



## **Improving Students' Social Intelligence Using Folktales during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

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Numerous studies have been conducted on education during the Covid-19 pandemic, but none have been done on efforts to improve students' social intelligence throughout the pandemic. The objective of this study was to illustrate how folktales were used to improve students' social intelligence in Kedurang Bengkulu while they were studying at home, given that social ability is one of key aspects of life (Salavera et al., 2017). The researchers collected the necessary data using a mixed method approach. Statistical analysis, observations, interviews, and documentation studies were used to obtain the data. This study revealed that folktales could be used as educational materials to help students enhance their social intelligence. It was based on the result of statistical analysis that showed the value of t-score is -45.633 with a P value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ , it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the mean score of the pre-test and post-test. Additionally, it was supported by the results of interviews with several teachers, families, and students. The utilization of folktales as a learning resource was able to shape students' social intelligence in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: folktales, social intelligence, students, the Covid-19 pandemic, teaching

## **INTRODUCTION**

The coronavirus outbreak that has plagued Indonesia since the beginning of 2020 necessitates online education. Education in Indonesia, and indeed throughout the world,

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has shifted away from face-to-face towards the online instruction. The recent Covid-19 pandemic widened the gaps in the education sector globally. Covid-19 pandemic has created a change of educational style. It has significantly made billions of society being obliged to stay at home (Onyema, 2020). Similarly, students have to study independently at home under the supervision of family members. They will also adapt to new ways of learning. According to Ferdiansyah et al. (2020), the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in the closure of schools and universities, prompting educational institutions to establish an online learning. Students need to practice being independent in learning. This condition has physical and non-physical impacts such as feelings of sadness, disappointment, and anxiety for students (Puspitasari & Rahayu, 2020). Thus, positive reinforcement is one strategy that could be used to alleviate students' stress when learning at home (Mantasiah et al., 2021), especially given the importance of interaction between the teacher and students in online courses (Malpartida, 2021). Students conduct learning activities at home with the support of their family during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is part of an effort to halt the spread of coronavirus in Indonesia.

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted various parts of the world, affecting all life areas (Widodo et al., 2020), including Indonesia's educational system. Traditional and regular learning, which emphasizes the interaction of teachers and students inside and outside the classroom, is changed to distance learning called Learning from Home (known as *BDR*; *Belajar dari Rumah*) (Abidah et al., 2020). Learning from home (*BDR*) in Indonesia is carried out in almost all regions. Similarly, in Bengkulu Province, particularly in the Kedurang region in South Bengkulu. The students came to school in turn which made the school appear to be quieter than it was before. Some schools even completely stopped the teaching and learning activities for certain amount of time, because the majority of students in the area did not have a mobile phone for the online learning. In addition, because most parents work as farmers, they often lack the time necessary to assist their children in learning online. Besides, the students also lack the necessary equipment to participate in online learning activities. This circumstance consequently led the school to implement the total assignment activities by requiring students to come to school once a week to pick up assignments and then submit them the following week. It would last an undetermined period of time until the new policy on face-to-face learning activities was announced. This condition made the students learn independently at home.

The Kedurang region is classified as a green zone due to the absence of Covid-19 patients in the area. Nonetheless, the green zone status does not mean that teaching and learning activities in school can take place as usual. Education in schools continues to stagnate. Because there is no face-to-face learning, students and teachers do not interact in the classroom. It is a government-led initiative to protect the citizens from the dangers of coronavirus, as the primary concern during the Covid-19 outbreak is health. Parents will be actively involved in their child's education process through home learning, and they will also be able to observe their child's cognitive development firsthand. This reality leads to the awareness that parental education is critical for the development of children's intelligence; academic, emotional, and social. That intelligence becomes part of the family's responsibility. The family's role in assisting young children at home

learning is critical. Parents must exert control over their children when they are learning (Plowman et al., 2012).

While parents should encourage their children to study at home, folktales can be used as an alternative learning resource. Folktales have a role as tools to not only entertain but also to educate. They are used as edutainment tools worldwide, including in Indonesia, to teach the young generation the expected behaviour ("Readers Responses on Indonesian Folktales: A Proposal for Folktale Reconstruction," 2017). Folktale is a text that has the power to educate children in shaping them to approved behavior. A folktale fosters positive development in children (Citraningtyas, et al., 2014). Coulter et al. (2007) state that storytelling has long been perceived as a pedagogical tool. Folktale indeed teaches many things and is able to shape a child's social intelligence, namely social awareness, what we feel about others, and social facilities, what we then mend from that social consciousness ("Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships," 2007). The story's text in the folktale can provide an example for students to remain concerned for others because the condition of learning at home makes them not learn directly with their friends, so that efforts and strategies are needed to develop children's social skills intelligence during the pandemic.

The condition of learning from home and its challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic made researchers interested in investigating a way to improve students' social intelligence through folktales reviewed by teachers and families in Kedurang, Bengkulu. Therefore, in this study, researchers investigated and explained how the use of folktales as a learning resource to improve students' social intelligence when studying at home during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **Literature Review**

### **Online Education during Covid-19 Pandemic**

Covid-19 has a significant impact on education, including in educational system in Indonesia. Traditional and routine learning that emphasizes the interaction of teachers and students in the classroom and outside the classroom change to online learning (Abidah et al., 2020). Rofiah, et al., (2022) state that during Covid-19 teachers and students around the world have to move from traditional face-to-face to synchronous learning. The existence of online learning certainly has many challenges. Many things need to be prepared to conduct optimal online learning. Many parents, students, and teachers were not ready to move from offline learning to online learning, especially in terms of devices, resources, and digital literacy (Aboagye et al., 2020; Lau & Lee, 2020). To solve the condition, many schools did learning in a mixed way. Students came to school and also learned from home. This was certainly aimed at overcoming the transmission of the corona virus.

In Kedurang Bengkulu, Learning in the pandemic era was carried out in a mixed way. Students came to school to take up assignments then they will do those tasks at home. It was because the location of this study was classified as a green zone due to the absence of public members exposed to coronavirus. The condition was undoubtedly good news that the community must maintain. Thus, they remained obedient to health protocols

such as diligently washing hands, maintaining physical distance from others, and maintaining body hygiene. Despite the fact that the Kedurang region was identified as a coronavirus green zone, the area's education process continued to be disrupted. The students learned at home as instructed by the local government's policy. However, not all students experienced home learning to its full potential.

Table 1  
Learning conditions before and during the covid-19 pandemic in Kedurang Bengkulu

	Before Covid-19	Until January 2021
Teaching and learning during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kedurang Bengkulu	Face to face learning	Learning through assignments
	Classroom interactions	No classroom learning
	Learning took place optimally	Learning did not take place optimally because the majority of students did not have a mobile phone
	Students interacted and discussed with each other	Students did physical distancing

During the Covid-19 pandemic, all primary schools in the Kedurang region conducted learning through the assignment system. The students came to school once a week to take assignments from the teachers. This condition was explained in the interview with Mr. MK, a teacher at an elementary school in Batu Ampar village in Kedurang.

*"We just give the students some assignments. They are asked to finish those assignments at home. After that, they will come to school the following week to submit the assignments and so on."*

The preceding statement showed that the teacher simply assigned tasks to the students. Because most of them did not have a mobile phone for the online study, they were required to come to school to pick up an assignment provided by the teacher. And then they would complete the assignment within a week. Following that, the teacher would assign the next task.

### **Folktale and Social Intelligence in Language Learning**

The etymology of 'folktale' indicates a conflation of two ideas, 'folk' (people/community) and 'tale' (story or narrative). One of the uniqueness of a folktale is its power to share moral and social values based on habits, rules, and customs from society. Social Intelligence values, which refer to the understanding of self, others, and the social situation (Kaukiainen et al., 1999), are essential things that should be taught through a folktale (Sone, 2018). Folktale would help to shape our children's values, condition their moral and responsibilities, their emotions and appetites, as well as stimulate their creativity. Telling the folktale could transmit a people's norms, values, ideas and thoughts through the narration of folktales, myths and legends. Likewise, in the learning of literature in elementary schools, folktale has a positive impact on the educational process, especially on literary learning. Through folktale students will get a moral message and mandate that could be done by them in daily life.

The existence of folktale in learning can certainly had a positive impact on the development of student intelligence. Students will make good things obtained from

folktale reading activities as an example in behaving. Literature subject is one of appropriate media for developing students' characters. In literature, there are elements of culture, history, and even ideology in addition to emotional, intellectual, social, and moral aspects. So far, these elements are parts of personal development studies. Literature can help build students' character through the touching plots, appropriate dictions, and powerful conflicts which blow up the amazing and heroic themes. By classic literature, students can get awareness without having been strictly forced or taught (Efendi & Muttaqien, 2017).

Furthermore, the value of social intelligence is one of the important things that must be internalized to students through literary learning during Covid-19 pandemic because one of primary concerns in online education is the loss of socialization (Alomyan, 2021). Social intelligence is one type of intelligence that is needed for anyone, including students in the Covid-19 pandemic. Kihlstrom & Cantor (2019) state that the term social intelligence was first used by Dewey (1909) and Lull (1911) but the modern concept has its origins in Thorndike's (1920) division of intelligence into three facets pertaining to the ability to understand and manage ideas (abstract intelligence), concrete objects (mechanical intelligence), and people (social intelligence). Socially Intelligent people have to use all of the power of their own brains and bodies to communicate with and to 'read' others. They have to acquire attitudes that encourage others to grow, create, communicate and befriend, and they have to know both how to make and to keep friends. Goleman (2006) state that social intelligence includes social awareness and social facility. Social Intelligence emphasizes its relevance at the interpersonal level (Azañedo et al., 2020). Buzan (2002) distinguished eight groups of skills in the structure of social intelligence, namely: 1) understanding and cognizing people through verbal and non-verbal signals; 2) active listening; 3) sociability; 4) influencing others; 5) social activity; 6) negotiating and solving social problems; 7) persuasion of others; 8) orientation and behaviour in different social environments. Most of the problems in our lives occur due to our failure in maintaining social relations. From family to nations, sound relationships are basis of harmony (Khan, 2017).

## **METHOD**

This study employed a mixed method approach, which entails the integration of qualitative and quantitative methodologies into a single study. This research design was a convergent mixed method intended to collect quantitative and qualitative data in one phase. The data were analysed separately and then compared and/or combined (Creswell, 2012).

### **Data Collection procedure**

#### **Quantitative**

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected to answer research questions. In the quantitative part, researchers used questionnaire to obtain information on students' social intelligence. The researchers distributed the questionnaire to 25 elementary school students to measure their social intelligence. Social intelligence measured include following aspects (Goleman, 2006).

Table 2  
Dimensions of social intelligence

Dimensions	Indicators
Social awareness	Primal empathy
	Empathic accuracy
	Attunement
	Social cognition
Social facility	Synchrony
	Self-presentation
	Influence
	Concern

### Qualitative

In qualitative part, researchers used narrative inquiry. Narrative is essentially a linguistic form of inquiry whose results are in the form of stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Narrative inquiry is widely known as a viable approach to conducting qualitative research (Coulter et al., 2007). In narrative inquiry, information is gathered from the shared experiences, informant's journal, interviews (usually unstructured), storytelling, letter writing, and autobiographical and biographical writing. In conducting a narrative inquiry, it is critical for researchers to listen to informants' stories, maintain relationships with them, appreciate them, and convey their stories in their own words as they say (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007).

Meanwhile, the researchers conducted interviews with teachers, families, and students to gather information about folktales that could help students enhance their social intelligence while learning from home during the Covid-19 pandemic. To obtain the appropriate data, researchers gathered information from the participants. The participants in this study were teachers, families, and students. The detail of participants in this study is presented in the following table.

Table 3  
Research participants

Teacher	Researchers visited teachers in 17 primary schools but only interviewed a few teachers. Researchers also observed the condition of schools during the Covid-19 pandemic.
Family	Researchers conducted interviews with parents, grandfathers, or family members involved in children's education in the family environment during the Covid-19 pandemic.
Student	The researchers observed the school and interacted with the elementary school students that were there. Additionally, researchers discovered students who engaged in home-based learning activities. The researchers then interviewed the students.

### Data Analysis

#### Quantitative

The results of the questionnaire were analysed using statistics. Researchers analysed students' social intelligence before learning using folktale and after learning using folktale. The data obtained were tested with statistics. The analysis began with a prerequisite test, namely the normality test and homogeneity test, and then the t test was carried out.

**Qualitative**

The researchers collected the data through observations, interviews, and documentation studies of students’ readings, mainly textbooks containing folktales. The collected data were subsequently selected to obtain the most representative ones. Afterward, the researchers analyzed the data to draw a conclusion. Data analysis techniques were performed by referring to qualitative data analysis technique as follow.

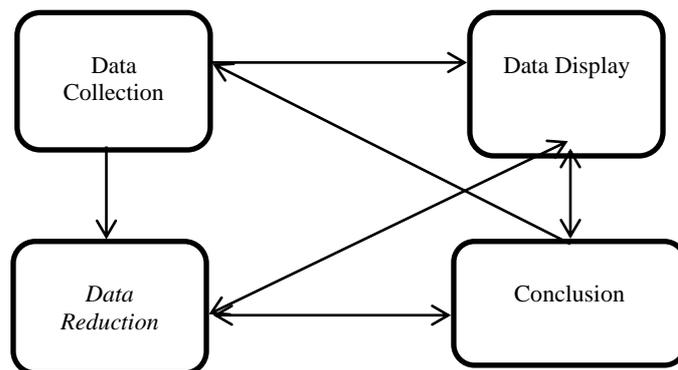


Chart 1  
Analysis data components (Ridder et al., 2014)

**FINDINGS**

Based on the statistical analysis, the researchers found an increase in students’ social intelligence. It was indicated by the mean score of the post-test which was higher than the pre-test. Furthermore, from the results of the t-test, it was found that the t-score was -45.633 with a P value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ , it could be concluded that there was a difference in the mean score of the pre-test and post-test classes. It showed that learning by using folktales could improve the social intelligence of elementary school students in Kedurang, Bengkulu. The results of statistical analysis in this study can be seen in the following table.

Table 4  
Descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
		Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Pre-test	25	104	142	2900	116.00	1.459
Post-test	25	171	187	4521	180.84	.806
Valid N (listwise)	25					

NPar Tests

Table 5  
One-sample Kolmogorov Smirnov test

		Pre-test	Post-Test
N		25	25
Normal Parameters <sup>a</sup>	Mean	1.1600E2	1.8084E2
	Std. Deviation	7.29726	4.02782
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.167	.097
	Positive	.167	.096
	Negative	-.089	-.097
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.833	.487
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.491	.972

Assumption = If the Z-score has a significance value of  $P < 0.05$ , it is assumed that the data distribution is normally distributed.

#### Homogeneity Test

#### T-Test

Table 6  
Group statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Data	1	25	1.1600E2	7.29726	1.45945
	2	25	1.8084E2	4.02782	.80556

Table 7  
Independent samples test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Data	Equal variances assumed	2.949	.092	-38.896	48	.000	-64.84000	1.66701	-68.19175	-61.48825
	Equal variances not assumed			-38.896	37.382	.000	-64.84000	1.66701	-68.21653	-61.46347

Assumption = If the F-score has a P value of  $> 0.05$ , it is assumed that the data is homogeneous.

#### T-Test

Table 8  
Paired samples statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test	1.1600E2	25	7.29726	1.45945
	Post-test	.8084E2	25	4.02782	.80556

Table 9  
Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pre-test & Post-test	25	.323	.115

Table 10  
Paired samples test

		Paired Differences				T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	Pre-test Post-test	-6.48400E1	7.10446	1.42089	-67.77258	-61.90742	-45.633	24	.000

Assumption = If the value of t-score is -45.633 with a P value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ , it can be concluded that there is a difference in the mean score of the pre-test and post-test classes.

As long as students learn from home, cooperation between teachers and the family is necessary in monitoring their learning progress and social development. With good cooperation, families and teachers can evaluate students' learning and share educational experiences. Every student has family members, but they share one school. A family supplement could form students' values and characters through the use of folktales as academic tools. Family influence starts from when the day a child is born (Penjore, 2005). The following are the perspectives of teachers, families, and students' on learning using folktale during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### Teachers' Perspective

A teacher is the first person who teaches the student about social and emotional intelligence in school. The teacher has a vital role in promoting social and emotional competence (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Social and emotional competence influences everything about the teacher and student relationships (Jones et al., 2013). To find out the teacher's perspective on folktales as a learning resource to improve students' social intelligence, researchers observed 17 elementary schools in Kedurang Ilir and Kedurang regions. Additionally, the researchers conducted interviews with teachers and analyzed documents pertaining to the books used by the teachers. According to the results of observations and interviews, the researchers found that the students were very fond of reading folktales. They usually read a collection of stories contained in textbooks as well as storybooks in the library. However, the current conditions made it impossible for them to come to school regularly, so they missed reading storybooks.

Mrs. IS, an elementary school teacher in Kedurang Ilir, stated that her students were enthusiastic about reading stories in textbooks. Students at the school even read a typical community story at a storytelling competition in South Bengkulu. According to Mrs. IS, students urgently need to be introduced to local culture.

*“My students are very interested in reading story collection books. Textbooks also have many stories in them. The story is outstanding and educational to develop the attitude and character of the child, and it also teaches them to care for each other.”*

Mrs. IS firmly believed that folktales could be a great alternative as a source of learning. She also highly expected the students to stay focused on learning at home. Additionally, folktales could be one of the learning resources to prevent the students from being individualistic. By reading a folktale, they could learn from the messages conveyed.

Furthermore, according to Mrs. MN, an elementary school teacher in Kedurang, folktales could be used as a learning resource both at school and at home. According to her, teaching folktales means teaching values, what should and should not be, and good and bad attitudes. Teachers could also teach folktales to shape a student's social sensibilities.

*“Folktales are excellent as a source of learning. By reading folktales, students come to know which are good and which are bad. They will also think critically about distinguishing between good and evil. Folktales can also sharpen children's social sensibilities. Folktales that become a source of learning must undoubtedly be explored, namely folktales that can shape children's personalities to care and love helping others. During the Covid-19 pandemic, folktales are an educational reading.”*

Mrs. MN's perspective indicated that folktales made students think critically and hone their personalities and social spirit. It was undoubtedly very good for their cognitive development. The students would be able to criticize the information they received and distinguish between good and evil and what can and cannot be done. However, the tale that the students read must be sorted, namely a tale that contains the values of social intelligence, because their behaviour will be formed from the information they get. Folktales are categorized into types and themes. Themes in folktales focus on particular lessons for the reader or listener to learn. On the other hand, folktales' role refers to the lesson to educate the readers or listeners (Amali, 2014).

Mr. SR, an elementary school teacher who has been teaching elementary school students for many years, also said that folklore or folktales have an essential role in education. He said that folktales are perfect for developing students' social intelligence. According to him, people also have tales that can be conveyed for family education. Society has many exciting stories that can be used as a learning resource for children.

*“People have a lot of unique folktales. Those tales can be used as a means of education and devolution of local culture to elementary school students. Many folktales contain exemplary attitudes, such as caring for others. Such tales can be told to children.”*

According to Mr. SR, the societies could use folktales they know to educate children. And they were also believed to have many folktales containing good values that can be used as an educational resource at home.

### **Families' Perspectives**

Based on the observations and interviews, the families used two strategies in internalizing the value of social intelligence through folktales as a source of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. *First*, the student listened to a fairytale read by a parent

or another family member. Widodo (2005) states that children begin learning simple expressions, then learn abstract language rules which they listen to, and then learn expressions. It was implemented for low-graders since they did not have good reading skills. Some of them had not read fluently and still needed to spell the syllables. Therefore, their parents or the other family members read the stories for them. It was very beneficial as they could entirely focus on listening and understanding the values in the story.

This condition was experienced by Yoga, a student at Kedurang elementary school. He listened to his grandfather's folktales to understand what he could and could not do. He got an essential point from the story and also the pleasure of listening to the fairytale by doing it. Durlak et al. (2011) state that children typically should not learn by themselves but rather in collaboration with their teachers, peers, and family. The family has a vital role in the child's social development because relationships between children and family affect their learning. Schools and families have to effectively address these aspects of the educational process for the benefit of all students (Elias et al., 1997). Additionally, family involvement is vital for young children's cognitive and social development (Harvard Family Research Project, 2006) since family interaction will influence their emotions (Lunkenheimer et al., 2007).

*Second*, the students read the book of folktales from the government by themselves. It applied to students in higher grades. Students in grades IV to VI had good skills in understanding storylines. It means that they could read with the assistance of parents or other family members. Before students read a story, parents should have already read and understood it earlier to ask about the content of social intelligence and the lessons from the story (Dong, 2019). The parents do not have to ask the questions formally, but they can do it casually while having a conversation. For example, *how is the character in the story? What do we need to learn from the character?* Other questions can certainly be asked according to the context and content of the story. Parents can also ask the students to retell stories that they have read. The interviews conducted with parents showed that these two ways were quite effective.

DW, a family member who read the story for his sister in the first grade of elementary school, stated that his sister was very excited to listen to the story. Meanwhile, if she was told to read, she would be more focused on looking at the pictures. The following are the results of the interview with DW.

*"My sister is very excited to listen to the story I read. However, when I ask her to read a storybook by herself, she focuses on looking at the pictures. It may be because she is still not so good at reading that it is hard to understand the stories in the books."*

DW's sister's excitement showed her enthusiasm in listening to the story. She would also listen to the story from start to finish, and it made DW eager to tell an exciting story to her. The folktales used to improve students' social intelligence could also be taken from community stories in the Kedurang region. According to Mr. AR, a community member in the Kedurang region, they had many folktales that originated in that area, namely fable-shaped folktales, origin stories, about *Pak Beluk*, *Pak Andre*, *Sinammam*,

and *Beteri*. These stories contained excellent educational values to be used as a learning source during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, folktales can also sharpen children's sensitivity to their surroundings. Parents can convey clear and convincing messages about nature, and they can also use folktales to teach their children suitable lessons to prepare them to live well (Fadhli, 2020).

The use of folktales derived from community folklore is also a strategy to introduce local wisdom to the younger generation. Local culture certainly needs to be introduced to all community members, from the younger generation to adults. Learning by using folktales sourced from people's folklore is undoubtedly one of the proper steps. Students can learn as well as get to know the local culture in the area. It is beneficial in internalizing local wisdom to the younger generation to have a sense of pride in their culture.

The following transcript presented the results of an interview with Mr. AR, a grandfather and chairman of tradition who liked to tell the stories to his grandchildren.

*"We have a lot of wonderful and interesting stories that must be passed on to the younger generation. These stories contain life values such as caring, compassion, sympathy, and mutual assistance. They also contain the good value that can make children know their own culture and good and evil deeds in life."*

According to Mr. AR, the use of folktales as a learning resource had a tremendous impact. Children tend to understand the important message contained in the fairy tale. Folktales could touch their hearts so that they might apply what they got from the story. The delivery of folktales could positively influence children to be more familiar with friends and respect their parents. It indicated that folktales were very suitable to be used as a source of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. By using the folktale, a child is exposed to knowledge, experiences, morals, customs, rituals, and beliefs that they are supposed to live through as human beings. Folktales also introduce social customs, institutions, organizations, and their processes. Children will know and realize fundamental social values such as respect for ruler, parent, senior, superior, master, older person, and teacher (Penjore, 2005).

### **Students' Perspectives**

The observations and interviews were also conducted with the students at school and home. The researchers met many students in the Kedurang Ilir and Kedurang Ulu regions. Most of them said that they loved reading the folktales in textbooks. Meanwhile, some of them listened to folktales told by their family. This storytelling activity used to be done often by the residents of Kedurang, Bengkulu. Parents usually told their children stories before they went to bed. Nevertheless, those activities were barely done by them nowadays.

Although the children rarely listen to folktales these days, they still love to read and listen to exciting stories. YG, a student from Batu Ampar village, stated that he was very fond of listening to stories. He used to hear folktales from his grandfather at home. According to YG, listening to folktales was fun.

*“I love listening to stories told by my grandfather. The story is fun. I am very excited to hear if grandpa is going to tell me a story.”*

The other students also liked to read stories. They knew the stories from the book. A student said that he liked to read stories containing images. FR, a third-grade student of elementary school, loved to read fairy-tale books. The book he chose was the one containing many interesting images.

*“I love reading storybooks, but the ones with many pictures.”*

The FR's statement is undoubtedly significant to consider. It is important to note that children tend to like storybooks containing many compelling images. It could also be concluded that low-graders were fond of storybooks with many pictures. Their understanding of the storyline would be supported by looking at the images provided. FR usually read storybooks with his friends in the mini library in Lubuk Ladung village. They were so excited to do reading activities in the library.

RR, the first-grade elementary school student, was also very fond of listening to stories or folktales. He was still not so fluent in reading, so that he preferred to listen to folktales read by his brother.

*“I listened to the story. My brother usually read it for me.”*

RR enjoyed listening to folktales delivered by his brother. He was so excited that his brother would read a fairy tale, and he listened word by word. Some students that researchers met in Nanti Agung village also liked to read storybooks. They even desperately wanted to have a storybook. Based on the observations, the students interacted with each other and asked about the story's content during storytelling activities. Such activities could unite students to be more familiar with each other. They would also listen attentively to the story so that its message would be easy to internalize. This reality indicated that storytelling using folktales could be a source of learning for students to improve their social intelligence, and it was very well done during the Covid-19 pandemic. The students were desperately yearning to learn, usually at school, even though the school was closed for a while and disrupted the learning activities (Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020). Cole et al. (2005) state that formal education is a significant community for students, and teachers are the primary role model.

Besides, to learn about folktales during the Covid-19 pandemic, elementary school students in the Kedurang region had a mandatory book published by the Ministry of Education. Some schools also had other supporting books published by Erlangga and Masmedia publishers. They were textbooks containing materials and exercises. Based on the researchers' analyses, the books used by the students were excellent, contained compelling images, and corresponded to the curriculum. The material was also delivered with exercises. In books IV and VIII for grade IV students, there was material about folklore or folktales that students were interested in. The teachers also said that the book's stories were fascinating and contained the value of character education, especially social care and the spirit of cooperation. These stories were outstanding as learning resources for elementary school students. The books also contained a variety of Indonesian cultures to know.

Based on the document analysis results, researchers found several stories containing the value of social intelligence, namely social empathy, caring, and mutual assistance. Martono (2019) states that literary work is intended to introduce children to society. Using literary work could make children think creatively as well (Marzuki, 2019). The researchers found two social intelligence dimensions in the book: social consciousness and social facilities. Both dimensions were contained in the textbook's story. The value of social intelligence was even included in the questions so that the students would get used to interacting with others. The stories presented in the book also taught them to empathize with and care for others, such as fathers, mothers, teachers, friends, and neighbours who need help. It indicated that parents could use relevant stories in student textbooks to internalize the value of social intelligence.

The following is an example of social intelligence's value in the book published by the Ministry of Education for grade IV students.

*“One morning, Mr. Tulus did not see Grandma Ijah in her yard. In the afternoon, the porch of her house remained quiet. Mr. Tulus took the time to stop by. He knocked on the door, but it went unanswered. He opened the door and stepped in. He was shocked to find Grandma Ijah limping in front of her living room. He touched her forehead, and it felt a bit warm. She was sick. He felt regret that he did not stop by in the morning, but it was not too late. He asked several residents to take her to the nearest doctor. And then he arranged a schedule of residents who would take turns looking after her until she recovered. Nobody refused, and all of them volunteered to help. They know, someday when they are in trouble, they will surely be helped.”*

The above excerpt was taken from the story entitled “The Importance of *Tegur Sapa* Culture” in the grade IV student book published by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia. The story taught students to greet and help each other. The above story was an excellent example. Mr. Tulus, in the story, had social intelligence, especially a very good concern for his neighbours. He visited the house of a neighbour who had not been seen for a long time. He found his neighbour, Grandma Ijah, sick. He also invited everyone to take her to the hospital, and they all were ready to help her. The phrase “they know, someday when they are in trouble, they will surely be helped” at the end of the story indicated an awareness to help each other. All communities uphold the principle of helping each other; today, we help others, and tomorrow, we could need help. Another story that contained social intelligence values was the “Ants and Grasshoppers” in the textbooks of grade IV students. The story can be seen in the following excerpt.

*“Winter has finally arrived. The diligent Ant sat comfortably in his warm house and enjoyed his abundant food. The Grasshopper was pensive and sad in his house because he did not have any food. When the Grasshopper was about to starve to death, the Ant came and gave him some food.”*

The Ant in the excerpt above was so concerned with his best friend, the Grasshopper. The Ant then helped the distressed Grasshopper by giving him food when he was starving. This story fosters children's social attitude, caring for each other, which is an

integral part of humans' lives as social beings. The character of ant is undoubtedly perfect to be used as an example in life. It helped its neighbours and friends who were starving. As well as with humans, we must live in harmony with neighbours and friends. We also have to help others who are in trouble.

Additionally, folktales might adapt to modern technical advancements throughout time. The era of society 5.0, which is filled with technology, requires educational institutions to respond to technological advancements. Likewise, to facilitate access during the Covid-19 pandemic, folktales might be linked with technology. It can be done by the creation of digital storybooks and folktale-based educational animated videos. The fairytale could be developed in digital platforms containing animation, voice, pictures, and games to build students' morals, ethics, and culture (Phanphai et al., 2019). Amali (2014) states that smartphones are available for collecting, documenting, disseminating, and promoting folktales. Today's children have many opportunities to access it. In addition, Folktale-telling sessions can be presented through television and radio programs. Regardless of medium the students use to access folktale, they can still take the substantial benefits contained in it. Additionally, teachers must collaborate with families to monitor students' academic development and motivate them to increase their engagement with parents (Hurst et al., 2013).

## DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, there were several critical things that the researchers found.

*First*, the Kedurang region was a green zone area and free from the Covid-19 outbreak, but the education process did not take place face-to-face for a while to avoid the spread of Covid-19. Thus, the schools carried out the teaching and learning activities through assignments. The students came to school in turn. Online learning was also not implemented in Kedurang, Bengkulu, as most students lacked access to mobile phones, leaving the assignment as the only option.

*Second*, the use of folktales could trigger students' social intelligence. The folktales utilized in this study could be found in students' textbooks. The students owned three distinct types of books: those produced by the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Kemendikbud*), those published by Erlangga, and those published by Masmedia. Nevertheless, the one published by the Ministry of Education and Culture was the most widely used by the teachers, as it contained the good values of social intelligence for the students.

*Third*, the researchers investigated the perspectives of three informants in this study: teachers, parents, and students. According to the teachers, most students in the Kedurang region showed a strong interest in reading storybooks. Thus, there were two strategies used to help them internalize the value of social intelligence. For low-graders, i.e., grades 1-3, parents or family members read the stories for them. Meanwhile for high-graders, i.e., grades 4-6, the students were asked to read by themselves, and then parents/families asked about the value of social intelligence in the book. Moreover, parents might convey educational tales representative of society to educate and internalize the value of social intelligence. Indeed, the fairy tales chosen were the ones

that could be taken as examples of the importance of caring and social empathy. The students were also excited to read storybooks while studying at home. Reading a book of folktales made them understand the value of goodness.

*Fourth*, the creation of regional libraries might provide students a place to learn after the pandemic. In Lubuk Ladung village, for example, many students learned in the available mini library. They read a variety of storybooks and looked so happy. During the Covid-19 pandemic, they kept their distance to avoid the spread of coronavirus while maintaining their motivation as it has a significant role in learning (Jung, 2021). Likewise with students in Kedurang, they only focused on learning at home. This was as the results of interviews with a teacher, namely Mrs. IS.

*"In the meantime, our school does not carry out learning [activities]. The students just stay at home. The coronavirus has prevented learning activities in our schools from taking place. It is our effort against the spread of coronavirus. The students focus on their health. We have not given any assignment yet. We also do not carry out online learning because the students do not have mobile phones."*

The above conditions indicated that not all schools carried out assignments for the students regularly. As what happened at the school in Betungan village, the students stayed at home because there was no school activity. It showed that the learning activities had stalled for a while to maintain health. However, it did not mean that teachers did not care about students' education; they missed face-to-face learning activities. The interview results with Mrs. ST, an elementary school teacher in Pajar Bulan village, revealed that many teachers in the Kedurang region missed face-to-face learning. She expressed how she felt a longing to teach her students.

*"I miss face-to-face learning. I feel sorry for the kids who have not been able to read. I am afraid their parents do not have much time to teach them to read at home because they have to work in the fields."*

The teacher's sympathetic attitude showed how concerned she was about the education of her students. Similarly, Mrs. IS and the other teachers in Kedurang, Bengkulu also missed the interaction in the classroom. They missed meeting their students and desperately wanted to hold face-to-face learning and hoped the coronavirus outbreak pass soon. They were also worried that the students were not learning optimally at home. Thus, Mantasiah et al. (2021) state that giving them positive vibes is a good way for teachers to reduce students' stress during learning from home.

Mrs. AH, a teacher at an elementary school in Batu Ampar village, also showed her concern for education in her school. She asked the students to come to her house. By implementing health protocols, she taught the students to read. She guided the students who had the motivation to learn to read even though the teaching and learning process did not take place optimally. Mrs. AH was anxious about her students' education. As a teacher, she strived to give her best. She also remained passionate about teaching her students at home. She did not consider that education must take place in schools; she believed that it can take place anywhere.

*“I am anxious about the education of my students. I asked them to come to my house. Although not all of them could attend. I taught the students who came to read and write. I do not want them to forget about learning activities because of the coronavirus outbreak.”*

Mrs. AH was so eager to bequeath her knowledge. She was very concerned about the continuity of students' education. She agreed to teach reading and writing in her home to open up the opportunities for her students who wanted to learn. Mrs. AH's sincerity showed how much she cared about her students.

### **CONCLUSION**

Folktales had a vital role in building students' character. This study's results were divided into two main components: statistical analysis and narrative inquiry about the perspective of teachers, families, and students on learning using folktales during the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the statistical analysis, there was an improvement in students' social intelligence. It was shown that there is a significant difference in the mean score of the pre-test and post-test. On the other hand, based on the interview with the teacher, folktales were found to be excellent as a source of learning. Folktale material in the primary school curriculum could be used as a learning resource so that the teachers provided books containing folktales suitable for teaching and learning activities. The students were very active in learning using folktales, which led them to think critically and develop their social sensitivities. According to the parents, folktales could build the students' character to care for others. Folktales could also internalize many good values to students during learning from home. According to students, folktales were enjoyable to read. They were pleased to read or listen to folktales delivered by parents or other family members. The students in Kedurang had a high interest in reading or listening to folktales. Creating the village library is a strategic step that can be done so that the students remain eager to learn and read diligently. This effort is a perfect thing to do in all villages. Additionally, cooperation between families and teachers is an important thing that needs to be done to monitor students' social and cognitive development during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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