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Education storytelling & digitization for the congregation of GKI Kwitang Bajem Cililitan, East Jakarta

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ABSTRACT

This community engagement program focuses on improving storytelling competence and basic digital literacy among Sunday School teachers and youth at GKI Kwitang Bajem Cililitan, East Jakarta. The program was implemented through interdisciplinary collaboration between the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences and the Faculty of Letters and Languages, integrating social communication perspectives with literary and creative approaches. The main challenges identified were limited creative storytelling techniques and insufficient technical skills in using digital presentation media to support worship and educational activities. The methods applied included participatory training, hands-on workshops, storytelling simulations using puppet stages, and basic PowerPoint operation training for worship presentations. Program implementation emphasized practical skill development through guided practice and direct evaluation. The results show that participants were able to deliver stories more effectively, demonstrate improved narrative confidence, and operate presentation media with greater accuracy during church services. Audience engagement during Sunday School sessions also increased as storytelling became more interactive and visually supported. In conclusion, the integration of storytelling training and basic digital literacy proved effective in enhancing communication skills and youth participation within a faith-based community. This program contributes to sustainable community empowerment by strengthening creative expression and technical support for religious and educational activities.

Keywords: storytelling; digital literacy; community engagement; youth empowerment; faith-based education.

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RESEARCH & PUBLISHING



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Situation Analysis

Sunday School teachers and youth workers at GKI Kwitang Bajem Cililitan, an urban Protestant congregation in East Jakarta, face two concrete and interrelated educational gaps. First, they lack the creative storytelling techniques needed to deliver religious narratives in ways that capture the attention of children and young congregants. Second, teenagers and young adults who support worship activities lack the digital presentation skills required to operate media effectively during services. These gaps are consequential because the younger generation is accustomed to visual, interactive, and multimedia content, making conventional instructional approaches increasingly ineffective (Luthfia et al., 2021; Darmawan & Priskila, 2020). This community engagement program was specifically designed to address both deficiencies through an interdisciplinary, participatory training model integrating performing arts pedagogy with basic digital literacy instruction.

GKI Kwitang Bajem Cililitan is an active church community that plays a strategic role in character building, spirituality, and social awareness among children, teenagers, and young adults. Through Sunday School activities, youth and young adult worship services, and general worship services, the church not only conveys teachings of faith, but also instills human values such as love, solidarity, justice, and peace. However, amid the rapid pace of globalization and the development of digital technology, the way the younger generation receives, processes, and responds to these messages has undergone significant changes. The younger generation is now more familiar with visual, interactive, and digital-based content, so that conventional approaches to conveying messages of faith are often considered less engaging and less relevant to their learning preferences (Luthfia et al., 2021).

In the context of the GKI Kwitang Bajem Cililitan congregation, this transformation creates practical challenges for Sunday School teachers and youth members who are actively involved in delivering religious messages and supporting worship activities. Although they demonstrate strong enthusiasm and commitment, many of them still have limited experience in applying creative storytelling techniques and utilizing digital presentation tools to communicate messages effectively. As a result, religious narratives are often delivered in conventional ways that do not fully capture the attention of children and younger congregants who are accustomed to digital and multimedia environments.

Storytelling, as a pedagogical practice, serves as more than a communication tool: it is a mechanism for identity formation, moral development, and the transmission of cultural and religious values in ways that are contextual, emotionally resonant, and accessible to children and adolescents (Darmawan & Priskila, 2020). Research consistently shows that narrative-based instruction engages learners more deeply than didactic approaches by centering human experience and emotional relationships in the learning process. In religious education specifically, storytelling enables faith communities to convey spiritual teachings through meaningful storylines that integrate values and character development in age-appropriate ways (Darmawan & Priskila, 2020; Huth et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, storytelling has also been used as a medium for cultural learning and social adaptation. For example, telling the Malin Kundang fairy tale to refugee children from Sudan and Somalia has been shown to help them understand Indonesian local wisdom, such as the importance of respecting parents and local social norms. Through stories, refugee children can adapt emotionally and culturally and develop empathy towards the local community (Saragi et al., 2024). These findings show that storytelling not only serves as entertainment, but also as a medium for cross-cultural learning and character building.

A number of studies confirm that storytelling is an effective and enjoyable method in children's education because it is able to integrate moral values, religious teachings, and character building into meaningful storylines (Darmawan & Priskila, 2020). Even in this digital age full of distractions, storytelling remains relevant as a creative approach that places human experience and emotional relationships at the center of learning (Juliati, 2021).

Alongside storytelling, digital literacy has become an essential competency for meaningful participation in contemporary congregational life. Digital literacy encompasses not only technical proficiency with digital tools but also the capacity to critically produce, evaluate, and communicate digital

content in contextually appropriate ways (Hobbs, 2010). Digital media is now deeply embedded in how teenagers and young adults communicate, learn, and express themselves (Luthfia et al., 2021). Yet many youth in faith-based settings lack the practical skills to apply this familiarity purposefully in a ministry context, resulting in worship media that is poorly designed and inconsistent with liturgical needs.

The relationship between storytelling and digital literacy can be understood within the broader framework of participatory and community-based education. Storytelling provides a narrative structure that enables the transmission of moral values, cultural identity, and collective experiences through emotionally engaging communication (Darmawan & Priskila, 2020). At the same time, digital literacy equips individuals with the technical and communicative competencies required to translate these narratives into visual and multimedia formats that are accessible to contemporary audiences (Hobbs, 2010). When these two competencies are integrated, they create opportunities for community empowerment, particularly among young people who are both consumers and producers of digital content. In this sense, storytelling functions as the narrative foundation, while digital literacy acts as the medium that expands the reach and effectiveness of communication within faith-based communities (Luthfia et al., 2021; Darmawan & Priskila, 2020).

Based on this framework, this community engagement program conducted as a collaborative initiative between the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences and the Faculty of Letters and Languages at Indonesian Christian University was designed to bridge two specific gaps at GKI Kwitang Bajem Cililitan: (1) limited mastery of creative storytelling techniques among Sunday School teachers, and (2) insufficient digital presentation skills among youth who support worship activities. The program combined participatory storytelling training using puppet theater with hands-on PowerPoint workshops, producing a replicable interdisciplinary model for faith-based community capacity building whose academic contribution lies in demonstrating how performing arts pedagogy and digital literacy instruction can be integrated within a single community engagement framework.

1.2. Partner Issues

The partners in this Community Service activity are Sunday School teachers, children, teenagers, and young adults from the GKI Kwitang Bajem Cililitan congregation who are actively involved in various worship and church ministry activities. The partners show great enthusiasm and commitment in conveying messages of faith and human values. However, this enthusiasm is not yet fully supported by adequate technical skills, both in mastering creative storytelling techniques and in utilizing digital media. Storytelling has long been recognized as an effective instructional approach because narratives help learners construct meaning, develop empathy, and understand complex moral and social values through relatable experiences (Bruner, 1990).

In practice, religious messages are often not presented in an appealing and contextual manner, especially when it comes to reaching younger generations who are familiar with visual, interactive, and digital formats. The rise of digital culture has significantly transformed communication patterns, encouraging educators and community facilitators to integrate multimedia and participatory communication approaches in order to maintain audience engagement (Jenkins, 2009). In addition, there is no integrated learning approach that combines performing arts methods, such as puppet shows and short plays, with digital skills training, such as presentation material preparation and PowerPoint operation. This gap limits the ability of partners to develop a more effective, adaptive, and emotionally engaging communication style. Integrating narrative-based learning with creative media practices has been shown to support collaborative learning, cultural expression, and meaningful participation in community-based educational activities (Lambert, 2013).

1.3. Solutions Offered

As a follow-up to the identification of problems and the results of discussions between the PKM team and partners, several strategic solutions were agreed upon.

First, multidisciplinary Approach: Combining perspectives from International Relations (cultural diplomacy) and Literature (imaginative expression and moral values) as a basis for strengthening participants' capacities.

Second, contextual Storytelling Training: Providing training on interesting storytelling techniques that are relevant to the current context to support Sunday school teachers in delivering the word effectively and engagingly to children.

Third, creative Media Practice: Puppet Theater and Visual Aids: Training in the use of puppet theater and visual aids as expressive and enjoyable means of conveying messages of faith and humanity to the younger generation.

Fourth, basic Digital Skills Training: Developing the skills of teenagers and young adults in creating presentation materials (PowerPoint) and simple digital content that supports worship activities and public communication in the era of social media.

2. METHOD

This community engagement program was implemented through an interdisciplinary collaboration between lecturers and students from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences and the Faculty of Letters and Languages at the Indonesian Christian University. The program adopted a participatory and practice-based approach that positioned community partners as active participants throughout the entire training process. This approach was chosen to ensure that the learning activities were contextual, responsive to the needs of the congregation, and oriented toward sustainable capacity building. The program design integrates performing arts-based storytelling methods with basic digital literacy training through workshops, simulations, hands-on practice, and reflective discussions (UKI, 2018).

To assess participant learning outcomes, the program employed a pre-test and post-test design administered at the beginning and end of each training track. For the storytelling track, participants were assessed using a four-dimension rubric evaluating: (1) vocal expression (intonation, volume, and pacing), (2) non-verbal delivery (facial expression and gesture use), (3) narrative coherence (story structure and logical flow), and (4) audience engagement (children's observable responsiveness during simulation). For the digital literacy track, assessment criteria included: (1) technical accuracy (correct slide transition timing and font consistency), (2) layout appropriateness for worship context, and (3) operational confidence during live simulation. Pre-test scores were obtained through baseline observation of each participant's unaided performance prior to instruction; post-test scores were recorded during facilitator-guided practice sessions. In addition to quantitative rubric scores, qualitative data were collected through structured observation notes, facilitator feedback sessions, and a participant satisfaction survey administered at program close. Program effectiveness was determined by comparing pre- and post-test scores across rubric dimensions and by thematic analysis of qualitative feedback.

The Community Service Activity was held on Sunday, February 1, 2026, at GKI Kwitang Bajem Cililitan, East Jakarta. The location was chosen based on the needs of the partners and the availability of worship space and supporting facilities that would allow for the optimal implementation of storytelling and digital skills training. The activity was carried out in several structured sessions that were adjusted to the worship schedule and congregation activities.

The target audience for this activity includes Sunday School teachers, children, teenagers, and young adults from the GKI Kwitang Bajem Cililitan congregation. Sunday School teachers play a key role in contextual storytelling training, while teenagers and young adults focus on strengthening their digital skills to support worship and church ministry activities. Children are actively involved in storytelling practice sessions to test the effectiveness of the methods used. The activity is divided into two main series: storytelling education and puppet theater, as well as technical training in PowerPoint operation and the preparation of worship presentation materials.

2.1. Storytelling Education and Puppet Theater

First, Preparation and Planning: (1) Identify training needs based on a survey of Sunday School teachers, (2) Development of training covering storytelling techniques, strategies, and practices (3) Coordinate with sources and facilitators who are experienced in storytelling. (4) Provision of teaching materials and supporting equipment such as teaching aids, visual materials, and training locations.

Second, Training Implementation (1) Introductory session: Presentation on the importance of storytelling in children's education and its benefits for character development. (2) Storytelling techniques workshop: Training in expression, intonation, use of voice, and gestures to bring stories to life. (3) Practice and simulation: Each participant practices telling stories with direct guidance from the facilitator.

Third, Evaluation and Feedback, Reflection sessions where participants receive feedback to improve their storytelling skills.

Fourth, Implementation and Development (1) Participants began applying storytelling techniques in Sunday School classes. (2) Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of storytelling in increasing children's interest and understanding of Bible stories. (3) Follow-up discussions and the possibility of forming a community of teachers to share good practices. (4) Preparation of training reports and publication of documentation as a reference for similar training in the future.

Through this stage, it is hoped that teachers will become more confident and able to convey stories in a way that is interesting and inspiring to the children of GKI Kwitang Bajem Cililitan Sunday School.

In this Community Service activity, lecturers from the Indonesian Christian University (UKI) acted as the main resource persons in storytelling training for Sunday School teachers at GKI Kwitang Bajem Cililitan. UKI lecturers guided participants in understanding the concept of effective storytelling, provided academic and practical insights into storytelling techniques, and helped participants develop speaking skills that would capture children's attention. In addition, they also contributed to the development of the training program, evaluated the effectiveness of the learning process, and encouraged participants to implement storytelling in Sunday School activities on an ongoing basis. To strengthen the impact, UKI lecturers will provide assistance and monitoring to participants after the training, as well as compile academic reports or publications as part of the scientific documentation of this activity. With the active involvement of lecturers, it is hoped that this training will not only improve the quality of teaching in Sunday School but also contribute to the development of academic studies in the fields of education and communication.

UKI students here act as the main drivers and implementers who ensure the continuity of each stage of the activity (UKI, 2018). They are directly involved in planning, coordinating, and implementing storytelling training for Sunday School teachers at GKI Kwitang Bajem Cililitan. Students assist in preparing training materials, facilitating workshops, and mentoring participants in honing their storytelling skills. Additionally, they are involved in documenting the activities through photos, videos, and reports, which can later be used for evaluation and academic publication. Through this involvement, students not only hone their organizational and communication skills but also develop empathy and social awareness in supporting children's education through inspiring storytelling methods.

2.2. Digital Literacy

This program aims to improve the capacity of teenagers and young adults in supporting worship services through technical training such as PowerPoint (PPT) operators and the preparation of good presentation materials. The program implementation method includes three main stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation.

First, Program Design Preparation (1) Formation of the Implementation Team: Forming a team consisting of training facilitators, resource persons, and technical committee members to support the activities, (2) Training Curriculum Development: Training materials are developed based on worship needs, such as: The basics of using PowerPoint, techniques for creating attractive and easy-to-read presentation slides, how to operate PowerPoint during worship (hymns, liturgy, and devotions), procurement of facilities and infrastructure: providing computers/laptops, projectors, layers, and other supporting devices, as well as representative training rooms.

Second, Project Activity Implementation: PowerPoint Training; providing training to participants on slide design appropriate for worship contexts, train participants in adjusting font types, colors, images, and layouts to support a solemn worship atmosphere, training as a PowerPoint Operator during Worship, providing live simulation as an operator during worship (timely transition of song slides, liturgy, and Bible verses), arrange a rotating practice schedule so that participants become accustomed to working in a calm and orderly atmosphere, compilation of Practical Guidelines and developing a brief guide for worship leaders and slide designers that can be used by churches and youth communities on an ongoing basis.

Third, Program Implementation Evaluation: (1) Conducting a Pre-test and Post-test: Measuring the improvement in participants' technical skills before and after training, (2) Hands-on Practice and Feedback: Assess participants' abilities through hands-on practice during worship and gather evaluations from the liturgy team or worship leaders. (3) Participant Satisfaction Survey: Identifying suggestions and criticism from participants as material for future training improvements. (4) Activity Report Preparation: Prepare a final report containing documentation of activities, training results, and recommendations for the development of similar training programs in the future.

To further evaluate the impact of the program, both quantitative and qualitative indicators were considered. Quantitatively, participant learning improvement was observed through the comparison of pre-test and post-test results related to basic storytelling knowledge and PowerPoint operation skills. Qualitatively, facilitators conducted observations during practice sessions and simulations to assess participants' ability to apply storytelling techniques and operate digital presentation tools in real worship contexts. Feedback from participants and worship leaders was also collected to identify perceived improvements in communication effectiveness and technical performance.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the program's outcomes across four dimensions: storytelling competence improvement among Sunday School teachers, digital literacy development among youth, integration of both competencies in church ministry, and overall participant evaluation. The program was attended by 18 participants: 11 in the storytelling track and 8 in the digital literacy track. Analysis of pre-test and post-test rubric scores, combined with facilitator observation notes and participant feedback, reveals consistent improvement across all assessed dimensions in both tracks.

3.1. Improving the Storytelling Competence of Sunday School Teachers

One of the main objectives of this activity was to improve Sunday school teachers' ability to tell stories in a more interesting, communicative, and contextual manner. Before the activity was carried out, the storytelling method tended to be one-sided and lacked variety in expression, making it difficult to hold the children's attention. Through storytelling training combined with puppet theater and story simulation, participants began to understand the importance of voice intonation, facial expressions, body gestures, and narrative flow in building emotional closeness with children.

Observations during the practice sessions showed that Sunday school teachers became more confident in telling Bible stories. Stories were no longer delivered textually but were transformed into lively narratives relevant to children's daily experiences. This is in line with the objective of the PkM activity, which is to make storytelling an effective tool in character education and the instilling of faith values from an early age. Children involved in the practice sessions also showed more active responses, such as asking questions, responding to stories, and participating in simple dialogues during the activities.

Pre-test to post-test comparison showed improvement across all four rubric dimensions, with the most marked gains in non-verbal delivery and audience engagement dimensions that directly reflect the shift from text-dependent recitation to embodied, interactive performance. These findings are consistent with Darmawan and Priskila (2020), who identified expressive vocal delivery and structured narrative as the primary predictors of effective storytelling in children's religious education. The puppet theater component was particularly effective: by allowing teachers to project emotion and character differentiation

through a physical prop, it lowered inhibition barriers and encouraged more expressive delivery, a finding consistent with [Huth et al. \(2021\)](#), who note that object-mediated storytelling reduces performance anxiety in novice narrators. These results confirm that creative, embodied storytelling methods can significantly improve communication effectiveness in faith-based educational settings.

3.2. Strengthening Digital Literacy Among Youth and Young Adults in the Congregation

In addition to storytelling, this activity also resulted in improved digital literacy skills among the congregation's teenagers and young adults, particularly in operating PowerPoint to support worship and church activities. Before the training, some participants still had difficulty preparing neat presentation materials that were appropriate for the context of worship. Inappropriate slide transitions, inconsistent font selection, and a lack of understanding of the liturgical flow were common obstacles.

Through technical training accompanied by live simulations, participants began to understand the basic principles of simple, communicative presentation design that supports the worship atmosphere. Participants were also trained to act as PowerPoint operators directly in worship simulations, enabling them to adjust the tempo of slide changes to the liturgical flow and congregational singing. The evaluation results showed that participants became more skilled, calm, and responsible in carrying out these technical roles.

Post-training assessment showed measurable improvement across all three technical competency dimensions, with the greatest gains in operational confidence and layout appropriateness. Participants' qualitative feedback revealed a notable shift in self-perception: from viewing digital operation as a stressful technical obligation to treating it as a meaningful act of ministry and congregational service. This reframing is theoretically significant. [Hobbs \(2010\)](#) argues that digital literacy education achieves its deepest impact when learners connect technical competence to meaningful social participation in this case, supporting the congregation's worship experience. These findings are further supported by [Luthfia et al. \(2021\)](#), whose research on Indonesian youth confirms that digital literacy development enhances not only technical ability but also active participation and sense of contribution within community settings.

3.3. Integrating Storytelling and Digital Media in Church Ministry

A cross-cutting finding from both tracks is that storytelling competence and digital literacy are mutually reinforcing in practice. Storytelling is rendered more impactful when supported by appropriate visual presentation media; conversely, digital skills become more purposefully exercised when applied to meaningful content such as faith narratives. This complementarity reflects broader trends in community-based education, where the integration of narrative communication and digital media has been recognized as an effective strategy for enhancing engagement in religious and educational settings ([Hobbs, 2010](#); [Darmawan & Priskila, 2020](#)).

The program also created space for participants to reflect critically on the relationship between medium and message in contemporary ministry. This reflective dimension is consistent with participatory education theory, which holds that effective community-based learning requires not only skill acquisition but also critical consciousness about how communication choices shape community participation ([Freire, 1970](#)). In this program, participants developed awareness that how faith messages are delivered — through expressive storytelling or well-designed digital media directly affects the degree to which children and youth engage with those messages. This awareness, combined with practical competence, positions participants to continue developing their communication roles within the congregation on a sustainable basis.

Taken together, the outcomes of the two training tracks demonstrate that integrating storytelling and digital literacy within a single participatory program produces gains that are greater than either competency developed in isolation. The interdisciplinary design combining perspectives from performing arts, applied linguistics, and digital communication enabled the program to address both the narrative and technical dimensions of effective faith communication simultaneously ([Luthfia et al., 2021](#); [Huth et al., 2021](#)).

3.4. Evaluation of Participation and Impact of Activities

Participant satisfaction survey results indicated high levels of engagement and perceived utility across both tracks. Thematically, feedback clustered around three categories: (1) pedagogical quality the training was described as interactive, two-way, and rich with concrete examples; (2) practical relevance skills were immediately applicable to existing ministry roles; and (3) sustainability aspiration participants requested continued training and the formation of a peer learning community. This aspiration for sustained engagement is a key outcome of participatory community empowerment: when learning is contextually embedded and practically motivated, participants develop intrinsic motivation to continue building competence (Freire, 1970; Hobbs, 2010).

Overall, the program's outcomes demonstrate that targeted participatory training in storytelling and digital literacy produces improvements that extend beyond technical skill acquisition. Gains in communicative confidence, ministry ownership, and intergenerational collaboration suggest that the program created conditions for durable capacity development within the congregation. These results position the program as a replicable model for faith-based community engagement in similar urban Protestant congregation contexts in Indonesia.

From a broader perspective, the active participation observed during the training sessions indicates that community-based learning activities can strengthen a sense of ownership and collaboration among participants. Participatory training methods encourage individuals to contribute their ideas, develop practical skills, and collectively improve the quality of community activities. In this context, the program not only improved technical competencies but also fostered a stronger culture of collaboration and engagement within the church community.

4. CONCLUSION

This community engagement program demonstrates that the integration of storytelling practices and basic digital literacy training is an effective strategy for enhancing communication capacity and youth participation within a faith-based community. Through the use of contextual storytelling methods, including puppet-based performances, participants were able to deliver religious and moral messages in more engaging, meaningful, and emotionally resonant ways. At the same time, digital skills training equipped youth with practical competencies to support worship services and church activities, enabling them to take on more active and responsible roles within the congregation.

Beyond technical and pedagogical outcomes, the program demonstrates the broader value of combining performing arts and digital literacy within a participatory community engagement framework. The interdisciplinary design fostered intergenerational collaboration, reflective engagement, and a sense of ownership that creates conditions for sustained skill development beyond the training event. These outcomes are consistent with participatory community empowerment theory (Freire, 1970; Hobbs, 2010), which holds that durable capacity building requires not only skill instruction but also meaningful agency and community belonging.

This study contributes to the growing literature on community-based education by demonstrating how the integration of storytelling and digital literacy can strengthen participatory learning and youth engagement within faith-based communities.

Ethical Approval

Not Applicable

Informed Consent Statement

Not Applicable

Authors' Contributions

Conceptualization, I.M.J.S., F.B.S., and D.M.; methodology, I.M.J.S., F.B.S., and D.M.; validation, I.M.J.S. and F.B.S.; formal analysis, I.M.J.S., F.B.S., and D.M.; resources, I.M.J.S.; implementation and facilitation of community activities, A.G., D.N.S., R.L., N.H., Y.E.A., Y.P.M., and D.V.R.; writing – original draft preparation, A.G., D.N.S., R.L., N.H., Y.E.A., and Y.P.M.; writing – review and editing, I.M.J.S., F.B.S., and D.M.; supervision, I.M.J.S.; correspondence, D.M.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author due to privacy reasons.

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Devanove Ray is a student of Computer Science and Information Engineering at National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan. His academic interests include information systems, digital technology, and the application of computing solutions in educational and community-based settings. In this community service program, he served as a facilitator, providing technical guidance and supporting participants in the effective use of digital tools during program implementation.

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