

# A Systematic Review: Identifying Research Gaps in Emotional Intelligence Development Using Storybook as a Learning Tool

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## Abstract

Emotional Intelligence is defined by its capacity for social success. Children must have the ability to properly assess other individuals or groups and react in an acceptable way. This systematic review intends to fill the knowledge gap on the usage of storybooks as a learning tool for developing emotional intelligence among preschool children. According to the findings, there has been little research into the significance of storybooks as a learning tool for developing emotional intelligence. Furthermore, most of the studies do not use preschool children as a sample. As a result, many of the studies concentrated on the effects on a few emotions, which cannot be considered a true definition of emotional intelligence. According to the findings, more research is needed to determine the benefits of storybooks as a learning tool in developing emotional intelligence in children. Aside from that, findings have revealed the importance of creating emotional intelligence-themed children's storybooks as a learning tool for the development of emotional intelligence in children.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Storybooks, Preschool Children, Learning Tool

## Introduction

### *Preschool Children*

According to Piaget's theory, preschool children are egocentric and can distinguish between fiction and reality. Logical egocentrism is caused by the fact that "the children view everything from their perspective because they believe that everyone thinks similarly to themselves." (Suparno, 2003). Preschool children often use transductive thinking to address problems (Baken, 2014). The preschool children thinking and speech are filled with metaphors. Imitating, dreaming, and speaking are some of the skills that they learn from mimicking others. They can tell the difference between reality and fantasy. They may use more complex

vocabulary, relate the story to current events, and express their thoughts and feelings about it (Papalia et al., 2014). It is necessary to challenge, expand, and reshape their preexisting schemas. This age group is a big fan of stories.

As a result of their cognitive and physical development, Erikson's developmental theory claims that preschool children behave more maturely. It's not uncommon for a child's curiosity to be silenced, resulting in a loss of motivation. To instill values in children, harmful behavior must be outlawed. According to the theory of mind, preschool children can assess character and mental points of view. Preschool children are mature enough to be considerate of the feelings of others. Before age six to eight, a child can't begin to recognize words or letters, according to maturation theory (1963), the ability to read fluently develops over time. If a child is unable to read, they are still developing. Stage progression is influenced by one's behavior, according to reading readiness (Hoskisson, 1977). Reading should wait until the child is more mature. Maturation theory had a significant impact on reading education in the mid-20th century (Morphett & Washburne, 1931). Children as young as preschool-aged could read.

### *Storybook as a Learning Tool*

Children of all ages benefit from reading stories because it helps them communicate, work together, solve problems, and develop empathy (Kalivas, 2014). A growing body of research suggests that children's growth and social success depend on their acquisition of "soft" skills (Hart, 2021). Children's emotional intelligence may be boosted by reading storybooks (Ding, He, & Wang, 2021). Children may learn to identify and understand their own and others' emotions through the experiences sparked by reading a storybook (Murphy & Bastian, 2019; Evans & Saint-Aubin, 2005). Preschool children recognize and express emotions better than non-readers (Petrisia et al., 2018). Storybooks expose children to different situations and emotions, helping them to develop emotional intelligence skills (Campana et al., 2016; Evans & Saint-Aubin, 2005). According to a study at Emory University in 2013, emotional books increase readers' emotions, helping them manage and feel them (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Clark, 2013). Experiments with brain transplants or MRIs demonstrate that narrative heightens a reader's emotions, even if the book is written in a language the reader is familiar with. Therefore, children's emotional intelligence can be developed through storybooks (Erickson, 2018).

The preschool years are transitional. Children of this age comprehend the emotions of others, but they also become self-centered. Children at this age comprehend physical or emotional comfort (Hazrati et al., 2020). They will comfort a friend who is upset, apologize if they make a mistake, be grateful, and share. They are more compassionate (Miller, 2016). The number of tools or resources available to children and the consistency with which they are taught to care to impact their emotional development (Borba, 2001). Storybooks teach children to consider the views of others, which may enhance their emotional intelligence (Santrock, 2011). Children may be inspired and educated by stories (McNamee & Mercurio, 2007; Flook et al., 2015; Flook et al., 2014) and inspired to think and act appropriately by reading engaging stories (Edgington et al., 2013; Brockington et al., 2021, Murphy, 2013). Additionally, storybooks are a crucial tool for developing emotional intelligence in children. It teaches children, through the stories, how to respond appropriately to a variety of emotions, as well as how to influence others to behave and react in specific ways (Zeece, 2009).

### *Emotional Intelligence*

The advantages of emotional intelligence include improved communication, the ability to deal with challenges, a reduction in stress, and an increased capacity for empathy for other people (Baroncelli & Ciucci, 2014). How individuals carry themselves and engage in conversation with one another is an element of emotional intelligence. People that are emotionally aware can recognize the feelings that others are experiencing (Ozdemir, 2017). Emotional Intelligence is a skill that may be advantageous in social situations. The ability to look at other people and react appropriately is a skill that children need to master. To develop emotional intelligence, it is necessary to have a solid grasp of the social setting (Badea & Pana, 2010). To have a high level of emotional intelligence, it is essential to comprehend the feelings of people and to be able to relate to them. Children cannot develop meaningful relationships with other individuals if they lack empathy. Children with a high degree of emotional intelligence have a greater chance of developing meaningful relationships with their peers and becoming well-rounded members of society (Nadiia et al., 2019). Monitoring their feelings as well as the feelings of others helps children develop the emotional intelligence that may impact their thinking and behaviors (Salovey and Mayer, 1989). There is a dearth of study on the subject, even though children's storybooks have the potential to be used as a teaching tool for the development of emotional intelligence.

### **Methodology**

This study is qualitative research that was conducted through the use of the technique of systematic literature review (SLR). This technique will perform a methodical analysis of existing research to find previous studies that have been done on storybooks as learning tools to develop emotional intelligence in children. Specifically, this method will focus on studies that have been completed in the past. Therefore, literature resources are limited between 2014 to 2021. This study applies a systematic literature review (SLR) method that includes the subject area, research objectives, methods, study sample, and study findings. Therefore, other than matters unrelated to the questions and objectives of the study will not be included in the systematic review of the literature (SLR). This method applies systematic search using keywords like the principle of systematic literature review (SLR) applied by modern researchers (Michie & Williams, 2003; Usman et al., 2021). In this study, the keywords 'children's storybooks', 'emotional intelligence, and 'children's storybooks and emotional intelligence' were used to obtain research data. Articles were searched using Google Scholar, ResearchGate, ProQuest, and Mendeley databases. The use of storybooks as a learning tool is the main criterion in the analysis of this study. The study found that 179 articles were searched using predefined keywords. After examining the title and abstract, there were 65 articles selected. However, further evaluation and detail were conducted on the 65 articles, and the study found that there are only 22 articles that will be used for this research, as shown in Figure 1.

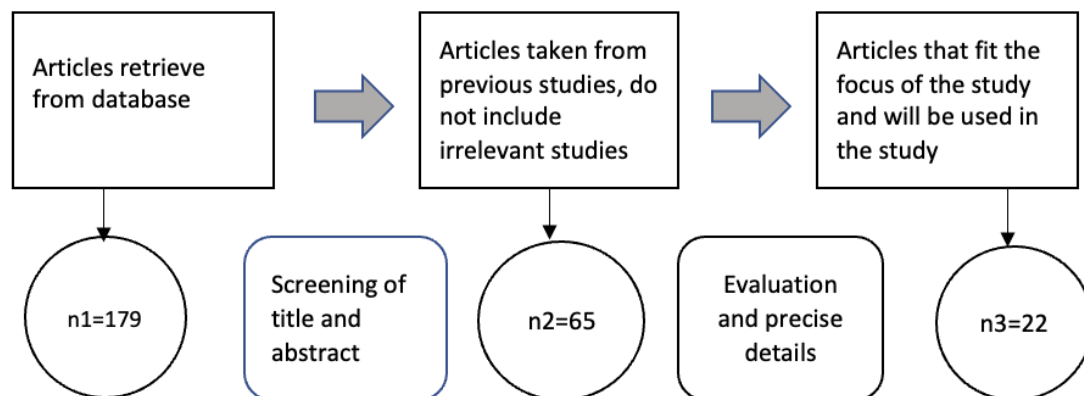


Figure 1. Flow Chart of the Bibliographic Search and Selection of Studies

Source: Michie and Williams, 2003

## Results

A total of 22 articles were identified for analysis to address the gap in the literature regarding the use of storybooks to develop emotional intelligence. The obtained results have been systematically summarized in Table 1:

Table 1

*Systematic Review of the Literature on Using Storybooks as a Learning Tool to Develop Emotional Intelligence among Children*

Study	Subject Area	Objectives	Method	Sample	Findings
Hart (2021)	Storybooks, Emotion Experience	To provide a valuable resource for children and readers by presenting the concepts of excitement and age-appropriate management strategies.	Qualitative	7 Parents 5 Preschool Teachers	Overall, the book's goal was met, making it a possible resource for readers and children. Parents said they could discuss "excitement" with their children based on the book, while teachers liked utilizing the recommended activities in their classes. Clinical consequences and future research

					suggestions are also explored.
Ding et al (2021)	Storybooks Cultural Norms	This research analyzed on how cultural norms concerning emotions are expressed in global storybooks.	Comparative Analysis	38 Chinese Storybooks 42 American Storybooks	American storybooks in comparison to Chinese are more likely to present positive (vs. negative) emotions, negative powerful (vs. negative powerless) emotions, and supportive (vs. unsupportive and teaching) responses to negative emotions, but less likely to present social (vs. personal) themes, other-based (vs. self-based) attribution, and teaching (vs. supportive and unsupportive) responses to negative emotions. No cultural variations were seen in intrinsic vs. extrinsic interpersonal emotion management. Emotion-related information coexists in different cultures, although its relative significance differs.
Wheeler (2021)	Storybooks, Parents Loss	This dissertation aimed to develop a storybook for 3–5-year-olds who had lost a parent.	Mixed Method	15 Professionals	Overall, qualitative, and quantitative data showed that the book exceeded its original goal and might benefit young children dealing with parental loss and

					equip them with age-appropriate coping methods. Participants thought the book's visuals and content were appropriate for young children.
Hazrati et al (2020)	Storybooks, Emotional Intelligence	To develop an emotional intelligence picture book that fulfills the methods.	Research and Development	Primary Student (6 – 9 Years Old)	Emotional intelligence should be fostered early to encourage children to learn and be appreciated by others.
Syeda et al (2020)	Storybooks, Covid-19	This exploratory study identified topics for a children's online storybook, 'My Back-to-School Bubble,' to ease the return to school in June 2020 when COVID-19 lockdown restrictions were reduced in the UK.	Survey	71 Adults	Children's attitudes towards COVID-19 vary on their temperament and confinement experiences, including changes in family and friend connections. 21 people replied to a poll on the e-book 'My Back-to-School Bubble' 14 respondents (67%) thought the storybook benefitted children, and 12 (57%) stated it helped children comprehend their feelings.
Farkas et al (2020)	Storybooks, Mental References	This research compares Chilean, Colombian, Scottish, and American preschoolers' storybooks for mental references.	Qualitative	160 Storybooks (40 per country)	Aspirations, psychological moods, and physical expressions were similar across nations. There were commonalities between Chilean and Colombian literature and Scottish and American books,

					but significant differences between South American (Chile, Colombia) and Scottish and American books.
Farkas et al (2020)	Storybooks, Characteristics and Similarities	This research compared emotional references in preschool storybooks in Chile and the U.S.	Qualitative	80 Storybooks (40 per country)	Happiness, fear, sadness, and anger were the most often described emotions in both countries' storybooks. Except for surprise, disappointment, and rage, both nations referenced emotions similarly. These results are explored considering the emotions young children are exposed to and their socioemotional development.
Grady et al (2019)	Storybooks, Ethnic and Racial	This research examined if emotions were portrayed differently in US storybooks with ethnic and racial characters.	Qualitative	Popular storybooks were grouped by the race and ethnicity of the main characters as African American, Asian American, European American, or Hispanic and Latino	Positive and negative emotions were represented differently among storybook groups. Storybook emotion descriptions differ socially. In storybooks, Asian Americans, Hispanics, and Latinos were more emotional than European Americans. These statistics demonstrate that popular U.S. storybooks deliver diverse emotion signals.

Erickson (2018)	Storybooks, Emotional Development	To study the impact of storytelling on the emotional development of PreK-K Montessori children.	Action Research	28 Children	Storytelling boosted children's emotional development by giving them vocabulary to express themselves. According to the implementation plan, the research may use many methods of expressing emotions.
Petrisia et al (2018)	Storybooks, Empathy	Determine whether dialogic reading helps 3-4-year-olds develop empathy.	Quantitative	Children (3- 4 Years Old)	Dialogic reading enhances 3-4-year-olds' empathetic comprehension.
Buono (2017)	Storybooks, Emotional Expression and Understanding	How emotional expressiveness and comprehension can impact narrative performance.	Mixed Method	212 Children (6 – 9 Years old)	Anger and frustration decreased performance, whereas emotion understanding helped. Anger, frustration, and emotion comprehension were not statistically associated.
Ozdemir (2017)	Storybooks, Social and Emotional Learning	To study the use of children's books to improve social and emotional abilities in a small sample of children, including those with ASD-related social skills deficits.	Mixed Method	8 Children (4 – 5 Years Old) 1 Preschool Teacher	Organized book readings on emotions are an effective way to promote children's social and emotional development, especially their vocabulary for emotions and recognition skills.
Boris (2017)	Storybooks, Emotional Response	To determine how oral storytelling affects preschoolers' emotional responses to conflict.	Mixed Method	23 Children (2 ½ - 6 Years Old)	The research found no substantial influence of emotional reaction to conflict, but it did highlight the importance of oral storytelling



					and spoken language exercises in early childhood education.
Shanty (2016)	Storybooks, Emotion Knowledge	In a randomised control, pre-test-post-test approach, storybooks were used to boost preschoolers' emotion understanding. Determine whether gender, age, and receptive vocabulary moderate the intervention's effects. Implementation moderators were attendance, teacher-rated attention, independent observer-rated attention, and emotion storybook familiarity.	Quasi-Experimental	153 Children	Many successful social and emotional development programmes utilise books as part of a larger curriculum (Greenberg, Kusche, Cook & Quamma, 1995). There's minimal evidence that storybooks promote emotion comprehension long-term. My knowledge includes just one unpublished dissertation on storybook-based emotional learning in preschool (Milonnet, 2008)
Kohm et al (2016)	Storybooks, Social Play and Vocabulary Learning	This research examined how shared storybook readings can affect children's imagination, social relationships, mood, prosocial behaviour, and social play. This research examined social play and vocabulary learning.	Mixed Method	44 young children (17 boys, 27 girls)  Ages ranged from 4.1 to 5.6 years.	Shared storybook reading is connected to social, cognitive, emotional, and social play development. Pretend play boosts receptive vocabulary.
Goetsch (2016)	Storybooks, Teacher Talks	This research examines how Head Start teachers speak about emotions during whole-class book	Quasi-Experimental	34 Teachers	This research found that Head Start teachers do not speak much about emotions during book readings, but they

		readings, a common preschool activity, and how emotional content in the text affects their conversation.			do when they read emotional stories. This research found that teachers' emotional domain class scores are not predicted by emotion discussion during whole-class book readings or text choice.
Vajcner (2015)	Storybooks, Vocabulary and Social Emotional Skills	This research examined a reading intervention that sought to increase preschoolers' vocabulary and social-emotional skills.	Quasi-Experimental	(Initially) 35 Children 7 teachers  (Final Sample) 23 Children 5 teachers	Both groups increased their vocabulary and emotional understanding, but the classroom made a significant difference.
Kumschick et al (2014)	Storybooks, Emotional Competence	Assessing the READING and FEELING program's emotional competence	Quasi-Experimental	104 Children (7 – 9 Years Old)	Emotional vocabulary, emotional awareness, and concealed emotions identification improved. Males benefited more than females from counselling for recognising hidden emotions. These results suggest children's books may promote emotional competence in childhood development.
Wege et al (2014)	Storybooks, Cultural Norms	To examine emotional cultural norms in Romanian, Turkish, and American preschool storybooks.	Quantitative	30 Storybooks (10 per cultural group)	The data validated the premise but highlighted differences between Romanian and Turkish storybooks. The research confirms that preschool

					children are exposed to media that reflects cultural emotion standards.
Kalivas (2014)	Storybooks, Socioemotional Skills	To explore current evidence-based tactics that improve EI and associated socioemotional abilities to synthesise and incorporate these strategies in an interactive picture book for an 8- to 12-year-old child and a main caregiver to read aloud (s)	Instructional Design	Children (8 – 12 Years Old)	Help a child recognise, manage, and explain emotions to address relationship issues instead of lashing out, blaming others, or avoiding problems. Interactive dyadic reading, open-ended questions, role plays, artwork analysis, and diaphragmatic breathing increase emotional intelligence.
Sujud et al (2014)	Storybooks, Reading, Literacy	Analyze children's emotional expression via reading.	Mixed Method	70 Children (7 – 8 years Old)	Reading improves children's experience and emotions. The explanation of the reading materials is crucial for children's emotional development and building a knowledgeable generation.
Sedik (2011)	Storybooks, Reading, Literacy	Identifying emotional expressions in books	Mixed Method	210 Children (7 – 12 Years old)	The research found that children's literary reading of diverse genres effectively transmits emotional expression via face, eye, voice, and behavioural expression. Illustration, colour, personality, presentation, narrative, theme,

					and book cover all affect emotional expression. Thus, the existence of well-grasped important features by the author, the child will have the greatest emotional influence by reading children's literary genres, giving rise to a broad range of emotional expression.
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**Discussion**

Based on 22 articles, the study identified three crucial gaps in the study of developing emotional intelligence using storybooks as a learning tool: 1) There is a dearth of research on the relationship between storybooks and emotional intelligence in preschoolers; 2) There is a need for more research in Malaysia on the effects of storybooks on preschoolers' emotional intelligence, and 3) Limited research on children's storybooks and emotional intelligence. Table 2, adapted from previous research (Rahman et al., 2021), indicates how three gaps in the study of developing emotional intelligence using story books as a learning tool were identified:

Table 2

*Gaps Discussion Study*

No.	Study	Study using preschool children as the sample	Study in Malaysia on Storybooks and Emotional Intelligence	Study on Storybooks and Emotional Intelligence
1	Hart (2021)			
2	Ding et al (2021)			
3	Wheeler (2021)			
4	Hazrati et al (2020)	x		x
5	Syeda et al (2020)			
6	Farkas et al (2020)			
7	Farkas et al (2020)			
8	Grady et al (2019)			
9	Erickson (2018)	x		
10	Petrisia et al (2018)	x		
11	Buono (2017)	x		
12	Ozdemir (2017)	x		
13	Boris (2017)	x		
14	Shanty (2016)	x		
15	Kohm et al (2016)	x		
16	Goetsch (2016)			
17	Vajcner (2015)	x		
18	Kumschick et al (2014)	x		
19	Wege et al (2014)			
20	Kalivas (2014)	x		
21	Sujud et al (2014)	x	x	
22	Sedik (2011)	x	x	
<b>Total</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

The ability to conduct a critical study and comparison of the results of previous research on children's emotional intelligence and storybooks is made possible by conducting a systematic literature review. This study of the relevant literature includes a complete synthesis and analysis of that material to identify areas where more research is needed. The researcher feels that these are the gaps and limits in the literature addressing the benefits of storybooks on children's emotional intelligence. This belief is based on Table 2, which shows the gaps and limitations.

All research has been examined and classified to identify the gaps that must be addressed. According to the total number by column, the first column reveals that only 13 of the 22 studies involved a sample of preschool children. The second column reveals that only two studies on storybooks and emotional intelligence were undertaken in Malaysia out of the selected 22 studies. While the third column reveals that just one research out of 22 investigates the topic of storybook and emotional intelligence. In a conclusion, the gaps discovered in the research will be discussed as follows.

*Gaps 1: There is a dearth of research on the relationship between storybooks and emotional intelligence in preschoolers.*

A significant amount of research on how storybooks contribute to children's emotional development has been carried out over many years. Numerous studies have demonstrated that reading children's books helps children develop emotions. However, the researcher believes that there should be new approaches that can be taken to investigate how storybooks may be utilized as a tool for learning about emotional intelligence in today's world. First, the examination of the comprehensive storybook search revealed a gap in the research. The impacts of storybooks are the subject of a significant number of research, the vast majority of which exclude children as participants. Even though emotional intelligence is becoming more essential today, not much study has been done on how storybooks may be utilized to educate and increase emotional intelligence in children. This is even though storybooks have been around for centuries.

According to this study's analysis, five further studies use the storybook as a research sample to examine subjects other than emotional intelligence. Like the study by Wege et al (2014); Ding et al (2021) examined storybooks, including cultural norms. However, the study by Wheeler (2021); Farkas et al (2020) focuses more on examining children's books with parental loss and mental references. Grady et al (2019); Farkas et al (2020) conducted a storybook analysis to examine features of similarities and characteristics, ethnicity, and race. Moreover, only 13 studies out of the total number of studies have been analyzed using children as the study sample. Only five of the 13 studies, namely those by Hazrati et al (2020); Buono et al (2017); Odzemir et al (2017); Boris et al (2017); Kohm et al (2016), appropriately included preschool-aged children in their research.

According to the findings of this study's analysis, there is a dearth of research on storybooks and emotional intelligence that engages preschoolers as its sample population. This hole in the study has been recognized and going forward, it must be closely examined, analyzed, and explored. In addition, it is widely acknowledged that the study of children is crucial in the twenty-first century. There has also been a significant amount of study conducted on emotional intelligence; however, there have not been enough studies conducted on emotional intelligence in preschoolers.

*Gaps 2: There is a need for more research in Malaysia on the effects of storybooks on preschoolers' emotional intelligence.*

According to a study of relevant studies, the emotional intelligence of Malaysian children is often relatively low (Rohaizad & Mislán, 2012). Based on interviews with educators, Rohaizad et al (2015) discovered that emotional intelligence is only taught as an optional topic since there are insufficient teaching tools and modules that concentrate on emotional intelligence. Another reason why children don't have much emotional intelligence is that their parents and teachers don't know much about it, and they also don't realize how essential storybooks are for teaching children emotional intelligence. This is the other reason children don't have a higher level of emotional intelligence (Rohaizad et al., 2015). Reading to children has been demonstrated in several studies conducted over the last few decades to have many positive effects on the development of early language and pre-reading abilities in children (Dickinson

et al., 2010; Dickinson et al., 2019; Flack et al., 2018). However, there has not been much study done to determine whether or not reading storybooks may assist the child to develop their emotional intelligence (Kruse et al., 2021).

Evidently, storybooks are used as study samples in a variety of academic studies. Ding et al (2021), for instance, used 38 best-selling Chinese storybooks and 42 best-selling American storybooks to examine how cultural norms about emotions are depicted in narratives across countries. Grady et al (2019) examined whether characters in children's literature reflected ethnic and racial groupings by using storybooks. The same applies to a few further research, as seen in Table 1. There is a clear emphasis on academic-related outcomes such as prosocial behavior (Rosmadi & Isa, 2019), developing English as a Second Language (ESL) (Madhubala et al., 2014), developing English Vocabulary (Supar & Alias, 2017), comprehension skills in ESL (Omar et al., 2015; Chai & Ng, 2020).

This is particularly obvious in the studies done in Malaysia, as shown in Table 1, where only two study publications indicate the usefulness of reading storybooks in developing children's emotions (Sujud et al., 2014), and children's emotional expressiveness (Sedik, 2011). In Malaysia, more research is required to determine the effects of storybooks on children's emotional intelligence. In Malaysia, there is a need for research on the impact of storybooks in developing emotional intelligence in preschoolers.

### *Gaps 3: Limited research on children's storybooks and emotional intelligence*

Storybooks that teach children a variety of character and moral values are becoming increasingly popular, but there is very little empirical research testing whether storybooks are beneficial for developing emotional intelligence among preschool children (Kruse, Faller, & Read, 2021). There has been no comprehensive research on the effectiveness of storybooks as an intervention method in developing emotional intelligence in the past (Ozdemir, 2017). According to Vajcner (2015), there has been little research on the effect of storybooks on children's emotional intelligence.

According to Shanty (2016), there is no empirical evidence that storybooks alone can develop emotional intelligence over time. According to Shanty (2016), as far as her study's observations from the literature only Milonnet (2008) conducted one study, an unpublished dissertation on the effectiveness of a storybook-based intervention for emotional intelligence in preschool. Previous research has also suggested that more research is needed to investigate the effectiveness of storybook interventions for developing emotional intelligence among preschool children (Hart, 2021; Vacjner, 2015; Shanty, 2016; & Ozdemir, 2017).

As shown in Table 1, most studies have not explored how storybooks affect a child's emotional intelligence. Among these are studies that show how storybooks can help with things that do not have anything to do with emotional intelligence. Goetsch (2016) studies what teachers talk about to find out how the amount of emotional content in a text affects how teachers talk while reading. Even though this study is about feelings, it is clear that it is more focused on teachers as a sample than on children. According to Vajcner's (2015) study on the effectiveness of a reading intervention indicated that it was meant to improve both children's vocabulary and their social and emotional skills. The teachers and parents took part in this study besides children.

The focus on social and emotional skills is relevant to the purpose of the research, but not specifically to emotional intelligence. There are more studies that explored how storybooks affect children's creativity, social interaction, prosocial behavior, and social play (Kohm et. al., 2016). In connection with the pandemic Covid-19, there are other studies that used online surveys of adults to find out which titles of storybooks would be the best as emotional support for children who are upset about going back to school (Syeda et. al., 2021). In contrast to the frequent study of storybooks, the impact of this study is primarily on areas such as vocabulary, literacy, and English as a second language, with some researchers examining emotional aspects that cannot be called emotional intelligence but can be considered as a component of or related to emotional intelligence.

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