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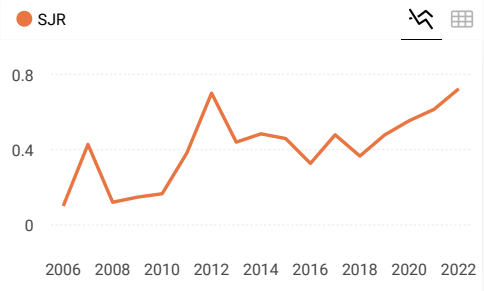

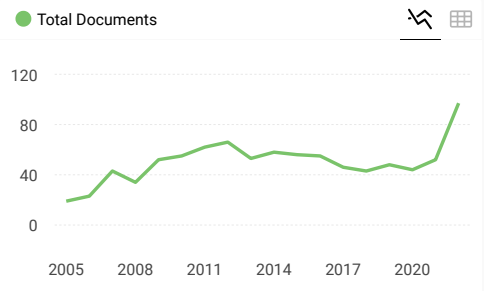

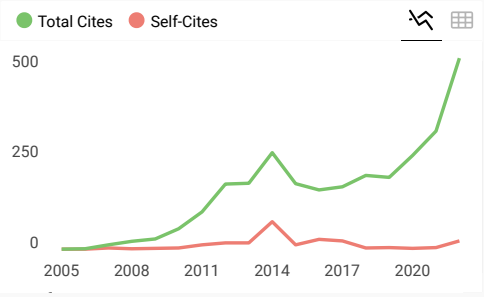

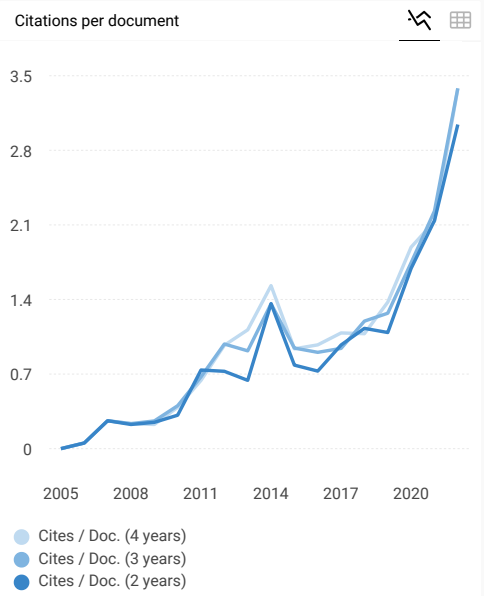

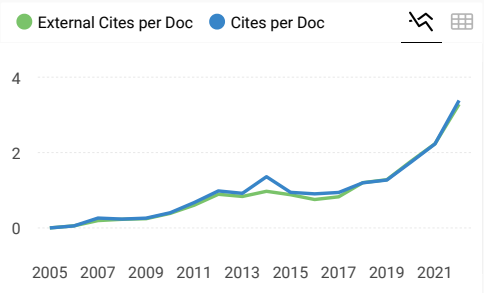

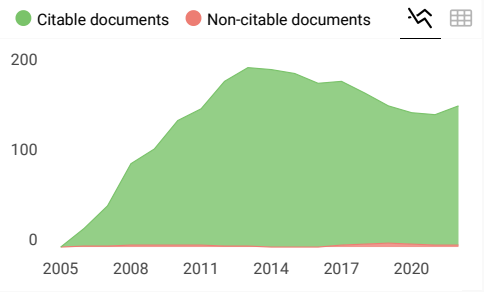

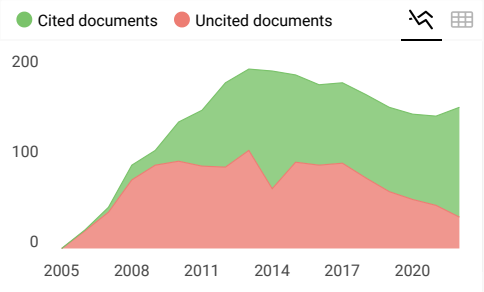

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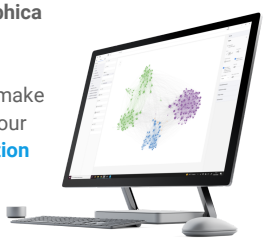

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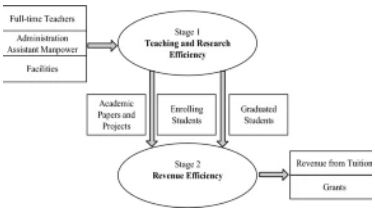

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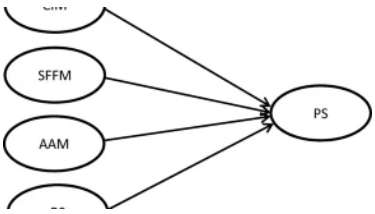

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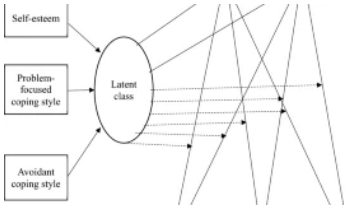

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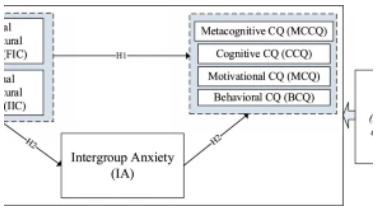

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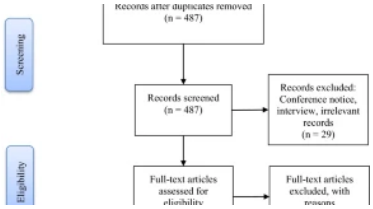

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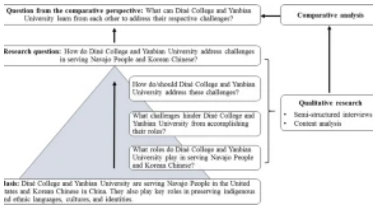

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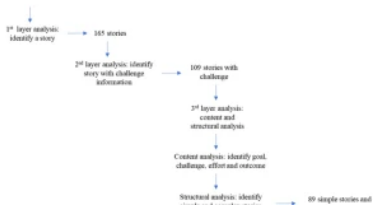

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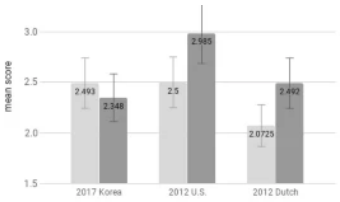

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How effort towards challenge is depicted in stories for young children: an Indonesian study

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How efort towards challenge is depicted in stories for young children: an Indonesian study

Maria N. Suprawati[1,2] · Simone Volet[1] · Deborah Pino-Pasternak[3]

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Abstract
This study examined the nature of efort towards challenge in stories recommended for young children in Indonesian schools. One hundred and nine stories with challenge information, recommended by the Indonesian government for Years 1 and 2 were analyzed, using a combination of content and structural analyses. When exploring the characters' eforts towards chal lenge, the fndings revealed that the most prominent type of efort depicted in the stories was exerted by characters other than the protagonist (other-initiated efort). Furthermore, while all stories with this type of efort had a successful outcome, self-initiated individual efort (exerted by the main character) was the most prevalent type of efort in stories with an unsuc cessful outcome. These fndings can be interpreted in more than one way. From the perspective of the achievement motivation literature, the responses to challenges depicted in the stories do not seem to promote a proactive approach towards difculties. From the perspective of prevalent local values, however, the examples of efort presented in the stories may represent societal expectations concerning the acceptance of life events (in Indonesian: *nrimo*) and the promotion of caring values towards individuals in need. By integrating fndings of the extant literature on achievement motivation with a contextually sensitive approach to the interpretation of the stories' content, this study raises important questions for future research in this area.

Keywords Stories · Efort · Challenge · Primary education · Indonesia

Introduction

Learning at school can be challenging since most of the skills necessary to be successful in this setting are new to children and require practice (Rimm-Kaufman et al. 2000). Efort is, therefore, necessary if children are to master skills such as learning to read and write. A number of studies have documented that children who exert efort towards challeng ing academic situations at school (i.e., persisting at work, paying attention and engaging in learning tasks) are more likely to attain academic success (McWayne et al. 2004; Schaefer and McDermott 1999; Yen et al. 2004). Those stud ies underscore the importance of fostering efort in young children from the beginning of schooling and the need to identify predictors of behaviors that are indicative of efort.

Several predictors of efort enactment have been identi fed in the literature. These include the following: (a) child level predictors such as self-regulation (Rimm-Kaufman et al. 2009) and behavioral adjustment (Domínguez et al. 2010); (b) home context predictors, like parental involve ment and assistance (Fantuzzo et al. 2004; Neitzel and Stright 2003), and (c) classroom-related variables, such as

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Maria N. Suprawati
maria.suprawati@gmail.com

Simone Volet
s.volet@murdoch.edu.au

Deborah Pino-Pasternak
Deborah.Pino-Pasternak@canberra.edu.au

[1] Murdoch University, Perth, Australia

[2] Psychology Faculty, Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

[3] University of Canberra, Canberra, Australia

the instructional context (Rimm-Kaufman et al. 2005) and teacher support for learning (Domínguez et al. 2010; Rimm Kaufman et al. 2005). However, among studies of contextual correlates of efort, the possible role of educational materi als, such as stories presented in the classroom, has received limited empirical attention.

The present study is the frst step in addressing this gap and examines, through an in-depth analysis of text, how efort towards challenge is depicted in stories for young chil dren. While this study does not investigate how children's understanding of stories contributes to modifying their efort-related behaviors in school settings, we take what we argue is a necessary preliminary step, which is to examine the extent to which the content of these stories makes refer
ences to efort, particularly in the face of challenging situa tions. The choice of Indonesia as the context for this study is deemed valuable for this inquiry because, as opposed to Anglo-speaking and European countries, children in Indone sia are mostly (if not solely) exposed to books in the school context and rarely read or are read to at home (Hasan et al. 2013). Analyzing then the extent to which stories read at school address efort-related themes becomes pivotal in sup porting a future understanding of how these materials may infuence student efort-related behavior in these settings.

Conceptualisation of efort in educational research

The term *efort* is widely used in education and usually appears in the education literature when scholars discuss the relationship between motivation and achievement (see Schunk et al. 2008, for a review). Efort also appears in the volition literature (Brookhart et al. 2006; Schunk et al. 2008) and self-regulation research (Schwinger and Stiensmeier
Pelster 2012). Alongside the growing body of literature examining the relationship between motivation and achieve ment, some researchers, however, have treated efort as a variable in its own right, for example, when investigating how efort mediates the relationship between motivation and achievement (Larson et al. 2014). Efort has been con ceptualized as behavior directed towards a goal (Brookhart et al. 2006) and internally driven (Brookhart 1998; Car bonaro 2005; Natriello and Mcdill 1986). Looking at how efort has been measured (Brookhart 1998; Chouinard et al. 2007; Guan et al. 2013), it can be concluded that challenge is necessary to elicit efort. If a challenge is not resolved in the frst instance, efort may be displayed as persistence, demonstrated by repeated attempts to address the challenge. Conceptualizing persistence as part of sustained efort is in line with Elliot et al.'s (1999) and Guan et al.'s (2013) that defned efort as "the amount of energy expended in the process of learning" (p. 153) and persistence as "continued investment in learning" (p. 153).

Factors related to efort towards challenge in young children

Several studies have investigated the factors that could be related to efort towards challenge in young children
(Domínguez et al. 2010; Rimm-Kaufman et al. 2009, 2002, 2005, 2000). While some factors are related to children's characteristics, others have been associated with the fea tures of the classroom context. Two children's character istics have been identifed as predicting efort, namely, behavior adjustment (Domínguez et al. 2010) and self regulation (). For example, using a sample of 172 pre schoolers, Rimm-Kaufman et al. (2009) found that chil dren with better self-regulation (e.g., ability to control own behaviors and follow schools' routines) were more likely to demonstrate task persistence than their less self regulated counterparts.

Another study by Rimm-Kaufman et al. (2005) exam ined the extent to which children's display of efort was related to classroom characteristics. Their observations of a kindergarten cohort (n=250) revealed that children were more likely to persist when the teacher organized the class in small groups compared to a whole-class setting, and also when the activities were teacher directed rather than child directed (seat work vs. free time). However, they also reported that teaching quality (the extent to which teachers provided emotional and instructional support for learning) moderated the association between classroom settings and children's efort. Children in classrooms characterized by high teaching quality, as demonstrated by positive afect, low harshness, and clear instructions, were more likely to persist, regardless of other classroom arrangements. Overall, these studies show that classroom characteristics, particularly supportive teacher behavior, may be associ ated with children's efort in challenging school tasks. As argued previously, much less is known about the possible contribution of specifc educational materials, such as sto

ries, on children's enactment of efort.

Stories as tools for promoting the value of efort toward challenge in schools

A substantial body of research has demonstrated the efectiveness of stories in providing general knowledge about daily life situations and enabling the development of appropriate responses or behaviors in those situations (Abdelhalim 2015; Agosta et al. 2004; Bhavnagri and Samuels 1996; Bouchard et al. 2013; Shepherd and Kob
erstein 1989; Stanton-Chapman et al. 2006; Tsunemi et al. 2014). Abdelhalim (2015), for instance, demonstrated the efects of stories in fostering life skills and learning strat egies, such as, communication and interpersonal skills, and learning/metacognitive strategies. Using a pre–post test quasi-experimental design with 90 ffth graders, these researchers showed that students whose teachers used sto ries that referred to life skills as part of an intervention program showed greater levels of understanding of such

skills when compared to students whose teachers did not use stories. These fndings suggest that the target skills and strategies could be taught through stories.

Concepts from social learning theory (Bandura 1986) and research on the function of fction (Mar and Oatley 2008) can be called upon to explain how stories may afect children's behavior. Based on Bandura's social learning theory, an individual can learn behaviors vicariously by observing others. Even though stories depict the experi
ences of fctional characters, these characters can never theless be expected to serve as models and lead readers to learn from them. This is supported by the research by Mar and Oatley (2008) on the function of fction. For these scholars, a story represents a form of simulation that provides abstraction and models of the human social world. Readers can, therefore, simulate the experiences illustrated in the stories through identifcation with the characters. Once readers have identifed with the charac ters, they can learn from the simulated experiences and gain more information about their related thoughts, feel ings, and behaviors. Subsequently, this information can lead to the adoption of the previously learnt behaviors when readers face similar situations. Both explanations ofer insight into the processes that could explain how sto ries may infuence individuals' behavior. As triggers for modifying knowledge or behaviors has been documented, Hakemulder (2000) has argued that the choice of stimulus material (i.e., stories or texts) used in experiments is often based on intuition or on the suggestions of advisory boards and seldom on the basis of specifed criteria. For Hake mulder, there is a lack of clarity related to the content of stories used in experimental research, and therefore, little is known about the elements of stories that can infuence changes in behaviors.

Having established the importance of promoting the value of efort towards challenge to young children in the frst few years of primary school, and based on evidence that sto ries can be a source of learning at an early age, it can be argued that stories presented in class may have the potential to encourage efort towards challenge in young children. As argued, this claim calls frst for an analysis of the content of stories available for young children in a given primary school context (in this case Indonesia), to determine the extent to which efort-related themes are indeed present in these stories, and second, what types of efort towards chal
lenges are portrayed in these stories and in relation to what outcome.

Research questions

This study was designed to address the following research questions:

(1) What types of efort are portrayed in the stories pro vided by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture for Years 1 and 2 students?
(2) What types of goals and challenges lead to the efort depicted in these stories?
(3) What patterns of goal–challenge–efort are connected to successful and unsuccessful outcomes in these sto ries?
(4) What types of efort, goals, and challenges are por trayed in stories that feature repeated unsuccessful out comes?

Materials and methods

Data sources

Stories were obtained from texts provided in electronic schoolbooks (Buku Sekolah Elektronik) used for the Indo nesian language subject for Years 1 and 2 published online by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. These schoolbooks are recommended by the Indonesian govern ment and are expected to be used by primary school teachers in the country. The schoolbooks were accessed through the ofcial website of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture under the KTSP curriculum for

primary education (www.bse.kemdikbud.go.id).

A total of 375 texts were available in the schoolbooks and were examined in this study. These texts use diferent gen res, including narratives and expository texts, and they are mostly written in lower case without any punctuation. How ever, some of the texts include spaces and bold/italic fonts.

Data analysis and reliability of the coding process

This study applied a three-layered approach to data analy sis: (1) the identifcation of texts that could be regarded as "stories"; (2) the selection of stories that included a chal lenging situation; and (3) the investigation of the nature of efort-related themes that were depicted in these stories. These layers of analysis are described in turn, starting with the procedure developed to identify stories for subsequent analyses. Content analysis was employed across all three lay ers, with codes or categories systematically assigned to story segments. Both content and structural analyses were used in the third layer. Structural analysis in the present study involved scrutinizing the stories' composition based on their complexity. Following principles of Grounded Theory (Glasser and Strauss 1967), a combination of theoretically derived and data-driven (emerging) categories was estab lished (Glasser 1992).

First layer of analysis

Given the purpose of the present study, this first layer involved scrutinizing all the abovementioned 375 texts, and distinguishing between those that could be discarded on the grounds that they were not stories (i.e., expository mate
rial), and those that qualifed as stories and thus would be retained for the second layer of analysis. The constituents of a story were defned using Stein and Glenn's (1979) and Mar's (2004) distinction between narrative and expository texts. According to Stein and Glenn, a well-developed story generally has six constituents, although some may not be explicitly stated: those are setting, initial event, internal response, attempt, direct consequence, and reaction.

The suitability of Stein and Glenn's (1979) six constitu ents to determine whether a text qualifes as a story was piloted on a sample of 30 randomly chosen texts. This pilot analysis revealed that two constituents (*initial event* and *internal response*) were not explicitly present in a number of stories. In spite of these missing constituents though, and consistent with Stein and Glenn's (1979) claim, it was still possible for readers to get a sense of a story. Furthermore, it was established that the constituents of *direct consequence* and *reaction* could be combined into one single unit called *outcome*. Consequently, the following constituents were considered as minimum requirements for a text to qualify as a story: *setting*, *attempt*, and *outcome*. *Setting* is defned in this study as a statement in the text that provides infor mation about the characters (e.g., name, gender, age, emo tions, interests, goals, problems, abilities, habits or physical conditions) and story context (e.g., time, place and initial situation). *Attempt* is a statement in the text informing the reader of the characters' responses to the situation described in the setting. It may include some passive responses, such as *waiting* or *staying quiet*. Last, *outcome* is a statement in the text telling the reader whether the main characters attained their goals and resolved their challenges. This information can be inferred from the main or other character's feelings, thoughts, or actions after the attempt.

The determination of texts as stories was also consistent with Mar's (2004) claim that a story or narrative text is dis tinct from expository text, since the creation of an imaginary world is seen only in stories. However, Mar (2004) cogently argues that some stories can also include expository infor mation as background to the story. This means that a text can contain all the constituents of a story but vary in the amount of background exposition, including facts and descriptive information. In this study, texts were not categorized as sto ries if the expository component interfered with the sense of a story and accounted for more than 20% of the total word count. Because the three essential constituents (*set ting*, *attempt* and *outcome*) are related to the experiences of the main characters, it was also necessary to identify who the main character was. Informed by Suprawati et al. (2014) work, the criteria were (1) its name could be stated in the title, (2) the main character was usually described more extensively or mentioned more often in the story than other characters, and (3) the main character was generally men
tioned at the end of the story.

To assess inter-judge agreement on story constituents (i.e., setting, attempt and outcome) 2 judges independently coded 66 randomly selected texts from 375 texts (18%). Intercoder agreement for each category was almost per
fect (Landis and Koch 1977): $\kappa_{Setting}$=0.80, $\kappa_{Attempt}$=0.82, $\kappa_{Outcome}$=0.83, $\kappa_{Exposition}$=1.00 respectively. Disagreements were resolved through discussions. From the 375 texts ini tially identifed, 165 (44%) were coded as stories and sub jected to further analysis.

Second layer of analysis

The purpose of this analysis was to select the stories that included a challenging situation (*challenge*) from the 165 stories retained after the frst layer of analysis. *Challenge* was defned as a statement about situations that blocked or prevented the main character from achieving his or her goal. This analysis was based on a study conducted by Guan et al. (2013) that found efort to be exerted when obstacles are encountered. Some situations that lead to feelings of dis
tress were also treated as challenging (e.g., being sick, being trapped, losing something or facing poverty). To assess the reliability of this coding, 2 judges randomly coded 30 stories (18% of the 165). This proportion of stories was deemed appropriate, given the low-inference nature of this coding. Coder agreement for this layer was almost perfect (κ=0.90) (Landis and Koch 1977). Disagreements were resolved through discussions. After this analysis, 109 stories with *challenge* information were retained.

Third layer of analysis

The fnal layer of analysis was used to categorize the con tent and the structure of the stories in order to address the research questions. Content analysis was used to examine the nature of efort towards challenge, as depicted in the stories. In turn, structural analysis was used to diferentiate
the stories' composition based on their complexity. In terms of content, each story was coded using four cat egories: *goal*, *challenge*, *efort*, and *outcome*. To understand efort, it was necessary to frst identify the character's goal and its relation to the efort exerted. According to Stein and Glenn (1979), goals are expressed as statements that refer to the desire or intentions of a character. Brookhart et al. (2006), in turn, argue that efort represents "action towards a goal" (p. 152), meaning that a goal provides direction for a course of action. Hence, a goal is expected to precede action

or efort. In this study, two goal categories were identifed: (1) *blocked goal* and (2) *triggered goal*. While the notion of *blocked goal* was derived from the literature (Guan et al. 2013), the notion of *triggered goal* was empirically driven from the study's data (Glasser 1992). These categories were developed based on the position of the challenge relative to the goal. A *blocked goal* was recognized when the challenge emerged after a goal was set (e.g., a dragonfy wanted to fy but it couldn't because it only had one wing). In contrast, the goal was identifed as *triggered* when the challenge was stated at the beginning of the story (e.g., a bird had been trapped, and it wanted to be free). Although many stories did not explicitly state the goal, it could be inferred consistently.

The *challenge* categories identifed the sources of the challenges represented in the stories. Initially, two catego ries were considered: (1) *internal challenge* and (2) *external challenge*. These categories, adapted from the literature on stress resources (Ross et al. 1999), were used to defne chal lenges residing within the individual (internal challenges) as opposed to challenges imposed by another person or the environment (external challenges). In this study, the *external challenge* category was subsequently divided into two cat egories: (a) *external social challenge* and (b) *external non social challenge* to acknowledge diferences found in the data between interpersonal challenges (e.g., being mocked by a friend) and those generated by the physical environment (e.g., a natural disaster).

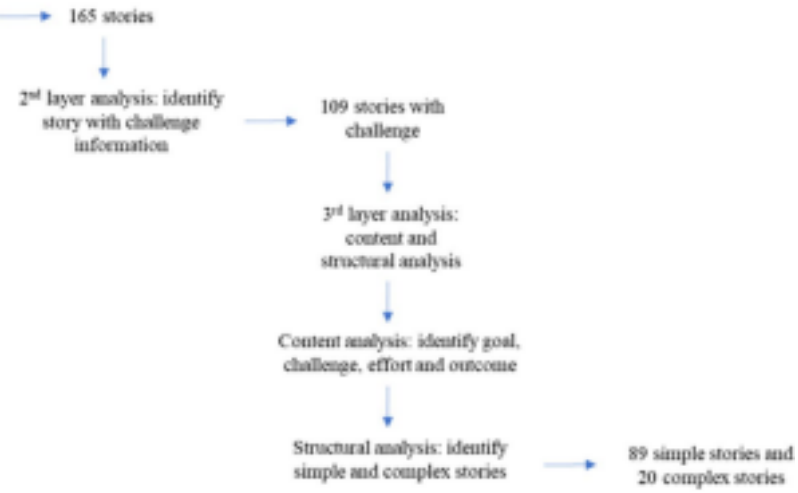
Based on the extant literature (Brookhart 1998; Guan et al. 2013; Natriello and Mcdill 1986; Trautwein 2007), efort towards challenge was conceptualized as a behavior exerted to resolve a difcult situation. Though persistence has also been recognized as a behavioral indicator of efort (Trautwein et al. 2009), in this case, behavioral engagement or action directed to address the challenge was considered

Fig. 1 Three layers of analyses

a minimal requirement to determine the presence of efort because persistence could only emerge in situations where the character engaged in repeated unsuccessful outcomes. Since efort can be understood as a personal and intrinsically driven action (Adamuti-Trache and Sweet 2013; Brookhart 1998; Cole et al. 2008) as well as an action that may involve other people through help-seeking behavior (Newman 2002), the locus of efort initiative (self vs others) was a key feature in characterizing efort in the selected stories. Two catego ries of efort were distinguished: (1) *self-initiated individual efort* and (2) *self-initiated efort involving others*. While the distinction between these two categories was theoretically driven, another category of efort (*other-initiated efort* cat
egory) was inductively derived. In this case, eforts directed to resolve the main character's challenge were initiated by others without any prompt or request by the main character. The last category (*no efort*) was also inductively derived from a few stories where no efort to resolve the main char
acter's challenge was present.

Lastly, outcome was identified as any statement that indicated whether the main character succeeded or failed in attaining his or her goal (Stein and Glenn 1979). Based on Stein and Glenn's (1979) work, two categories were identi
fed: (1) *successful* and (2) *unsuccessful outcome*. Because individuals can learn vicariously by observing the conse quences of other people's actions (Bandura 1986), the *out come* category was particularly important to make inferences about the potential lessons young students may learn from the stories used at school. The distribution of these catego ries across the selected stories is discussed in the "Results" section.

To assess the reliability of this last set of categories, two coders categorized 19 randomly selected stories out of 109 stories with challenge information (17%). The interrater



reliability was κ_{Goal}=0.79, $\kappa_{Challenge}$=0.71, κ_{Effort}=0.92, $\kappa_{Outcome}$=1.00. Disagreements were resolved through dis cussions. The lower levels of agreement, yet still substantial (Koch and Landis 1977), in the goal and the challenge cate gories compared to other categories can be related to the fact that the stories tended to be short with limited details about the characters, thus requiring a higher degree of inference.

Structural analysis was then used to identify *simple* vs *complex* stories regarding their composition. A story was identifed as *simple* when it comprised only one unit of analysis in each category (e.g., one goal, one challenge, one demonstration of efort and one outcome). In contrast, *complex* stories had more than one unit of analysis in any possible category. This analysis was necessary to identify persistence since this behavior could only be seen in a com plex story, particularly a story with repeated unsuccessful outcomes following frst evidence of efort. From the 109 stories with challenge information retained from the sec
ond layer of analysis, 89 (82%) were simple stories and 20 (18%) were complex stories. Given the objective nature of the simple vs. complex distinction, no reliability assessment was carried out. A fowchart to illustrate these analyses can be found in Fig. 1.

Results

The results are presented following the logic of the four research questions. The frst 3 questions focus on the 89 simple stories, and the 4th question focuses the 20 complex stories.

Types of efort portrayed in the stories

All three types of efort were present in the 89 simple stories. As can be seen in the last line of Table 2, efort was mostly presented as efort that was not initiated by the main character (n = 34; 38%), followed by efort ini tiated and completed individually by the main character (n=26; 29%) and self-initiated efort that involved others (n=22; 25%). Only 7 stories (8%) showed no efort. The analysis of the simple stories, therefore, revealed that 63% of the stories included the involvement of others (either prompted or unprompted by the main character) in resolv ing the challenge, while only 29% of them featured the main character independently resolving the challenge.

Types of goals and challenges leading to efort

Goals and challenges are important elements in stories that provide information about why the characters engage in efortful action. As shown in the right-hand column of Table 1, both types of goals were present in the simple sto ries, with triggered goals (n=51; 57%) being slightly more prevalent than blocked goals (n=38; 43%). Though other initiated efort was slightly more prominent in stories with a triggered goal, other types of efort were also depicted in stories with both types of goals. There was a signifcant association between types of goals and efort $\chi^2(3)=12.003$, $p=0.007$.

Challenges (see Table 2) emerging from internal attrib utes of the main character (n=40; 45%) were almost as frequent as challenges imposed by other characters (n=39; 44%). Only 10 stories (11%) depicted challenges from other external sources. Other-initiated efort appeared more often in stories with internal challenges, while self-initiated

Table 1 Goal and type of efort

	Type of efort				Total
	Self-initiated Individual	Self-initiated Involving Other	Other-initiated	None	*n*
Triggered goal	14 (16%)	13 (15%)	24 (27%)	0	51 (57%)
Blocked goal	12 (13%)	9 (10%)	10 (11%)	7 (8%)	38 (43%)
Total	26 (29%)	22 (25%)	34 (38%)	7 (8%)	89 (100%)

Table 2 Challenge and type of efort

	Type of efort				Total
	Self-initiated Individual	Self-initiated Involving Other	Other-initiated	None	*n*
Internal challenge	6 (7%)	11 (12%)	22 (25%)	1 (1%)	40 (45%)
External Social challenge	18 (20%)	7 (8%)	8 (9%)	6 (7%)	39 (44%)
Non social challenge	2 (2%)	4 (4%)	4 (4%)	0	10 (11%)

individual efort was more prevalent in stories with exter nal challenges. There was a signifcant association between types of challenge and efort $\chi^2(6)=19.892$, $p=0.003$.

Overall, all types of efort were evident in the goal and challenge categories, contributing to the validation of the conceptual categories developed in the coding scheme.

Patterns of Goal–Challenge–Efort connected to successful and unsuccessful outcomes

Patterns in stories with a successful outcome

Seventy-fve (84%) out of the 89 simple stories had a suc cessful outcome. The analysis of these stories revealed some dominant patterns of goal, challenge, and efort (see Table 3).

There were fve dominant patterns in the simple suc cess stories. The most prevalent pattern was *Internal Chal lenge–Triggered Goal–Other-initiated Efort–Success*, which accounted for 15 successful stories (20%). A typical story in this pattern used the following plot: the main character falls ill, and other characters notice its condition. These charac ters respond to the situation by caring for the protagonist. No initiative by the main character is evident in these stories. See below an example of a story with such a pattern.

Example 1: Story no. 338 (Tooth ache):
Dita could not sleep. Her tooth was hurting. Her

cheek was swollen. Mother took her to the hospital. The doc tor gave her medicine. The doctor advised her to brush her teeth. Dita did not want to get tooth ache anymore. She would brush her teeth after eating.

Though, in Example 1, it is possible to infer that, as a result of her experience, the main character (Dita) will eventually engage in the efort of brushing her teeth, the response to the immediate challenge (tooth ache) is exerted by the mother. Hence, efort in this story was coded as *other initiated*. As illustrated here, the coding scheme was strictly based on the explicit text, reducing the level of inference in coding decisions. Subsequent patterns in stories with suc cessful outcomes are detailed in Table 4. Examples of stories that illustrate these patterns can be found in Appendix A. To summarize, 5 dominant patterns were found in simple stories with successful outcomes representing 58% (*n*=44) of the stories with a successful outcome (Table 3). Only 5% (4 of 75) stories displayed no clear pattern. An important

Table 3 Patterns of Goal– Challenge–Efort in stories with a successful outcome

Goal	Challenge	Efort	*n*	%
Dominant patterns				
Triggered	Internal	Other-initiated	15	20
Triggered	External Social	Self-initiated Individual	8	11
Triggered	Internal	Self-initiated Involving Other	7	9
Triggered	External Social	Other-initiated	7	9
Blocked	Internal	Other-initiated	7	9
Less dominant patterns				
Blocked	External Social	Self-initiated Individual	5	7
Triggered	External Social	Self-initiated Involving Other	4	5
Blocked	Internal	Self-initiated Individual	4	5
Blocked	Internal	Self-initiated Involving Other	4	5
Triggered	External Non Social	Self-initiated Individual	2	3
Triggered	External Non Social	Other-initiated	2	3
Blocked	External Social	Self-initiated Involving Other	2	3
Blocked	External Non Social	Self-initiated Involving Other	2	3
Blocked	External Non Social	Other-initiated	2	3
Triggered	Internal	Self-initiated Individual	1	1
Triggered	External Non Social	Self-initiated Involving Other	1	1
Blocked	External Social	Other-initiated	1	1
Blocked	External Social	No	1	1
Total in efort category				
		Self-initiated Individual	20	27
		Self-initiated Involving Other	20	27
		Other-initiated	34	45
		No	1	1
		Total	75	100

Table 4 Patterns structure in simple stories with successful outcomes

Pattern	Frequency	Story structure
Pattern 2 *External Social Challenge–Triggered Goal–Self-initiated Individual Efort–Success*	8 Stories (11%)	The actions of a secondary character make the main character unhappy. The main character resolves the challenge success fully and independently
Pattern 3 *Internal Challenge–Triggered Goal–Self-initiated Involving other Efort–Success*	7 Stories (9%)	Initially, the main character gets sick and takes the initiative to tell others of his or her situation. Next, these other charac ters respond to the situation and the challenge is eventually resolved (similar to Pattern 1)
Pattern 4 *Blocked Goal–Internal Challenge–Other-initiated Efort– Success*	7 Stories (9%)	A typical plot of such stories began with a description of the main character's goal and the difculties in attaining what he or she wants. Although the main character does not show any initiative to resolve the problem, he/she still gets what he/she wanted through the help of others
Pattern 5 *External Social Challenge–Triggered Goal–Other-initiated Efort–Success*		

7 Stories (9%) The main character feels unhappy because of what other characters have done to him/her. Then, without any initiative from the main character, another character provides help. At last, the challenge is resolved

point from this analysis is that although all three types of efort were present, other-initiated efort was the most prev alent in the stories with successful outcomes. Moreover, when considering the involvement of other characters at the request of the main character, the aggregate number of sto ries involving others in the challenge's resolution accounted for 72% of the simple stories with a successful outcome.

Table 5 Patterns in unsuccessful outcome stories

Goal	Challenge	Efort	*n*	%
Blocked	External Social	No	5	36
Triggered	External Social	Self-initiated Individual	3	22
Blocked	External Social	Self-initiated Individual	2	14
Blocked	Internal	Self-initiated Individual	1	7
Blocked	Internal	No	1	7
Triggered	External Non Social	Self-initiated Involving Other	1	7
Blocked	External Social	Self-initiated Involving Other	1	7
Total			14	100

Patterns in unsuccessful outcome stories

depicted positive out comes, 14 stories (16%) led to an unsuccessful outcome.

Although most of the simple stories

In contrast to a successful ending, which may suggest that a character is engaging in a positive course of action, an unsuccessful ending might implicitly warn the reader to be cautious about imitating the main character's actions. Among the stories with unsuccessful outcome, only one dominant pattern was found. See Table 5 for the distribu tion of patterns that were presented in these stories. Table 5 shows that most common pattern (5 stories, 36%) was *Blocked Goal–External Social Challenge–No Efort–Unsuccessful*. Stories representative of this pat tern started with a goal that the main character wanted to achieve, followed by a challenge created by another char acter. The challenge presented in such stories was gener ally the presence of conficting goals between the main character and the other character. Instead of pursuing his or her wish, the main character in these stories gave in to the desires of others. Here is the example of a story with this pattern.

> Example 6: Story no. 272 (Confused to Choose): Putri wanted to join the baseball competition, but her teacher asked her to join in the piano contest. Putri felt doubt. The teacher decided Putri would join the piano contest. Finally, Putri agreed to join the piano contest.

As shown in Table 5, only self-initiated individual efort, self-initiated involving other efort, and no efort emerged in the stories with an unsuccessful outcome. It was interesting to see that while no other-initiated efort was identifed in these stories, another 6 stories (43%) included self-initiated individual efort, with this type of efort being the most prominent across all stories with unsuccessful outcomes.

Overall, two critical fndings emerge from the analysis of the simple stories' outcomes: (1) other-initiated efort was the most prominent type of efort emerging in the stories with successful outcomes, and (2) stories with unsuccessful outcomes were characterized by the absence of other-initi ated efort and the predominance of self-initiated individual efort. These results highlight

the importance of others in the achievement of successful outcomes and provide little encouragement for individual initiative, given its association with unsuccessful outcomes.

Types of efort, goals, and challenges portrayed in complex stories that depict repeated unsuccessful outcomes

The analysis of stories with repeated unsuccessful outcomes allowed the investigation of persistence as a theme. Out of the 20 complex stories, 7 (35%) featured repeated unsuc cessful outcome. Nearly all of them (6 out of 7) involved self-initiated individual efort in the frst attempt, the other showing no efort. However, after the frst unsuccessful out come, a shift in efort type was evidenced in all 6 stories with changes towards either other-initiated efort (3 stories) or self-initiated involving others (3 stories). Another important fnding is that only stories that depicted other-initiated efort in the last attempt eventually had a successful outcome. See below an example of a story showing such pattern.

> Example 7 (with coding categories): Story no. 246 (A Friend for Porcupine):
> Porcupine felt lonely. Porcupine wanted a friend. Porcupine asked Squirrel to be Porcupine's friend [self-initiated Individual Efort-IE]. Squirrel said no [Unsuccessful outcome-U]. Porcupine asked Fox [IE]. Fox said no [U]. Porcupine asked Rabbit [IE]. Rab
> bit said no [U]. Porcupine was sad. Porcupine met Turtle. Turtle asked Porcupine why Porcupine looked sad. Porcupine told Turtle that nobody wanted to be Porcupine's friend. Turtle told Porcupine that Turtle wanted to be Porcupine's friend [other-initiated efort]. Porcupine was happy [successful outcome].

In this story, although Porcupine showed some level of efort by telling Turtle about her situation, she did not adopt her previous strategy by asking Turtle to be her friend. Turtle took the initiative to approach Porcupine.

The most surprising fnding emerging from the analysis of the 20 more complex stories is that none of these stories depicted self-initiated individual efort after an unsuccessful outcome. This indicates that these stories do not illustrate persistence. It was also striking to fnd that all the stories within this group that ended in a successful outcome fea
tured other-initiated efort. As with the simple stories, this fnding highlights the role of other people when one must deal with a challenge.

Overall, three important points emerge from the analysis of stories with repeated unsuccessful outcomes: (1) only a small number of these stories provide examples of persis tence from the main characters' perspective, (2) most of these stories involved a shift in the type of efort exerted after the frst unsuccessful outcome and this shift was in the direction of other-initiated efort, and (3) none of the stories depicted evidence of repeated self-initiated individual efort leading to a successful outcome.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine the nature of efort towards challenge depicted in stories for young chil dren, with a focus on a set of stories recommended for Indo nesian children in the frst years of schooling. Using a com bination of text-based content and structural analyses, the study identifed diferent types of efort exerted by the story characters, the goals and challenges they faced, patterns of goal–challenge–efort that were connected to successful and unsuccessful outcomes in the stories, and patterns depicted
in stories with repeated unsuccessful outcomes. The fndings are discussed from two perspectives: First, they are interpreted using education literature. Second, prominent Indonesian values are used to provide a contex tually sensitive perspective on these fndings.

Your efort: giving up, *nrimo* or caring?

The relation between children's efort towards challenging academic situations and academic success is well established in the education literature (DiPerna et al. 2007; Li-Grining et al. 2010; McClelland et al. 2006; McWayne et al. 2004; Schaefer and McDermott 1999; Yen et al. 2004). These stud
ies indicate that children who initiate and sustain efort in the face of challenging tasks are more likely than others to be successful at school. Moreover, self-initiated indi vidual efort is aligned with the expectations of teachers and school staf (Rimm-Kaufman et al. 2000). Hence, when children self-initiate individual efort towards challenging academic tasks, they demonstrate the level of independence that is expected in the school context. This expectation is also refected in the Indonesian curriculum for early educa tion, which states that children should develop independent behavior (Kementrian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia 2015, p. 1). The curriculum specifes that inde pendent behavior means taking initiative and making deci sions (e.g., where to play at school), and performing activi ties at school without help or with only minimal help (such as eating, brushing teeth, or tidying up toys).

Notwithstanding the abovementioned expectation, indi cators from the present study show that this development is not promoted in the stories recommended for the early years of schooling. The systematic analysis of simple stories revealed that 63% of these stories depicted the involvement of others (either with or without prompting by the main char acters), and 38% of them displayed *other-initiated efort*. Since engaging in independent behavior requires the abil ity to initiate action, these fndings suggest that the lack of self-initiated individual efort depicted in these stories may be at odds with the development of independent behavior recommended in the curriculum.

The emphasis on other-initiated efort evident in our fnd ings can be interpreted using Bandura's construct of self efcacy (1997). According to Bandura, and supported by several studies (e.g., Schunk 2012; Zimmerman 2000), indi viduals will exert efort when they feel efcacious. There fore, the lack of self-initiated individual efort displayed by the main characters could be interpreted as lack of self-ef cacy in the face of the challenge. Based on the importance placed by Bandura on individuals' self-efcacy beliefs, it could be argued that if the main characters did not believe that they could resolve the challenge, then they would not invest any efort to resolve it. From this perspective, the main characters' behavior could be interpreted as giving up even before trying.

A diferent conclusion, however, emerges when the fnd ings are interpreted from a contextually sensitive perspec tive that takes local societal values and beliefs into account. First is an interpretation based on the Indonesian value of *nrimo*. In Indonesia, a *nrimo* attitude is typically adopted when individuals are facing difcult situations. Acting on the basis of *nrimo* means to "accept the will of God" (Arifn and Dale 2005, p. 220) or "accepting fate willingly" (Mia and Winata 2007, p. 87). According to *nrimo*, situations (perceived as positive or negative) that individuals encoun ter represent God's will and ought to be accepted without trying to change them, even if this means hardship (Arifn and Dale 2005). From the perspective of *nrimo*, the lack of evidence of self-initiated individual efort in the stories ana lyzed in this study suggests that when characters do nothing to modify their circumstances and let others assist, they may be acting according to *nrimo*. The challenge encountered by the main characters is accepted as it is and thus no efort is made to address it.

Another contextually-relevant interpretation emerges once the focus of attention shifts to the character who provides help in the face of the challenge. The predomi nance of other-initiated efort in the fndings highlights the essential caring role that people are expected to play in Indonesia when someone is confronted with hardship. By focusing on the helpers, a diferent message emerges from the stories. It seems like the *nrimo* value demon strated by the main characters in fact enables the adop tion of altruistic or caring behaviors by other characters. Once the focus is on the characters who ofer help, these stories provide valuable examples of caring values that are emphasized in the Indonesian curriculum. Indeed, caring is a core competence that children are expected to develop throughout all years of schooling (Kementrian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia 2017) (Indonesian Government Regulation No. 21/2016). It is also an attribute encouraged in the Character Education Reinforcement (CER) program, aimed at building and strengthening individual qualities considered critical to promote in young Indonesian children. Hence, the pres ence of predominantly other-initiated efort in the stories as a vehicle to promote caring behavior is not surprising and very much consistent with the fnding that all stories featuring other-initiated efort had a successful outcome. Support for this line of reasoning was found in the analy sis of stories with unsuccessful outcomes where the most prevalent efort (43%) was self-initiated individual efort. While it should be kept in mind that 29% of stories with self-initiated individual efort depicted a successful out come, the presence of unsuccessful outcomes associated with this type of efort suggests to children that self-initi ated individual efort does not necessarily lead to success. This would support the seminal fndings of Kağitçibaşi (1984) social psychological study of the Value of Children (VOC). This large-scale study, based on interviews with 20,403 married adults in nine countries (Indonesia, Korea, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, China, Turkey, Germany and the United States), elicited parents' motivations for child-bearing, and the most desired qualities in children. Parents' answers to a closed-ended question related to autonomy revealed that the most desirable quality of chil dren reported by Indonesian parents was "to obey parents", and the least was "to be independent and self-reliant" (p. 150). Furthermore, "to be a good person" was the sec ond characteristic of children considered most desirable by Indonesian parents. Hence, although conducted over 30 years ago, the children's qualities expected in Indo nesia, as found in Kağitçibaşi's work (1984), seemed to confrm the implicit discouragement of self-reliance and autonomy observed in the stories analyzed in the present study. Moreover, the fndings of Kağitçibaşi's study also appear consistent with the encouragement of caring behav ior as depicted in these stories. This stresses the criticality of considering the socialization practices and values that are predominant in the sociocultural context in which the study takes place and not, as argued by Kağitçibaşi, from an "unquestioned application of Western psychology" (p. 145).

Minimal persistence: the role of other people and nrimo value in stories with repeated unsuccessful outcomes

Surprisingly, only 6% of the stories (7 of 109) in this study featured a pattern of failure that called for persistence on the part of the main character. The analysis of the seven stories in question revealed that none of them depicted continuing self-initiated individual efort after experiencing an initial unsuccessful outcome that, in turn, ended in a fnal suc
cessful outcome. The small number of stories with repeated unsuccessful outcomes, and the absence of individual per sistence in these stories, calls for follow-up research examin ing whether and how persistence is promoted in Indonesian classrooms.

It is also noteworthy that six of the seven stories with repeated unsuccessful outcomes involved a change to a type of efort that featured others after the frst unsuccessful out come. As the number of these stories was very small, these fndings should be interpreted cautiously. However, looking further into the type of efort leading to the second attempt and the outcome following the attempt, it was found that only stories that depicted other-initiated efort had a suc cessful outcome. Although the number is extremely small (*n*=3), it is important to note that this fnding is in line with what was found in the simple stories. In these stories, the main characters experienced a successful outcome through an efort initiated by other characters, rather than their own. Similar to the interpretations of the simple stories, this fnd ing stresses the signifcance of other people in resolving individual challenges, even in those that involve repeated unsuccessful outcomes.

In summary, the fndings in the repeated unsuccessful outcome stories raise questions about whether, and how, per sistence is promoted in Indonesian classrooms. The fndings also confrm what was found in the simple stories, provid ing further support for a contextually sensitive interpreta tion that highlights the *nrimo* value and caring as outlooks and behaviors valued in Indonesian society. Taken together, the interpretations from the simple and repeated failure sto ries suggest that while the *nrimo* value and caring behavior seem to be promoted in the stories for young children in the classrooms, individual autonomy seems to be implicitly dis couraged. One may argue that self-initiated individual efort toward challenge may not be accordance with the desirable values of a context that emphasizes the contribution of other people in achievement-related situations. It suggests that the position of other people in individual striving situation needs to be looked at more closely as an important contextual fac tor that contributes to Indonesian children's behaviors in school contexts. A better understanding of these possibly conficting discourses calls for in-depth qualitative stud ies exploring teachers' and parents' views of challenging situations, the position of *nrimo* and caring value in their accounts, and also the place of children's efort and initiative toward challenge. In addition, it would also be valuable to examine how efort-related themes are presented in stories for children in contexts where academic achievement and autonomy are both relatively high.

Although studies (Bhavnagri and Samuels 1996; Bouchard et al. 2013; Shepherd and Koberstein 1989; Tsunemi et al. 2014) showed that stories have potential in afecting children's behavior, the present study did not meas
ure the impact of these stories to children's actual responses to challenging tasks. Future research should address this issue. However, before assessing children's responses toward challenge, it is critical to understand what they comprehend about the nature of efort depicted in the stories. As found in Stein and Glenn's (1979) study, children can construct their own interpretations of stories presented to them. Beside examining children's understanding of efort themes in the stories, it is necessary to know what and how teachers talk when they are presenting the stories to their children in the classroom. The role of the teacher in presenting and discuss ing the stories is critical in afecting children's story compre
hension (Mira and Schwanenfugel 2013; Read 2014). Future research should, therefore, examine, for example, how Indo nesian teachers explore such stories, while or after they read them; how children understand the stories' content, and what teachers assess as outcomes of these stories for students. Given the present research that was conducted in Indo nesia, it is important to question whether the fndings may be specifc to this context, and the extent to which they may apply to other countries. On the assumption that variation observed in cultural products is due to dynamic relation ships between people and their sociocultural environment (Morling and Lamoreaux 2008), it could be speculated that the types of efort identifed in the present research may be relevant only to the Indonesian context. However, as the types of efort found in the present research include help seeking and prosocial behaviors, which have been studied in many countries, such as Hong Kong (Mok et al. 2005), Germany, Israel, Indonesia, Malaysia (Trommsdorf et al. 2007), and the Netherlands (Veenman et al.

2005), it is rea sonable to assume that those types of behaviors may also be observed in other countries. The degree of transferability of the fndings of the present research should be addressed in future research.

In addition, some strengths of the present study also rep resent limitations. For example, in order to reduce the sub jectivity of the analysis, only textual references were used, which implied disregarding potential information that could be inferred from the text. This means that while the com prehensive, rigorous coding scheme developed for the study enhanced the consistency of the process and the reliability of

the fndings, at the same time, the analysis may have missed implicit messages conveyed by the texts.

Finally, by interpreting the fndings not only with refer ence to the general educational and developmental psychol ogy literature but also from a culturally relevant and con textually sensitive perspective, this study ofers nuanced but legitimate propositions to be addressed in further research. This approach is consistent with Kağitçibaşi (1984) which has highlighted the beneft of using cultural and cross-cul tural perspectives to understand the psychology of human development. We, hence, argue that the adoption of alterna tive interpretations can enhance our understanding of chil dren's development and learning in context.

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