

MBST Programe on Early Childhood Development by Parents

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Abstract

Early childhood is a critical period for learning, training good or bad habit. So, the parent must provide their children with appropriate moral behavior for real-world and daily life. This study examines the results of the MBST Program on early childhood development by parents. A quasi-experimental design was 30 children, ages 5-6, in each group while studying at a kindergarten, Thailand. The intervention group participated in the MBST Program with their parents. Data was collected using a paired t-test. The results showed that the intervention group had significantly higher mean moral scores after attending the program than before as well as higher scores compared to the comparison group ($p < 0.001$). This study suggests that children demonstrated improved behavior using the MBST book. Consequently, organizations such as children's groups should utilize storytelling to spread these benefits. Storytellers may not be limited to parents and can include other caregivers.

Keywords: Moral, Bedtime, Programe, Parent, Early childhood, good health and wellbeing

1. Introduction

Early childhood, was rapid developmental period, influences the way in which humans grow up and become vital parts of the nation and the world (Sayre et al., 2015). Childhood is critical period for learning, as such, adults and families must provide their children with examples of appropriate moral behavior (Haidt, 2008). A sense of morality emerges in children as young as three years old after infancy (Turiel, 2018). Moral and ethical grounds form with experience; children acquire them by listening to stories and practicing morals through people in the society around them (Hoyne & Egan, 2019; Veisson & Kuurme, 2010).

Lawrence Kohlberg, a psychologist, believed that intellectual and emotional development was a basis for moral development (Haidt, 2008). Preschool children's acquisition of morals is on the preconventional level. Thus, the correct and right foundation must form at this age for child development to occur in the proper step by step (Haidt, 2008; Turiel, 2018; Khajornchaikul, 2022). Adults must train children to rationalize when young, providing a basis for advanced moral rationalization at a proper age (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977; Haidt, 2008).

Family is the best social unit to raise a child within because it is a primary institution directly influencing their behavior (Khajornchaikul, 2022; Ceka & Murati, 2016). One of the goals of the 2021-2027 Early Childhood National Development Plan in Thailand involves strengthening parenting skills (Office of the Education Council, 2021). Whether a child will benefit or harm society partly depends on the condition of their family and the child-rearing methods used to mold their thought (Ceka & Murati, 2016). Moreover, parents have duties to perfect physical body and mind to help them engage in all possible development aspects (Vasta et al., 2004). And support cognitive skills are particularly important since they increase educational achievement once the child begins school (Saracho & Spodek, 2010; Hoyne & Egan, 2019). Therefore, parents should encourage proper behavior by using various methods like bedtime storytelling to help foster communication (Niklas et al., 2016).

Storytelling is not fun for children but builds imagination and language skills, simultaneously strengthening relationships and promotion moral too (Killick & Boffey, 2012; Niklas et al., 2016). This activity remains a crucial way to build social skills as children grow (Hoyne & Egan, 2019; Killick & Boffey, 2012). Storytelling has been an important social experience throughout time (Killick & Boffey, 2012; Niklas et al., 2016; Wambiri & Ndani, 2015). It is an expression of love and affection that can heal children's bad habits (Vasta et al., 2004; Wright et al., 2008; Pratiwi et al., 2020). As such, children develop discipline and generosity through the lessons learned in these books (Killick & Boffey, 2012; Pratiwi et al., 2020; Niklas et al., 2016). Discipline is the foundation that helps children understand the real world, encouraging it results in strong self – discipline and

group discipline, responsibility, and control behavior, can be applied in daily life (UNICEF, 2010; Pratiwi et al., 2020). For the generosity emerges during age two once a pattern within social relationships is recognized with emotional and cognitive processing, and can be predicted by assigning tasks that require sharing (Paulus & Moore, 2014; Paulus & Moore, 2017; Paulus et al., 2016). Characters within storybooks stimulate children's interest and a desire to imitate the behavior of any figures they favor (Killick & Boffey, 2012; Hoyne & Egan, 2019). Inserting morality and ethics into these tales could foster good behavior (Killick & Boffey, 2012). Characters introduce the concept of consequences, forcing children to think about their impact on others (Niklas et al., 2016; Killick & Boffey, 2012). Parents can ask open-ended questions to improve their child's critical thinking skills afterwards (Wright et al., 2008; Niklas et al., 2016). The learning quality overall relies on how each family raises their children (Logan et al., 2019; Helem, 1975). So, the aim of this research was to study the results of the MBST (Moral Bedtime Story Telling) Program in early childhood by parents.

2. Materials Studied

The quasi-experimental pretest and posttest two-group design, with 30 children in each group, involved recruitment using Lemeshow et al.'s formula (1990).

2.1 Participants

Inclusion criteria of Early childhood; included boys and girls, good health, resided within their parents' household, and acquired parent permission shown through the signing of the informed consent form. Inclusion criteria of parents; male and female parents, parents must have signed the informed consent form and constantly resided in their provinces. And Inclusion criteria of teacher: teachers must have signed the informed consent form. Withdrawal from program and deficient answers were the criteria for exclusion of early childhood from the study.

The intervention group was purposively invited to participate throughout in Kohlberg theory and received the MBST program. After finishing process, the comparison group receive the MBST program manual.

Content validity was approved by three experts specializing in early childhood, family studies, and public health nursing. The reliability was equal to 0.73. This study was approved by The Mahidol University Research Ethics Committee.

2.2 Research Instruments

The research instrument was divided into three parts and developed based on a literature review. The first part consisted of a series of questions and three subsections. Eight questions with multiple choice and open-ended answers addressed age, gender early childhood, education, occupation, and income parent. The next subsection was a moral picture questionnaire that tested discipline and generosity. There were 16 items; each had four pictures to choose from. Participants identified their choices as true (1 point) or false (0 points). The total score was 60. This part was evaluated by term researcher. The last subsection was a 30 items questionnaire that tested the same discipline and generosity, but was evaluated by teachers instead of researchers. Participants identified their choices on a 3 points scale from always (3 points), sometimes (2 points) and never (1 point). The total score was 90.

For the MBST program, included applying the MBST Program to the intervention group. Morality-oriented storytelling activities were given to the children by their parents. Meanwhile, the comparison group participated in their normal school curriculum. The research instrument consisted of six illustrated moral tales - three based on discipline and three on generosity - and were read by parents before their child's bedtime. The parents did so thirty minutes each night, six nights per week, and four weeks for the entirety of the MBST program. After the conclusion of the activities, child participants were asked for knowledge and lessons learned by their parents.

Characteristics of the two groups were analyzed by descriptive statistics. A paired t-test was used to examine the differences within the experimental group, while an independent t-test was used to compare the differences between the two groups. The level of statistical test was at $p < 0.05$.

3. Results

Part 1: Population Characteristics

About 70.0%, and 66.67 % of children in the intervention group, and the comparison group was at age of 5 - 5.6. 46.67% of the intervention group were boys and 53.33% were girls, while about 50.0% of the comparison group was boys and 50.0% were girls. Around 30.0% of fathers in the intervention group completed high school. However, 40.0% of the comparison group completed secondary school. Most fathers of the intervention group and comparison group were employee 56.7% and 53.3% respectively. Fathers in the intervention group typically

earned an income of 2,001 - 7,000 baht or 7,001 - 12,000 baht at 40%, while 43.3% of fathers in the comparison group earned some income but not more than 2,000 baht. 26.7% of mothers in the intervention group and 40.0% in the comparison group completed secondary school. 40.0% of mothers in the intervention group and 53.3% in the comparison group were employed. 40.0% of mother in the intervention group and 43.3% in the comparison one earned some income between 2,001 - 7,000 baht. Participants in both the intervention group and comparison group had indifferent demographic frequency, e.g., age, gender of preschool children, level of education of parents, the career of parents, and monthly income. (Table 1)

Table 1. Socio-Demographic characteristics of the sample group

Characteristics	Intervention Group (n=40)		Comparison Group (n=40)		χ^2	p-value
	Number	%	Number	%		
Age (year)						
5 – 5.6	21	70.0	20	66.67	0.268	0.605
5.7 - 6	9	30.0	10	33.33		
Gender						
Boy	17	46.67	15	50.0	0.317	0.573
Girl	13	53.33	15	50.0		
– X ± S.D.	5.04±0.028		5.05±0.029			
Min-Max	5-5.11		35.01-5.11			
Father's Educational level						
Primary school	5	16.7	6	20.00	5.657	0.226
Secondary school	7	23.3	12	40.0		
High school	9	30.0	7	23.3		
Vocational cert.	4	13.3	0	0.0		
Bachelor's degree	5	16.7	5	16.7		
Father's Occupation						
Government officer	6	20.0	5	16.7	2.921	0.571
Employee	17	56.7	16	53.3		
Agriculturist	3	10.0	7	23.3		
Private business	3	10.0	2	6.7		
Not working	1	3.3	-	0.0		
Father's Income (baht)						
Less 2,000	1	3.3	13	43.3	1.174	0.759
2,001- 7,000	12	40.0	0	0		
7,001 – 12,000	12	40.0	11	36.7		
More 12,001	5	16.7	6	20.0		
Mother's Educational level						
Primary school	7	23.3	5	16.7	1.894	0.755
Secondary school	8	26.7	12	40.0		
High school	7	23.3	8	26.7		
Vocational cert.	4	13.3	2	6.2		
Bachelor's degree	4	13.3	3	10.0		
Mother's Occupation						
Government officer	2	6.7	3	10.0	3.771	0.438
Employee	12	40.0	16	53.3		
Agriculturist	2	6.7	4	13.3		
Private business	3	10.0	6	10.0		
Not working	8	26.7	4	13.3		

Characteristics	Intervention Group (n=40)		Comparison Group (n=40)		χ^2	p-value
	Number	%	Number	%		
Mother's income (baht)						
Less 2,000	8	26.7	5	16.7	2.591	0.459
2,001- 7,000	12	40.0	13	43.3		
7,001 – 12,000	9	30.0	8	26.7		
More 12,001	1	3.3	4	13.3		

* p-value < 0.05

Part 2: Moral behavior score of intervention group and comparison group

After the experiment by researcher and teacher, the experimental group significantly achieved higher post-experimental average scores on moral behaviors in term of discipline and generosity than the pre-experimental average scores at a statistic test level (p-value < 0.01). For the comparison group, After the statistic test, it was found that the comparison group achieved the post-experimental average scores on moral behaviors in term of discipline and generosity indifferent to their pre -experimental average scores. (Table 2) (Table 3)

Table 2. Comparison of Moral behavior score in preschool of intervention groups and comparison group by researcher

Moral	Intervention group (N=30)		Comparison Group (N=30)		t	df	p-value
	X	S.D.	S.D.	S.D.			
Discipline							
Before the experimental	3.98	1.25	3.77	1.61	0.45	58	0.657
After the experimental	7.63	0.81	4.43	1.28	11.59	58	<0.01
Generosity							
Before the experimental	2.93	0.94	3.17	1.085	0.88	58	0.378
After the experimental	7.50	0.63	3.80	1.03	16.78	58	<0.01

* p-value < 0.05

Table 3. Comparison of Moral behavior score in preschool of intervention groups and comparison group by teacher

Moral	Intervention group (N=30)		Comparison Group (N=30)		t	df	p-value
	X	S.D.	S.D.	S.D.			
Discipline							
Before the experimental	30.43	1.19	29.73	1.14	2.32	58	0.20
After the experimental	37.37	5.23	29.98	1.07	7.60	58	<0.01
Generosity							
Before the experimental	30.63	1.38	29.98	1.33	1.91	58	0.06
After the experimental	42.23	1.65	30.20	1.30	31.35	58	<0.01

* p-value < 0.05

4. Discussion

After the implementation of the MBST program, intervention group scores increased (Table 2 and Table 3). In addition, an efficiency program based on moral theory and activities, 30 minutes every night, six nights per week, and four weeks for the MBST program. The characters within the books encouraged children to learn about good

behavior and to pay attention to events in those tales. They could motivate children's interest, stimulate their mind, and encourage desirable behavior because the children at this age prefer imitating their favorite role models' behavior (Mol, 2010; Niklas et al., 2016; Khajornchaikul, 2021; Hoyne & Egan, 2019). Such results are consistent with the explanation that a successful method of promoting and developing morality is to set role models for children to follow. With this, children as early as 5 years old can distinguish between moral rules (Haidt, 2008; Wambiri & Ndani, 2015; Niklas et al., 2016).

The psychologists believed that, it is possible the methods used were most effective because children did not recognize that they were being persuaded. The results showed that, the children tended to share more frequently after storytelling was implemented and understood the generosity displayed when in a task that required sharing (Boonnadee et al., 2021; Paulus, & Moore, 2017).

In term of discipline, the results showed that, young children with storytelling activities, and project approach about activities had high self-discipline, and obeying rules without expecting a reward. Different characteristics (like as the race of the child, black children or whether they came from a single-parent household) led to differences in discipline, ways to engage in tasks, and interactions with others in a preschool group (Noidad & Kajonrunsilp, 2012; Kaewkanha & Anurakwatthana, 2021; Pratiwi et al., 2020; Pan & Zhu, 2018; Jelić & Nenezić, 2019). So, these stories helped preschool children develop new behaviors and improve existing ones (Liu et al., 2010).

The findings of this study supported Kohlberg's concept and agreed that human moral development can be accelerated by training, practicing, and teaching by imitation of good role models, especially those within their home environment (Turiel, 2018; Mol, 2010).

However, Average discipline and generosity scores in the comparison group did not differ before and after the experiment was conducted. According to either direct or indirect learning can emerge from educational institutes, other environments, family, friends, communities, social culture, and media. Either good or bad matters could be learned and learning would last one's life. Teaching and learning in an educational institution could encourage learning and develop learners to be perfect (Allen & Kelly, 2015).

By only arranging bedtime storytelling activities through the school, the researchers were unable to limit the effects of additional media upon the children during the research period. Additionally, after data collection the researchers learned that teachers in related classes completed a performance evaluation similar to the research being conducted. This factor may affect the data analysis in the comparison group. This may be a reason why the preschool children in the comparison group gained indifferent before experimental and after experimental average scores. And the children's responses to interactive moral storytelling book. Lastly, this experiment only used a small group of test subjects. Therefore, results may not be applicable to the entire family population.

5. Conclusions

The results should be monitored after applying the bedtime storytelling activities to measure if the children will have good moral behavior in the long term. Next research is suggested as follows: The effects of switching out the parent with other caregivers would also be helpful to see how the MBST program can be expanded to other areas.

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