retell the story in their own words. Contextually, literacy skills in elementary school-aged children are closely related to the ability to understand the context of the reading, not just to recite word for word. This view is in line with the policy issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia [14]. which emphasizes the importance of strengthening literacy as part of children's foundational abilities. Literacy is positioned as the ability to understand, process, and use information reflectively for self-development and social participation.

The research results show that some parents initially only understood literacy as the ability to read fluently and well. However, after gaining understanding through activities and direct involvement in the program, through storytelling, this perception begins to shift. Parents are beginning to realize that the ability to understand story content, respond critically to questions, and retell stories is an important part of literacy that needs to be developed from an early age.

In practice, the storytelling method at the Rungkut Library in Surabaya is designed with the principles of fun and participatory learning in mind. Children sit in a circle to create an interactive atmosphere, while tutors use varied intonations, facial expressions, and simple toys

to capture their attention. This strategy has proven effective in improving children's focus and retention of the story's content. Children who were initially passive become more engaged when given the opportunity to play characters or continue the storyline.

The success of storytelling in improving literacy is inseparable from the ability to build self-preparation and readiness to learn in children. Children who actively participate in story discussions learn to control their emotions, wait for their turn to speak, and respect the opinions of their peers. This process shows that storytelling not only improves reading and comprehension skills but also encourages engagement, concentration, and discipline in participating in learning. Based on research conducted by [15], the application of storytelling can improve children's literacy by encouraging active participation, listening skills, understanding stories, and conveying ideas orally and in writing.

Therefore, successful storytelling not only influences cognitive literacy skills but also increases children's readiness to learn through active involvement and behavioral management in the learning process. Furthermore, the storytelling method also contributes to strengthening six foundations of children's abilities: religious values and morals, emotional maturity, social and language skills, positive learning interpretations, motor skills, and basic cognitive maturity [6]–[7]. Children not only learn to read texts but also understand moral values, learn to empathize with characters, and associate stories with their personal experiences. This process demonstrates that literacy develops holistically, inseparable from other aspects of development.

In terms of preparation and the role of tutors, the study results indicate that library coordinators and tutors have an adequate understanding of the importance of comprehension-based literacy. This understanding is reflected in activity planning, which prioritizes not only mechanical reading skills but also children's ability to understand, interpret, and communicate story content [8]. However, field findings also indicate that the variety of storytelling techniques used is still limited. Therefore, capacity building through training in more creative and participatory storytelling techniques is crucial for optimal and innovative program implementation.

Alignment between the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages is crucial for maintaining a literacy program. When tutors regularly plan activities, from selecting age-appropriate story material and using supporting media to final reflection, children demonstrate higher levels of engagement. This aligns with Lev Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism, which emphasizes that children's cognitive development is built through social interaction and the use of language as a tool for thinking. In this context, storytelling activities in the library become a space for social interaction that allows children to construct meaning through dialogue and shared experiences.

Overall, the implementation of the storytelling method at the Rungkut Library in Surabaya demonstrated that a fun, participatory, and contextual literacy approach was more effective than a mechanical or drill approach. Children not only experienced improvements in technical reading skills but also demonstrated progress in understanding the content of the reading, restructuring ideas, and communicating verbally with greater confidence. These findings align with research [16] reported that storytelling can improve students' literacy skills in text comprehension, speaking skills, and organizing information in oral and written forms.

This finding also extends previous storytelling-literacy research that primarily positions storytelling as an instructional technique for improving reading performance or vocabulary acquisition [9]. The present study demonstrates that storytelling simultaneously functions as a social literacy practice where literacy learning is relational, participatory, and contextually embedded within community interaction. Therefore, storytelling activities in community libraries should not be understood merely as recreational literacy programs, but as dialogic literacy environments that facilitate socially mediated literacy participation among children.

The empirical findings further reveal that children gradually developed greater confidence in expressing ideas, responding to questions, and retelling stories independently after participating in storytelling sessions regularly. Tutors observed that children who initially tended to remain passive became more communicative and actively involved in discussion after repeated participation in dialogic storytelling activities. This indicates that storytelling contributes not only to reading comprehension but also to oral communication development, narrative organization, and participatory literacy engagement.

More importantly, the findings suggest that literacy development within storytelling activities occurs holistically through cognitive, emotional, and social interaction simultaneously. Children not only learn to understand textual meaning, but also learn to negotiate perspectives, listen to peers, regulate participation, and connect narratives with personal experiences. This strengthens the argument that literacy in nonformal education settings develops as a socially situated practice shaped by interaction, mediation, and collaborative participation rather than as an autonomous individual competence.

B. Narrative Reconstruction and Meaning-Making

Storytelling methods have been shown to play a significant role in improving children's literacy skills, particularly in reading, comprehension, vocabulary mastery, and communication skills. Through storytelling, children are not only required to be able to read the text, but also to understand the meaning of the story and convey it verbally in a coherent and logical manner. This is in line with research [17] shows that storytelling can increase student engagement, text comprehension, and broader language skills, because storytelling provides meaningful context and triggers children's emotional involvement in the learning process.

Based on the results of the researcher's interview with Nobhita, as a storytelling class tutor at the Rungkut Library in Surabaya, she said,

> *"Children are often able to recite texts fluently, but have difficulty when asked to answer reflective questions about characters. Improved literacy skills are seen from changes in children's behavior before and after participating in storytelling classes. Children who initially lacked confidence, had limited vocabulary, and had difficulty understanding the content of the reading, showed significant development after participating in regular activities. Children became better able to identify characters, plots, and moral messages of stories, and convey stories in their own language without memorizing the text. conflicts, and moral stories."* (W/TKN/08-01-26).

These findings indicate that literacy development in storytelling activities extends beyond technical reading proficiency toward narrative reconstruction and interpretive engagement. Children do not merely reproduce textual information; rather, they actively reorganize story structures, reinterpret meanings, and connect narratives with their personal experiences. This process reflects collaborative meaning-making practices in which literacy emerges through interaction, reflection, and communicative participation rather than through memorization alone.



Fig. 3. Children retell the story

Documentation of the activities (Fig. 3) also shows an increase in the children's active participation and their courage to speak in front of their peers. Furthermore, the facilitator explained that initially, some children attended the class due to parental encouragement, aiming to boost their self-confidence. However, over time, the children began to enjoy the storytelling process and were no longer afraid to perform. Some children even demonstrated the courage to participate in storytelling competitions.

The changes observed include increased vocabulary, increased interest in reading, the ability to understand the content of reading, and confidence in public speaking. This statement is also supported by the results of an interview with a library staff member, who said,

> *"Children who were initially shy and had limited vocabulary, after joining the class, were able to understand the reading material and tell coherent stories. The better they read, the better they could tell stories."* (W/SPKV/08-01-26).

These changes indicate that the storytelling method not only improves reading skills but also develops narrative thinking skills and oral communication. This view is in line with [18] that storytelling creates opportunities for children to negotiate meanings collectively through

discussion, questioning, and retelling practices. The interaction between tutors and children functions as a dialogic mechanism that encourages interpretive thinking and narrative reformulation. In this process, children gradually shift from literal understanding toward deeper comprehension by reconstructing stories using their own linguistic and experiential frameworks. Storytelling in a planned way can improve children's language skills as a whole, including the ability to understand and express ideas orally. In general, the storytelling method has a positive effect on children's cognitive development, especially in the aspect of understanding and rearranging information in narrative form [19].

The role of parents serves as a mediating mechanism in the *narrative reconstruction process*, as children repeat, negotiate, and reconstruct the story through family interactions within the home environment. One of the parents (S) said,

> *"The storytelling method is very helpful, because if you get used to telling stories, your language skills also improve."* (W/OTP/22-01-26).

This statement shows that getting used to storytelling has a direct impact on the development of children's language skills. Similarly, Ms. (SE) expressed,

> *"The children become more confident, more daring in telling stories, and increasingly enjoy reading."* (W/OTP/22-01-26).

This quote emphasizes that the storytelling method not only contributes to the cognitive aspect but also to the affective dimension, such as increasing self-confidence and reading motivation. This research is in line with the results of research [20] *storytelling* and *story retelling* activities strengthen narrative abilities and story structure in elementary school-aged children, reflecting an increase in language understanding and narrative regularity. In addition, showed that interactive reading interventions that combined elements of dialogue and retelling produced positive effects on children's narrative skills and reading comprehension [21].

Storytelling also stimulates children's interest in reading. Children realize that to be able to tell stories well, they need to read more books. This encourages them to visit the library more often and choose a variety of reading materials, including not only comics but also folk tales, educational books, and books on moral values. Furthermore, storytelling fosters critical and systematic thinking skills through the stages of understanding the story, processing information, and relaying it verbally. Children also demonstrate increased confidence in public speaking, with some even participating in storytelling competitions both at school and outside of school. Thus, storytelling not only improves basic literacy skills but also builds children's self-confidence and communication skills.

C. Social Support and Literacy Ecosystem

Literacy practices develop within a literacy ecosystem that encompasses the relationships between families, institutions, and communities as interconnected systems. Within this framework, social support is not merely an external factor but also serves as a mechanism that bridges the continuity of literacy dialogue and expands the process of reconstructing children's narratives across various life contexts [22]. This concept can be observed in literacy activities conducted in the library environment. As illustrated in Figure 5, children actively read storybooks both independently and collaboratively.



Fig. 4. Storybook reading activities by children with tutor assistance

Fig. 4 demonstrates that literacy participation within the library environment is sustained not only through individual engagement with books but also through socially supportive interaction among tutors, peers, and family members. The literacy activities observed in the library illustrate that children's literacy development emerges within an interconnected ecosystem where environmental support, social relationships, and participatory interaction mutually reinforce literacy engagement.

Based on the results of the researcher's interview with N, one of the storytelling class tutors, she stated,

> *"Children who attend regularly usually do so because their parents support them and take them to the library. They are aware of their children's progress, including factors such as parents, the environment, and new friendships. These are extraordinary, coming from various schools, not just one school. Because these children come from different schools, it turns out they are quite enthusiastic about making new friends." (W/TKN/08-01-26).*

Interviews with tutor indicate that the library learning environment plays a crucial role in fostering literacy development and children's communication skills. One strategy implemented by tutors is to allow children the freedom to choose books that align with their interests. This statement is also supported by observations, which show that this approach has been proven to increase children's enthusiasm from the start of the activity.

> "*Children appear more enthusiastic when given the opportunity to choose their own reading material than when the reading material is determined unilaterally."* (O/22-01-26).

The conducive library environment, coupled with the tutor's exploratory approach, creates a fun and meaningful learning experience. The impact is not only visible during the activities but also continues at home. Several informants reported that children who participate in storytelling classes become more confident in recounting their learning experiences to their parents. Children become accustomed to sharing stories about activities in the library and at school. These changes indicate an increase in children's self-confidence and oral communication skills as part of literacy development.

The findings further indicate that literacy practices cannot be separated from broader social and cultural contexts shaping children's learning experiences. Parents, tutors, peer interaction, and the library environment collectively function as mediating agents that sustain children's literacy participation beyond formal instructional settings [10]. This reinforces ecological perspectives on literacy, which position literacy development as a relational process emerging through interaction across multiple social environments rather than through isolated cognitive learning alone.

The storytelling program, therefore, functions not only as an educational activity but also as part of a broader community-based literacy ecosystem. Through continuous interaction between libraries, families, and children, literacy becomes embedded within everyday social practice and participatory communication. This finding expands conventional understandings of community libraries from passive repositories of books toward socially interactive literacy environments that facilitate collaborative meaning-making and dialogic literacy participation.

Differences in family background and literacy awareness in the home environment have been shown to influence each child's literacy skills. A family's social, economic, and cultural conditions influence reading habits, the availability of reading materials, and the intensity of literacy interactions between parents and children. Children raised in a family environment that encourages reading and provides access to books tend to demonstrate better literacy readiness, both in reading comprehension and the ability to retell stories. Conversely, children who receive little literacy stimulation at home require more intensive and ongoing support to achieve optimal development [23].

A lack of reading habits within the family environment can result in low interest in reading, lack of comprehension, and low confidence in expressing opinions [5], [22], [23]. Limited literacy interaction at home also contributes to restricted vocabulary development, weak narrative understanding, and lower engagement in reading-related activities among children [24], [25]. Previous studies have emphasized that the home literacy environment significantly influences children's emergent literacy readiness, motivation to read, and communicative confidence [6], [21], [23]. Therefore, intervention through storytelling in the library is crucial as a form of additional stimulation [15], [16], [18]. Storytelling activities provide opportunities

for children to participate actively in expressive communication, collaborative interpretation, and narrative reconstruction processes that support literacy development [7], [17], [19]. In addition, dialogic storytelling encourages children to connect stories with personal experiences and social realities, thereby strengthening reflective thinking and communicative participation [26], [27].

However, the effectiveness of this method cannot stand alone without support from the surrounding environment. Success in improving reading skills through storytelling is greatly influenced by collaboration between the library as the program provider, tutors as learning facilitators, parents as primary companions at home, and the child's social environment that supports a culture of literacy [10], [20], [21]. Sustainable collaboration between various parties is crucial to building a literacy ecosystem that can strengthen learning outcomes consistently and long-term [1], [14]. Community-based literacy collaboration has also been identified as an important factor in sustaining children's reading engagement and literacy participation across different social environments [28], [29].

D. Conceptual Reconceptualization of Storytelling

This study reconceptualizes storytelling beyond its conventional positioning as a pedagogical technique primarily intended to improve reading performance or vocabulary acquisition [2], [3], [15]. The findings demonstrate that storytelling operates as a socially mediated literacy practice characterized by dialogic interaction, collaborative meaning-making, narrative reconstruction, and participatory communication within community-based nonformal education settings. Such findings align with broader sociocultural perspectives emphasizing literacy as an interactive and contextual practice rather than merely an individual cognitive achievement [30], [31].

Within this framework, literacy is not treated as an autonomous cognitive competence possessed individually by children, but rather as a relational and contextual process emerging through interaction among tutors, peers, families, and community literacy environments [10], [12]. Storytelling activities create dialogic spaces where children actively negotiate meanings, reinterpret narratives, express personal experiences, and participate in collaborative literacy engagement [4], [7], [17]. Consequently, storytelling becomes a mechanism of social mediation through which literacy competencies are constructed collectively rather than transmitted unidirectionally. Interactive storytelling also strengthens children's communication skills, interpretive abilities, emotional expression, and social participation through collaborative engagement [18]-[20], [32].

Moreover, storytelling in community contexts enables children to develop cultural awareness, empathy, and collaborative participation through shared literacy experiences [33], [34]. This reconceptualization extends existing storytelling-literacy research that

predominantly focuses on storytelling as an instructional strategy for improving technical literacy skills in formal classroom settings [2], [3], [16]. In contrast, the present study positions storytelling as part of a community-based literacy ecosystem embedded within participatory interaction, cultural mediation, and socially situated learning processes in nonformal education [5], [8], [14]. The findings further support contemporary perspectives that community libraries should be understood not only as repositories of books but also as socially interactive literacy environments facilitating collaborative learning, participation, and sustainable literacy engagement [1], [9], [11], [13]. Recent scholarship also highlights that participatory literacy spaces encourage children's long-term literacy identity formation and strengthen social inclusion through collective learning experiences [35]-[38]. In this sense, storytelling functions simultaneously as a pedagogical activity, a communicative process, and a socially situated literacy practice that strengthens children's engagement with literacy within their everyday community experiences.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that storytelling in community-based nonformal education settings functions not only as a literacy instruction strategy but also as a dialogic, participatory, and socially mediated literacy practice. The findings indicate that storytelling activities conducted at the Rungkut Community Library facilitate collaborative meaning-making, narrative reconstruction, reflective interaction, and participatory communication among children, tutors, peers, and families. Through expressive reading, dialogic questioning, story retelling, and guided discussions, children develop reading comprehension alongside oral communication skills, interpretive thinking, confidence, creativity, and active literacy engagement. In this setting, storytelling is reconceptualized beyond its traditional role as a pedagogical method for improving technical reading skills and is instead understood as a socially constructed literacy process emerging through interaction, mediation, and collective participation.

Furthermore, the study highlights that literacy development is strengthened by a supportive literacy ecosystem involving participatory tutor facilitation, parental engagement, peer collaboration, and a conducive library environment. Nevertheless, challenges such as inconsistent attendance, excessive gadget use, and unequal literacy support within families demonstrate that sustainable literacy development requires continuous collaboration among libraries, families, schools, and communities. Consequently, this study contributes to theoretical discussions on literacy as a socially situated practice while emphasizing the practical role of community libraries as inclusive and participatory literacy spaces.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Authors



Desika Putri Mardiani, M.Pd. is affiliated with Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia. She frequently serves as the Publication Chair for international conferences and is actively involved in research and community service. Desika also contributes as a lecturer and academic assistant, combining research, teaching, and community engagement with a strong dedication to improving inclusive and transformative education. (email: desikamardiani@unesa.ac.id).



Tri Lestari is a student in the Non-Formal Education Study Program, Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Surabaya. Her research interests include literacy education, storytelling practices, and community-based nonformal education. (email: tri.22017@mhs.unesa.ac.id).



Gunarti Dwi Lestari is an education scientist, senior lecturer, and currently the Coordinator of the Doctoral Degree of Educational Science, Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA). She is a Professor of Early Childhood Education. She is active in teaching, research, and community service in the fields of community education, early childhood education (PAUD), learning model development, and education policy. (email: gunartilestari@unesa.ac.id).



Tri 'Ulya Qodriyati is a lecturer at the Non-Formal Education Department of the Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA). She is active in teaching, research, and community service in the fields of family and informal. (email: triqodriyati@unesa.ac.id).