

## **Dialogic Reading Method in Improving The Understanding of Emotion on Children 4-6 Years Old**

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**Abstract: Dialogic Reading Method in Improving The Understanding of Emotion on Children 4-6 Years Old. Objectives:** The purpose of this study was to examine how effectively the dialogic reading approach helped children aged 4 to 6 understand emotions. **Methods:** A sample of 25 participants was used in a pretest-posttest design. Pons and Harris (2004) evaluated emotional comprehension using the Test of Emotional Comprehension (TEC). Children's pretest, posttest, and one-week follow-up posttest findings were included in the research data. The data was analyzed using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. **Findings:** after the dialogic reading intervention, there was a significant improvement in emotional understanding scores. Compared to the pretest, the average posttest score (5.68) was higher. Additionally, the average score on the posttest after a week was 6.52. This study revealed a variety of remarkable conclusions about the dialogic reading intervention. Certain aspects of the CROWD reading strategies Complete questions, Repeat questions, Open-ended questions, WH questions, Distancing questions, and unique prompts showed greater levels of interest than others. For example, WH and open-ended questions were very engaging and encouraged children to elaborate on their experiences and provide answers. Children also gave thoughtful answers that differed from the set responses. These answers point to a more nuanced comprehension of emotions and raise the possibility that the TEC is not fully capable of handling a range of responses. Social connections and interpersonal processes shape the children's experiences and statements. **Conclusion:** The dialogic reading intervention is effective in enhancing emotional understanding in 4- to 6-year-old children. The findings of this study can serve as a valuable reference for educators and parents in developing intervention programs to support children's emotional development.

**Keywords:** dialogic reading, emotion comprehension, emotion understanding, early childhood.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Aggression has become an increasingly prevalent phenomenon in recent years, among both adolescents and young children. A significant increase in aggressive behavior among young children, particularly since the implementation of online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has become a major concern. Verbal manifestations such as shouting have become a common form of aggression in this age group (Mil

& Athiyah, 2022). During childhood development, aggression is considered one of the most common developmental problems (Vaughn & Bos, 1988). Aggressive behavior is often a response to uncontrolled emotions and can result in damage, physical attacks, and even harm to others (Marini et al., 2024). Research suggests continuity of aggressive behavior from childhood to adulthood, where aggressive children tend to maintain this behavioral pattern as they age

(Girard et al., 2019). Therefore, identifying the factors that trigger aggression and developing prevention interventions are crucial steps (Angulo et al., 2024). Several studies have emphasized the importance of socio-emotional competence as a protective factor against aggressive behavior in children (Jiménez & Estévez, 2017). Previous research has shown a link between children's aggression and their ability to understand emotions. For example, a study by Sanchèz-Pérez and González-Salinas (2021) highlighted that aggressive children often have difficulty identifying emotions, understanding their causes, and predicting the consequences of various emotions.

Emotional understanding is a crucial skill that children possess to redirect aggression into prosocial behaviors and serves as the foundation for developing other socio-emotional aspects (García-Mera et al., 2022). Emotional understanding is an early form of mentalizing capacity, the initial ability to comprehend the mental states of others (thoughts, feelings, desires, and beliefs) and has been shown to facilitate aggression in school-aged children (Laurent et al., 2017). Furthermore, the ability to understand one's own and others' emotions is key to better interactions (Lucas-Molina et al., 2020; Roazzi et al., 2013). According to LaBounty et al. (2008), emotional understanding is a child's ability to comprehend emotional expressions, internal feelings, causes, and consequences of emotions in both oneself and others. At a young age, children begin to develop an understanding of basic emotions (happiness, sadness, anger, and fear) as well as more complex emotions (pride, shame, and anxiety) (Kramer, 2014). Emotional understanding encompasses understanding emotional expressions through facial expressions and body language, understanding emotions displayed by others, understanding various types of emotions, using emotional expressions to communicate (expressing or hiding emotions), and

knowledge of how to cope with emotions (Southam-Gerowa & Kendall, 2002). Overall, emotional understanding is the knowledge of emotions, how emotions arise, how emotions are expressed, and what is conveyed within those emotions (Pons et al., 2010).

Pons et al. (2010) delineated emotional understanding into nine components: 1) recognition of emotion, 2) external causes, 3) memories, 4) desire, 5) belief, 6) real and apparent emotions, 7) control the felt emotion, 8) mixed emotion, and 9) moral-based emotion. In a study conducted by Pons et al. (2004) using the Test of Emotion Comprehension (TEC), it was found that children develop emotional understanding in a sequential manner, starting from emotion recognition and progressing to emotions in moral contexts. The TEC itself consists of nine components divided into three levels: the external level for 3-4-year-olds, the mental level for 6-7-year-olds, and the reflective level for 8-9-year-olds. Children's understanding of emotions develops rapidly, especially around the age of 5, and their vocabulary related to emotions increases significantly at around 4 years old (Price et al., 2022). Children between the ages of 4-6 are considered to be at the optimal age for learning about emotional understanding, aligning with the characteristics of early childhood where children aged 4-6 are already able to express opinions, reasons, and narrate their feelings to others to a certain extent (Idris, 2016). Therefore, the target age group in this study is children aged 4-6.

Emotional understanding enables children to comprehend situations that elicit specific emotions and anticipate behaviors that may impact others. In this regard, it has been indicated that children with high awareness and understanding about their feelings are able to self regulate and interact socially more effectively—a skill which is helpful in the context of their peer relations (Saarni et al., 2006). Emotionally competent individuals seem to be able to control aggression as they are

able to feel concern for others and are sensitive and aware of the adverse consequences of aggression (Cuello & Oros, 2013). Apart from this, enhanced emotional understanding among children is an important contributor of their cognitive development which translates to better school work and lesser psychological problems (Sprung et al., 2015). On the other hand, due to a restriction in emotional understanding, such children are prone to aggression, show aggressive behaviors and lower levels of achievement at school (Denham, 2019). For these reasons, developing emotional understanding in young children seems to be very important.

Children can get acquainted with emotions through philosophy, storytelling, and games (Giménez-Dasi et al., 2013; Kristsuana et al., 2024; Papoutsis et al., 2022). Among these strategies, the use of books remains significant. Books let children have a sense of their environment, their emotions and their thoughts, in relation to a given context (Karniol, 2012). Evidence indicates that some of children's books can be of assistance in the area of socio-emotional development, especially those which depict the naming of feelings and allow children to feel calm when expressing such feelings (Bouley, 2007). In addition, children's books on emotions are successfully used to foster emotional competence among 8-9 year old children (Kumschick et al., 2014). Reading books with children more actively supports their literacy and understanding the information read. As shown by Kraus and Hutton (2015), children within the age of 3-4 do more brain work in areas concerning language when an adult reads to them than when they listen to audiobooks or read electronically.

While an interactive reading session can facilitate the growth of language and literacy skills and social-emotional skills, there is need to select appropriate books and employ reading techniques such as dialogic reading (Fettig et al., 2016). Dialogical reading activities are regarded as one of the activities which parents can do to

support language development and emergent literacy in their children aged 2 to 6 years (Elek et al., 2022). In a dialogic reading activity, the children roles change from being passive listeners to active readers and constructors of the story's meaning (O'Sullivan, 2021). Dialogic reading encompasses active participation with the help of picture books (Flynn, 2011). In other words, dialogic reading is a child centered techniques aimed at promoting interaction and discussion with adults and children through asking questions, giving cues, and building into what the child has said to enhance understanding of the plot, people and even the vocabulary (Folsom, 2017). As described by Shanty (2016), dialogical reading is an effective way of bringing across the contents of books especially in moral, social and emotional learning. Picture books enable children to 'talk' even when they can't find the words to explain emotions or express themselves (Ganea et al., 2014). Books with social-emotional content portray children and adults resolving dilemmas and interacting which enables the learner in a story to feel empathy to other characters (Doyle and Bramwell, 2006). It has been observed that children's language can be improved through either individual or group dialogic reading (Mol et al., 2008). Such aspects of emotional engagement bring about elements of focus, spatial and sequential learning, recall and pages schema and strategies which results in favorable memory retention and select social skills (Fivush, 2014). The most recent studies indicate that dialogue reading improves the ability to use as well as understand emotional vocabulary (Kogan, 2024). Also, engaging children in dialogic reading helps them understand emotions (Bassett et al., 2020; Deitcher et al., 2021). And most importantly, dialogic reading enhances the development of children's socio-emotional competence (Deglan & Leung, 2021; Doyle & Bramwell, 2006).

Within the Indonesian context, emotion understanding is one of the foremost aspects. Balai Guru Penggerak (2023) notes the high number

of bullying, fighting, low motivation for learning, and deression to point out the poor socioemotional growth of kids. Thus, there is a need that education in Indonesia needs to support learning that enhances children's socio-emotional competence. Students with high social-emotional competence tend to have better performance academically as well as in their daily activities (Tazkia & Darmiyanti, 2024). A significant reason why it is considered so is that children are not passive in the use of such a technique as dialogic reading, but are actively engaged in the dialogue which contributes to their socioemotional competence and emergent literacy. A number of studies on dialogic reading have been done in Indonesia. Among these studies, there are significant results such as improvement of communication skills, listening and speaking skills, as well as increased levels of empathy in children (Aliyah & Andriani, 2022; Permanik, 2017; Petrisia et al., 2018) which is especially relevant in the rich cultural context of Indonesia which is centered around communality and social involvement. There was also dialogic reading training for early childhood caregivers that was effective in enhancing children's literacy (Astuti & Ekowarni, 2014). Therefore, dialogical reading can be considered as an effective means in helping in the all-around development of children dan dapat dilakukan oleh siapapun di sekitar anak within the Indonesian context.

While past studies have employed dialogic reading with the aim of developing emotional vocabulary, there are no studies which focus on the understanding of emotions among 4-6 year old children in Indonesia, hence the novelty for this study. For this study, the researchers made their own books that meet the developmental level of children and have pictures that the children would love. The books focused on the emotions of happy, sad, angry, fear, and mixed emotions, and included follow-up activities such as mazes,

puzzles, and emotion wheels to maintain engagement and assess children's understanding. Based on the aforementioned research, emotional understanding can be effectively developed through dialogic reading. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of dialogic reading on emotional understanding in 4-6-year-old children. We hypothesize that we will see a significant increase in the emotional understanding scores of children aged 4-6 years before and after engaging in dialogic reading intervention.

## ■ **METHOD**

### **Participants**

The selection of study subjects was done with particular inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criterion were: child must be between the ages of 4-6 years, child must be registered in either Kindergarten S or Kindergarten G, and child must be willing to attend the intervention sessions which were carried out with groups of five children in each session. Provided in the exclusion criteria were children who did not meet the age requirements, children who were not registered in any of the specified kindergartens, Children who were not able to attend each time the intervention sessions were held, and children who were unable to fully engage in the intervention due to some form of physical or speech deficit on the basis of teachers' observations on day to day basis. Requesting of such criteria was aimed at preserving the integrity and the accuracy of the articles written in the study. Purposive sampling by considering the sample criteria was applied with five subjects in each intervention session. 25 children out of a possible 25 were collected from a sample of 2 schools, kindergarten S: 6 children, kindergarten G: 19 children. 12 of the children were female and 13 were male. All subjects had usually been aged between 4-6 years of age with regard to an average mean age of 4.8 years.

### Research Design and Procedures

This study is an applied quantitative research using a pretest-posttest design. It aims to measure changes in the level of emotional understanding in early childhood children before and after a reading intervention using the “*Seri Buku Pintar Menstimulasi Emosi*” through the dialogic reading method. A pretest was administered once to measure the participants’ abilities before the intervention. The posttest was given twice after the intervention as part of the evaluation phase and to measure the participants’ level of emotional understanding after the intervention. After each book reading, a questionnaire was given to assess the children’s emotional understanding.

Dialogic reading was delivered using the PEER (Prompt, Evaluate, Expand, Repeat) stage. In the prompt stage, the CROWDS technique (Complete questions, Repeat questions, Open-ended questions, WH questions, Distancing questions, and special prompts) was used. After that, the researcher evaluated the child’s answer, paraphrased the information, and repeated the same steps on each page of the book read. These questions were asked to elicit responses from the children so that the book reading was two-way. In addition, the reader also gave the children opportunities to complete the story, explain what happened in the picture, and ask questions related to the children’s personal experiences. The second stage was evaluate, where after the child responded, the reader evaluated whether the answer was correct. For example, if the child’s answer was correct, “That’s right! The one who walked slowly was the turtle. Great job remembering!”, while if the child’s answer was incorrect, “Thank you for answering, yes. But the one who walked slowly was the turtle, let’s see!”. The third stage was expand, where the reader expanded or continued the child’s utterance. For

example, “The one who walked slowly was the turtle, because he carried his house on his back.” The fourth stage was repeat, which involved repeating the prompts to give the children another opportunity to retell the story (Towson et al., 2016; Whitehurst et al., 1994).

The research consisted of three sessions and took place during the morning time when children were in school. All sessions in S Kindergarten took place in the common room of the school while the sessions at G Kindergarten were done in the classroom. All communication was in Indonesian. The materials were storybooks written by the researchers themselves that comprised a total of five books entitled “happy”, “sad”, “angry”, “fear” and “mixed emotion”. Each of the books consists of 5 particular situations that triggers certain emotions. They are tested using measuring instruments and grouped by the same gender. The first session commenced with a pretest using the Test of Emotion Comprehension (TEC) followed by reading some selected books’ “happy” and “sad” pages. Each book was read for 15 minutes and breaks taken in between to avoid boring the children. The first session lasted for one hour. At the end of the first session the children were given stickers as a reward. The second session consisted of the other pages of “angry,” “fear,” and “mixed emotion” books and each book was around 15 minutes with the post test after the final session. The second session lasted for one hour as well. After the end of session two, the child was a notebook as a reward. One week after session two, the child was given a second post test that took around thirty minutes, and they were given a pencil after finishing the task. The researcher operated all instruments employed in the study while the research assistant observed and reported interesting activities that occurred during the intervention in narrative form.

**Table 1.** Intervention module overview

<b>Session</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Information</b>	<b>dialogic reading prompt example</b>
<b>1</b>	Pretest assessment	- Test of Emotion Comprehension (TEC) - scoring sheet	
	dialogic reading implementation	- tools: happy; sad books - observation sheet - indicator: able to answer given prompt	“What do you see on this page?” “It's Lila's birthday today. Wow! What does Lila's expression looks like?” “Have you ever felt sad? How do you try to look when you're sad?” “Niko lost his cat, have you ever experienced the same thing?”
<b>2</b>	dialogic reading implementation	- tools: angry; fear; mixed emotion books - observation sheet - indicator: able to answer given prompt	“We're learning about anger! What does he look like when he's angry?” “When we get angry, let's take a deep breath!” “What are you afraid of?” “That's right! Tomi was afraid to sleep alone, smart!” “Look here! What is he doing? Why is he staying here?”
	posttest assesment	- Test of Emotion Comprehension (TEC) - scoring sheet	
<b>3</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> posttest	- Test of Emotion Comprehension (TEC) - scoring sheet	

### Instruments

The emotion test comprehension (TEC) 1.2, in turn, was created by Pons and Harris (2004). It is a picture-based measurement tool. In the course of the study, respondents were instructed to interpret pictures which accompanied the descriptions. In this case, only the instructions and questions designed to augment the pictures were translated, without altering the pictures' graphics. The translation was done reasonably, to be able to maintain the clarity of the prompt language and the aim of the context in Indonesian society. For instance, the item 'cola' was replaced with 'tea drink'. The instrument consisted of twenty-one picture items and was positioned as an instrument. Tests of validity and reliability of

the measuring instruments have been performed. The researcher conducted validity testing using content validity and construct validity models. Content validity was conducted through expert judgment by two psychologists. The instrument was presented to children in groups of five, and they answered in turn. The picture items and questions were read aloud by the researcher. The children were asked to point to the face as a response to the question. However, the children were still asked to explain as best they could. Each child's answer was recorded on an answer sheet and scored 1 or 0. A score of 1 was given if the child answered correctly, and a score of 0 was given if the child's answer was incorrect. The reliability of the instrument was tested using

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient with a value of 0.763, indicating a good level of reliability and consistency in measuring the emotional understanding of 4-6-year-old children, thus the instrument can be used in the study.

### Data Analysis

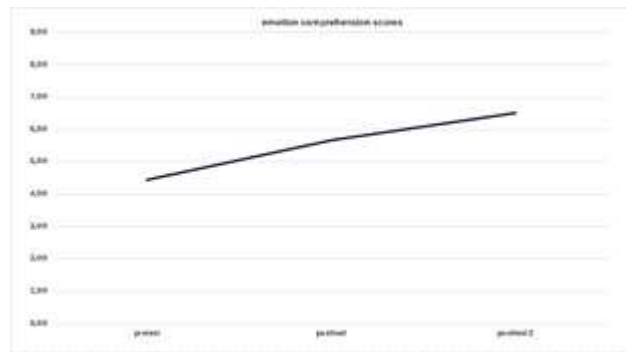
The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was chosen for the analysis because it works for the time paired data are not normally distributed. This non-parametric test is appropriate for instances when the data cannot be assumed to have a normal distribution which is required when using parametric tests such as the paired t-test. The median of the differences between matched pairs of observations is tested to see whether it is equal to zero which also implies that a change is not detected between pretest and post-test scores. This is so because it can be used in small samples as well as numerous scales where the data is in the form of two outcomes only yes or no, right or wrong (Triwiyanti et al., 2019). The results from the Wilcoxon signed-rank test are interpreted including level of significance usually  $p < 0.05$ . A significant finding highlights that a statistically

significant difference exists in the median scores of the two sets of data and that the change that occurred was due to the intervention. For this particular study data processing was done through the Jamovi application which in this case was ideal as it allowed simple yet effective 'how to' procedures for carrying out the non-parametric test and arriving at results that required interpretation.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Effectiveness of Dialogic Reading

The results of the dialogic reading intervention in this study can be seen through the pretest and posttest data of emotional understanding in 25 participants. The average pretest score of the participants' emotional understanding was 4.44 (SD = 2.00). After the intervention, the average posttest score of emotional understanding increased to 5.68 (SD = 1.14). A second posttest, conducted one week after the intervention, showed a further increase to 6.52 (SD = 1.19). A summary of the results from the pretest, posttest, and posttest 2 is presented in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1.** Average score of participants' emotion understanding

Table 2 reveals a significant change in participants' emotional understanding before and after the dialogic reading intervention. Wilcoxon signed-rank test results comparing the pretest and posttest ( $W = 35.0$ ,  $p = 0.014$ ,  $r = 0.591$ ) indicated a large effect size, suggesting a

substantial impact of the intervention. This demonstrates a meaningful increase in emotional understanding following the intervention. Similarly, a significant difference was found between the posttest and the second posttest conducted one week later ( $W = 27.0$ ,  $p = 0.017$ ,  $r = 0.603$ ),

with another large effect size, indicating that the gains made were sustained over time. Comparing the pretest to the second posttest revealed a highly significant statistical difference ( $W = 9.0$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $r = 1.03$ ), with a very large effect size. These findings consistently demonstrate a substantial and significant improvement in emotional understanding across all comparisons. On average, scores increased by 30% from the

pretest to the posttest and by another 30% from the posttest to the second posttest. The most significant change was observed between the pretest and the second posttest, with a 41.6% increase. The results of this study indicate that the dialogic reading intervention effectively enhanced emotional understanding in 4-6-year-old children and produced consistent, long-lasting effects.

**Table 2.** Wilcoxon signed-rank test result

		Wilcoxon W	df	Sig. (p)	Mean Diff.	Effect size
pretest	posttest	35.0	24	0.014	1.50	0.591
posttest	2 <sup>nd</sup> posttest	27.0	24	0.017	1.50	0.603
pretest	2 <sup>nd</sup> posttest	9.0	24	<0.001	2.08	1.03

Dialogic reading is a method of remediation that facilitates children with ample opportunities to express and learn about emotions. Moreover, it aids children's socio-emotional development as well (Bassett et al., 2020; Deitcher et al., 2021; Kogan, 2024). Conversely, when one engages with children during dialogic reading, children partake in role-play, hold questions, or incorporate story morals to embody interactions (Shanty, 2016; Xu, 2024). As many have illustrated before, these interactions are fundamental in terms of how children reason through what they have learned (Hui et al., 2019; Towson et al., 2017). Particularly, when children partake in these discussions, it aids their cognitive functions, adjusts their feedback reception tendencies, and improves children's coping mechanisms all facilitating an increased likelihood of success in both social and academic settings (Denham, 2019). Ultimately, the narrative and different forms of roles that engage readers during the reading is yet another His readers enable children to provide great engagement during the reading as oral participation emphasizes children's involvement (Petrisia et al., 2018). To address this, Cohen et al. (Cohen et al., 2012; Farver et al., 2009) suggest that this method is quite easy

to utilize thus can be beneficial for parents, teachers, or anyone with children.

### **Key Component of Engagement in Dialogic Reading**

After reporting results, the study revealed some noteworthy findings from the dialogic reading intervention to foster emotional comprehension in 4-6 years old children. First and foremost, there was participation from all elements of dialogic reading. All the researchers gave cues and the children responded by narrating their experiences including receiving birthday presents, or falling off the swing and hurting themselves. In relation to the reading strategies that were adopted, the CROWD as defined above (Complete questions, Repeat questions, Open questions, WH questions and questioning with distancing ,special cues), some facets were more involving than others. For example, open-ended questions and WH questions were found to be very provoking in that the children were ready to respond and recount about their experiences. On the contrary, repeat questions and special prompts elicited simple and less articulate answers with children being relatively aloof. Moreover, the researchers encouraged



children when they answered well, and corrected them when they gave wrong answers. For instance, when a child said it is bad to cry always, the researcher responded to this by saying it is normal for a human being to cry and to feel sad. The researchers also taught them how they can feel better when they feel angry or sad by practicing breathing and other strategies which they did. While elaborating the story, the children actively composed follow up answers and informed the researcher of more personal experiences. The phrase or phrases that the researchers had considered important were repeated on many occasions throughout the storybook.

### **Influence of Personal or Cultural Factors**

During dialogic reading sessions, children provided fascinating responses. For instance, while reading a book about sadness, Child A suggested that the character shouldn't be upset about dropping their ice cream because they could simply clean it up and buy another one since the ice cream shop was still nearby. In a book about fear, several children shared that they were not afraid to sleep alone because they prayed before bed. Similarly, in a book about mixed emotions, Child Z expressed sympathy for a character who felt hurt, angry, and sad after a loss. At the end of each book, the researcher asked questions related to the emotions explored. When asked to demonstrate expressions of happiness, sadness, anger, and fear, nearly all children were able to mimic these emotions. Some even acted out these emotions, such as rolling on the floor to simulate crying. The children could also describe situations that might evoke specific emotions and connect these emotions to their own personal experiences. These findings align with research indicating that dialogic reading, coupled with additional activities or role-playing, is an effective strategy for fostering socioemotional learning (Cook et al., 2024).

Following the intervention, children demonstrated an improved ability to respond to items assessing recognition of emotions, external causes, memories, desires, beliefs, and real and apparent emotions. However, the dimensions of controlling felt emotions, mixed emotions, and moral-based emotions exhibited consistently lower scores among the 4-6-year-old participants. This finding aligns with Pons et al. (2004) theory suggesting that children typically master these dimensions around the age of 8-9. They also stated that it takes years before children are able to understand that they can feel at the same time two or more emotions with different valences and arousal. The study of Cheng and Harris (2023) also notes, that comprehension of mixed emotions is very difficult for children who are less than 10 years old and this difficulty may lead to different expectations in different cultures. The reason for this situation is associated with the fact that early childhood psychology assumes children can hold only one emotion at one time. Therefore, even within the realm of emotions, the child has a layered understanding of the ability to comprehend the theory of mixed emotions (Harter & Buddin, 1987). With respect to previous studies which claim that other older children aged around 9-12 years have better cognitive understanding on the concept of mixed emotions than younger ones (Donaldson & Westerman; 1986; Harter & Buddin, 1987; Whitesell & Harter, 1989). This also correlates with Piaget's child development theory in which children are only able to comprehend and believe abstract and complex ideas when they are 12 years and older (Morrison, 2015).

Despite these lower scores, observations revealed that children often provided well-reasoned responses that deviated from the expected answers. For instance, when asked how to alleviate sadness, Child R suggested playing outside with friends. While the standardized response might have been to think

of something else, Díaz-Rodríguez et al. (2021) highlight that play is an effective strategy for managing negative emotions in children. Certain items on the Test of Emotion Comprehension (TEC), such as the “waiting for the bus” scenario, posed challenges due to cultural differences. Children who were not involved in such a situation or who went through it differently commonly found it hard to grasp the stated neutral emotion. On the contrary, 11 children explained ‘waiting for the bus’ as one of their answers in the case report saying that they waited for too long which made them feel ‘angry’ or ‘sad.’ Looking beyond the wait for the bus scenario, there were also variations in how the child perceived the emotion. Child Z, for example, gave nine out-of-context answers after the test was finished. For instance, when asked if she feared monsters, Z said that monsters are not real and got mad because she was interrupted. In a sibling conflict situation, where the instrument was expecting the response ‘angry’, Z said ‘fear’ indicating that they were afraid that they might spoil their drawing paper and hence were cautious. Such responses suggest that rather than having a simple view of the world, these children saw emotions in a much more complex manner, and that it may also be the case that the TEC is not able to withstand such variety. The TEC measurement tool is therefore considered to have some limitations according to this study. It lacks the ability to capture cultural differences or nuances in the understanding of emotions. Therefore, future use may require discussion on context and cultural adjustments.

Vygotsky’s Constructivist Theory holds appeal for children’s experiences and utterances since it asserts that children’s mental functions mature as a result of social mediation and interpersonal processes. Indonesian culture itself is not related to some items on the measuring instrument such as waiting for a bus and being chased by monsters, so this can influence children’s answers so that they do not match the

ideal answers. Furthermore, this correlates with sociocultural perspective, contending that children’s comprehension of particular situations and their world experiences is informed by social or cultural aspects (Morrison, 2015). LoBue and Ogren (2022) in the same light concluded that children’s emotional experiences are an interplay of the emotional information available to them. Adults are likely to show diverse emotional responses to a much wider scope of circumstances instead of engaging in the common emotions and expressions (Barrett et al., 2019). More vivid and varied responses were elicited by items that echoed children’s daily activities like being given a toy or cycling. On the other hand, items that had such less outstanding situations as waiting for a bus attracted less attention and thus had more relative decoding. This implies that the appealing nature of a narrative in relation to a child’s life experience when undertaken influences his or her active participation and responses that follow. It equally points to the issue of cultural fairness that standardised measures have as the “waiting for a bus” item may not be relevant for children who have never encountered this scenario. These are findings that suggest the problem of standardised measures sufficing in assessing complex and reflective responses. In order to substantiate children’s emotions and how children perceive them, a qualitative analysis is warranted.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

From the observations, it emerged that children’s emotions and physical state during both the intervention and assessment were important in the performance of the children. The well-adjusted children were seen to have more improvements over time than the children who were tired, ill, inattentive or had just been out of a tantrum. For instance, Child S, who had problems with new people and places as reported by the teacher, showed a notable difference

between the pretest and posttest scores. This brings to the fore the need for creating enabling conditions for the children while performing specific tasks during the intervention in order to draw valid and representative conclusions. This is in line with research indicating that emotions can determine the strategies learning, academic motivation and performance (Adesola et al, 2019; Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2021).

On a broad spectrum, the findings and discussions of this paper highlight that emotional understanding in children is shaped to a large extent by personal experience, cultural orientation and by the child's condition. What is also salient is the fact that how active a child is in reading practices at home has to do with how the child perceives or interact with the reader. In the global context, research shows that dialogic reading is effective in improving emotion intelligence in early childhood (Xu, 2024). However, in the Indonesian context, this effectiveness may be influenced by a culture of family interaction that tends to prioritize direct advice, behavioral examples, and moral cultivation over interactive approaches such as dialogic reading (Dewi, 2022).

Reading between children and their parents or caregivers can be interpreted as reading aloud to each other. This seems to lend further credence to the notion that reading aloud has more benefits than just providing the child with the necessary vocabulary. The reciprocal and participatory nature Reading, seems to enhance the bond between the adult and the child which enhances the Protectiveness around the child enabling the child to narrate freely his or her experiences and feelings (Xu, 2024). In order for the emotions displayed by children to be quelled in these dialogues, a particular training of the teachers and parents is necessary. The training must feature: understanding of emotional clues, and application of pictures and dialogue reading techniques like the open-ended inquiries. Selecting appropriate

books that will create emotion within the children and putting them in Ample emotion-enhancing situations is also very Necessary. Moreover, post-reading discussion and joint activities with psychologists can afford children a more comprehensive understanding of emotional situations. Such proposals will most likely contribute to the development of social and emotional comprehension of children.

This study is also limited by the attempt to modify the TEC assessment from its original format to the sociocultural context in Indonesia since not all of the items are appropriate for every child. Moreover, violent threat may be more complex and more than avoid physical assault, for example, fear of being angry with a disturbance sibling. In addition, the children's scores were affected by their physical and emotional state at the time of the intervention; those who were tired, sick or unhappy appeared to give more inconsistent scores. Finally, the quantitative approach of this study limited the depth of understanding of children's emotional understanding. A more comprehensive picture could be obtained through additional qualitative research.

The recommendations which emerge from this research can be incorporated in formal education systems in Indonesian context by establishing situations that enhance the students' emotional stability like providing children's soothing spaces and also engagement in activities that enable them to positively react emotionally. They also point out that training of teachers and parents on dialogic reading and children's emotion comprehension should form part of the curriculum, which includes interactive reading and the use of pictures. Cultivating Care in Children and Parenting Program, on the other hand, aims at ensuring that children have culturally relevant experiences by reading books which at least they can connect to their lives. In addition, working hand in hand with psychologists to address

students' emotional concerns and regular monitoring of such activities will ensure that such activities are fruitful. With such measures in place, there is hope that children will develop in areas of emotional and social understanding which supports them in their learning and development.

## ■ CONCLUSION

Emotional understanding equips children with the ability to comprehend situations, anticipate the potential impact of their behavior on others, and ultimately, better navigate social interactions. Children who are aware of their emotions are better equipped to self-regulate and resolve conflicts. This study demonstrates that a dialogic reading intervention can enhance emotional understanding in 4-6-year-old children. Through dialogic reading, children can identify emotions, understand their causes, and connect them to their own personal experiences. The prompts used in dialogic reading, particularly open-ended and WH-questions, were especially effective in engaging children. Additionally, children's personal experiences, physical condition, and emotional state influenced their responses.

Based on the results, discussion, and conclusions of this study, it is recommended that future researchers adapt the measurement tool to suit the Indonesian cultural context and utilize narratives that are more relatable to children's daily experiences. Researchers should also ensure that children are in a positive emotional state, are healthy, and are able to give their full attention to the intervention. Practically, this research suggests that teachers and parents can use storybooks and implement dialogic reading to introduce children to various emotional situations and connect these to their daily lives. By using open-ended and WH-questions, adults can actively engage children, focusing on discussions about emotions, their causes, and strategies for emotional regulation.

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