

Teachers' Self-Perception and Practice of Social-Emotional

^{*1}Suziyani Mohamed, ²Kamariah Abu Bakar, ³Faridah Yunus, ⁴Siti Nur Nadirah Ibrahim

ABSTRACT--- *Daily experiences play a significant role in the social-emotional development of young children. Social-emotional development did not grow naturally, but it needs to be nurtured and strengthened by individuals around the children. Preschool teachers as first children's educators must be knowledgeable and practising a good social-emotional skill to stimulate social-emotional development. Therefore, this study aims to determine the level of teachers' self-perception and practice regarding social-emotional development. This study also investigates the relationship between teachers' self-perception and practice regarding social-emotional development. Survey research design with a quantitative approach was conducted. A self-developed questionnaire was used for data collection and 313 preschool teachers participated in the study. A descriptive and inferential statistics using Statistical Package for Social Science were performed to analyze the data. Result show preschool teachers demonstrate moderate self-perception and practice of social-emotional development. Pearson correlation analysis shows there is a strong, significant and positive relationship between teachers' self-perception and practice. This finding shows teachers' self-perception of social-emotional development will positively influence teachers' practice in the classroom. Therefore, more in-service courses on social-emotional development should be held to empower and enhance teachers' competency.*

Keywords--- *Preschool teacher, Social-emotional, Self-perception, Practices.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The first six years are a crucial period for social-emotional development. As noted by experts, the early years of life present a unique opportunity to lay the foundation for healthy social-emotional development (Cooper, Masi & Vick, 2009). Every experience faced by the children will affect their social-emotional development and they tend to absorb positive and negative influence from their environment at this period. Scholars in early childhood education agreed that this experience will give a significant impact on children's personalities in the future (Cooper et al. 2009; Edwards, 2018; Zins et al. 2004).

Social-emotional competence refers to individual abilities to understand and manage emotions, create and maintain a positive relationship, become self-aware and self-regulated and develop an understanding of others (Mohamed & Toran, 2018; Church, 2015; Schultz & Richardson,

2011; State, Kern, Starosta, & Mukherjee, 2011). Children with good social-emotional skills recognized as a good listener, concerned with emotional signals, sensitive to the other circumstances, understand, respect and accept others belief (Edwards, 2018; Cooper, Masi & Vick, 2009). However, children who have deficits in social-emotional development are more likely to demonstrate behaviours problem and at risk for failure in schooling (Badilla, 2015; Buchanan, Guelder, Tran & Merell, 2008).

In recent years, the importance of social-emotional development in the early years has been an emphasis. A huge number of studies have shown a robust link between social-emotional development and holistic development of children (Laurens, et. al., 2020; Rakap, Balikci, Kalkan, & Aydin, 2018). Children with good social-emotional development discover to be more ready to enter school (Durlak, Domitrovich, Weissberg & Gullota, 2015; Church, 2015; Dowling, 2014). Moreover, scholars also emphasis the significant relationship between social-emotional developments at early years with later life. Children who mastered the good social-emotional skill at early years predict their academic performance and achievement in later years (Cooper, Masi & Vick, 2009).

Social-emotional development in young children does not develop naturally (Rakap, Balikci, Kalkan, & Aydin, 2018). Children develop social-emotional skills by interacting with the individual around them including families, peers and teachers. Beside families, children spend most of their time at preschool or kindergarten. Children will be interacting and socialize more with the teachers and peers at preschool. Hence, preschool teachers have an important role in stimulating and fostering the development of social-emotional competence among young children (Heo, Cheatham, Hemmeter & Noh, 2014; Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson & Salovey, 2012).

In Malaysia, all early childhood education service providers required to follow and implement the National Preschool Standards-Based Curriculum. This curriculum was introduced in 2010 and revised in 2017. The national curriculum developed based on six learning strands which are, (1) communication, (2) science and technology, (3) physical development and aesthetics, (4) personal competence, (5) humanities, and (6) spirituality, attitudes and values (Ministry of Education, 2017). Social-emotional development included in personal competence strand. This strand focuses on children abilities to identify and manage emotion, to control behaviour, to respects views and emotions of others, to master a good social skill and to be confident in facing challenges.

Specific modules were provided for each strand. This module will help a teacher in planning a teaching session to achieve a learning outcome. However, there is no specific module was provided for personal competence strand (Mohamed & Satari, 2019; Osman, 2015). The teacher was asked to provide learning opportunities throughout the daily routine in the classroom. Without a specific module, preschool teachers' readiness in implementing personal competence strand is questionable. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the level of preschool teachers' readiness in fostering social-emotional competence in the classroom. Teachers' readiness will assess the aspects of self-perception and practice. Besides that, the correlation between self-perception and practice will examine.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study using survey research design and quantitative approach. A self-developed questionnaire was used for data collection purpose. The questionnaire comprised three sections, which are demography, self-perception and practice. 5-point Likert scale ranges from completely disagree to completely agree were used in scoring for variables self-perception and practice. Two experts who are early childhood lecturer in public university were appointed to examine the content validity of the instrument. Experts reported the questionnaire has a good content validity value. Furthermore, two early childhood teachers were appointed as panels to examine the face validity of the questionnaire. Feedback provided by the panels shows the clarity and understanding of the items were good. A Cronbach's alpha value for variables of self-perception and practice were 0.95 and 0.96 respectively.

The study was conducted in Selangor, Malaysia and involving early childhood teachers. Convenient sampling techniques were used for sample selection. Questionnaire and consent letter were distributed to the respondents and they were given two weeks to fill up the questionnaire. The data were key-in in Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were performed to explain the demography information of the respondent and to identify the level of early childhood teachers' self-perception and practice regarding social-emotional development. Mean score interpretation from Malaysian Educational Planning and Policy Research Division (2006) were used to explain and describe the findings. Furthermore, the inferential statistic was performed to investigate the correlation between self-perception and practice.

Table 1: Mean Score Interpretation

<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
4.30 to 5.00	Very high
3.50 to 4.29	High
2.70 to 3.49	Moderate
1.90 to 2.69	Low
1.00 to 1.89	Very low

Source: Educational Planning and Policy Research Division (2006)

III. RESULT AND DISSCUSSION

A total of 313 early childhood teachers were participating in this study. 16.8% of respondents are working in a government school and 83.1% of respondents working in private kindergarten. Analysis on level of education of respondents indicates, 35.1% respondents have a graduate degree and above, 34.5% respondents have Diploma, 8.0% respondents have Malaysian Higher School Certificate, and 22.4% respondents has Malaysian Certificate of Education. Analysis on teaching experience in early childhood area found 54.3% respondent experienced 2 years and below, 22.4% respondent experienced three to five years, 11.2% respondents experienced six to ten years and 12.1% experienced ten years and above. 47.6% respondents reported they have been involved and 52.4% respondents have never been involved in a workshop regarding social-emotional development. Table 2 provides information on participants demographic.

Table 2: Participants' Demographic Information

<i>Category</i>	<i>n (%)</i>
Level of education	
Malaysian Certificate of Education	70 (22.4)
Malaysian Higher School Certificate	25 (8.0)
Diploma	108 (34.5)
Graduate degree and above	110 (35.1)
Early childhood teaching experience	
2 years and below	170 (54.3)
3 to 5 years	70 (22.4)
6 to 10 years	35 (11.2)
10 years above	38 (12.1)

Workshop participation	
Yes	149 (47.6)
No	164 (52.4)

1) *Self-Perception of Social-Emotional Learning*

Descriptive analyses were performed to determine the frequency, percentage, mean score and standard deviation values for self-perception variable. Result shows respondents demonstrated a moderate self-perception of social-emotional development with $M = 3.14$ (moderate) and $SD = 0.47$. Table 3 shows detail information on descriptive analysis for teachers' self-perception of social-emotional development. Overall, participants demonstrated a good self-perception regarding social-emotional development except for three items on high-risk group of children for social-emotional issue. Approximately 59.9%, 80% and 53% participants stated that they did not know the relationship between level of education, living in foster care and poverty with social-emotional development, respectively. These figure shows participants are not aware about the factors that influences social-emotional development among young children.

As noted by experts, there are three groups of vulnerable children were identified as a high-risk child for a social-emotional problems which is, children living in poverty (Nurius, LaValley & Kim, 2019; Reiss, 2013), children in the foster care system and children with disabilities (Blewitt, et. al., 2019; Squires & Bricker, 2007). Although being poor does not automatically produce poor outcomes for children, poverty is a convenient indicator variable that may signal the presence of an array factors in families (Font & Maguire-Jack, 2020; Guhn, etl. al., 2019; Reiss, et. al., 2019; Reiss, 2013). Besides, scholar address that children living in foster care often experienced abused. This experienced give a negative impact to their social-emotional development. As for children with disabilities, they often being bullied by peers and discriminate in the community (Blewitt, et. al., 2019). This situation will impact children social-emotional development.

In Malaysia, awareness about the importance of social-emotional learning among young children is still low. Although it has been documented in standard curriculum for preschool but its not teaching priority. Teaching priority is still on academic subject such mathematics, sciences, language and technology. As for parents, they still want their children to score a good grade and rank in the classroom.

Table 3: Teachers' Self-Perception of Social-Emotional Development

Items	n (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Definition of social-emotional	4 (1.2)	6 (4.8)	9 (11.7)	45 (43.7)	23 (37.0)
Link between social-emotional and mental health	6 (1.8)	3 (6.9)	02 (30.7)	43 (43.1)	7 (17.2)
Social-emotional skills needs to be nurtured	13 (3.9)	1 (2.7)	4 (4.2)	105 (31.6)	1 (57.2)
Social-emotional starts to develop social-emotional skills from birth	14 (4.2)	8 (8.4)	9 (17.8)	125 (37.7)	101 (30.4)
Parents' level of education influences social-emotional development	37 (11.1)	8 (23.5)	4 (25.3)	88 (26.5)	4 (13.3)
Children living in the foster care are at high risk for social-emotional problems	39 (11.7)	04 (31.3)	23 (37.0)	39 (11.7)	26 (7.8)
Children living in poverty are at high risk for social-emotional problems	12 (3.9)	9 (27.6)	15 (46.2)	13 (39.3)	4 (11.8)

Items	n (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
	3.6)	14.8)	34.6)	34.0)	13.0)
Environmental factors influences social-emotional development	10 (3.0)	2 (3.6)	3 (6.9)	107 (32.2)	178 (53.6)
Social-emotional development during childhood have a connection with future life	8 (2.4)	7 (5.1)	5 (16.6)	149 (44.9)	102 (30.7)
Teaching social-emotional is important	2 (0.6)	9 (6.1)	7 (24.6)	129 (41.2)	76 (24.3)
Social-emotional learning should be taught continuously	13 (3.9)	4 (4.2)	7 (11.1)	121 (36.4)	145 (43.7)
Social-emotional need to be taught in classroom likes science and mathematics	17 (5.1)	1 (12.3)	7 (26.2)	128 (38.6)	56 (16.9)
Children with good social-emotional skills will succeed in academic	11 (3.3)	0 (3.0)	4 (13.3)	150 (45.2)	115 (34.6)
Children with good social-emotional skills able to express a good attitude and behavior	-	- (1.0)	9 (6.1)	121 (38.7)	166 (53.0)

Items	n (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Children with good social-emotional skills able to start and maintain relationship	-	0.6)	3 10.5)	1 35 (43.1)	1 43 (45.7)
Children with good social-emotional skills shows high level of curiosity	1 (0.3)	1.9)	4 10.9)	1 55 (49.5)	1 17 (37.4)

1 = completely disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = undecided; 4 = agree; 5 = completely agree

2) Practice of Social-Emotional Learning

Descriptive analyses were demonstrated to determine the value of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation for practice variable. Result show preschool teachers demonstrate moderate practice of social-emotional learning in the classroom with $M = 3.48$ and $SD = 0.45$. Further scrutinizes on items reveal respondents score strongly disagree to undecided on three items which is “I directly teach children about rules and appropriate behaviors”, “I did not use punishment technique in the classroom” and “I speak in a calm voice when children breaks a rules”. However, majority teachers agree with others statements.

56.4% respondents did not teach children directly about rules and appropriate behaviors. Equip children about information regarding rules, what can and can't they do is a basic necessities in nurture social-emotional skills. Knowledge and awareness about rules and appropriate behaviors help children to understand about their environment.

Furthermore, 75.2% respondents still are practicing punishment and 53.7% respondents still using high-pitched voice to warning children in their classroom. These finding not surprisingly because in Malaysian context punishment for every wrongdoing by children is strongly tie with the tradition. However, for the pass ten years, experts in child development try to educate parents and teachers about the negative impact of punishment for child development. In order to foster good social-emotional skills among young children, teachers need to show a good example by modeling first

(Brackett et al., 2012). Children will learn by their observations and replicate what they have seen to their daily situation.

Table 4: Teachers' Practice regarding Social-Emotional in Classroom

Sub-construct/Items	n (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Directly teach children about rules and appropriate behaviors	42 (12.7)	53 (16.0)	92 (27.7)	85 (23.5)	67 (20.2)
Assess and monitor data to determine nature of children's challenging behavior	10 (3.0)	13 (3.9)	47 (14.2)	50 (45.2)	112 (33.7)
Teach children to accept and express their anger in appropriate ways	13 (3.9)	17 (5.1)	67 (20.2)	53 (46.1)	82 (44.7)
Develop and implement individualized behavior support plans for children who engage in persistent challenging behavior	14 (4.2)	71 (21.1)	51 (15.4)	53 (46.1)	106 (31.9)
Promote children's engagement	14 (4.2)	92 (27.7)	24 (7.2)	25 (37.7)	155 (46.7)
Did not use punishment technique in the classroom	33 (9.9)	101 (30.4)	116 (34.9)	66 (13.9)	36 (0.8)

Praise children when they shows good attitude	17 (5 .1)	1 0 (3.0)	4 0 (12.0)	39 (41.9)	12 5 (3 7.7)
Promote group activity	15 (4 .5)	8 (2.4)	1 8 (5.4)	15 (34.6)	17 6 (5 3.0)
Support children with persistent problem behavior	12 (3 .6)	1 0 (3.0)	2 1 (6.3)	31 (39.5)	15 8 (4 7.6)
Support children to be an active participant in group activity	15 (4 .5)	6 (1.8)	9 (2.7)	07 (32.2)	19 3 (5 8.1)
Support friendship skills	16 (4 .8)	7 (2.1)	3 9 (11.7)	34 (40.4)	13 6 (4 1.0)
Speak in a calm voice when children break a rules	21 (6 .3)	4 1 (12.3)	1 17 (35.2)	2 (27.7)	60 (1 8.1)
Engage in supportive conversations with children	17 (5 .1)	4 (1.2)	1 1 (3.3)	00 (30.1)	20 0 (6 0.2)
Involve families in supporting their child's social-emotional development and	13 (3)	1 2	2 1	30	15 7

addressing problem behavior	.6)	(	(	39.2)	(4
		3.6)	6.3)		7.3)
Communicate with families and promote family involvement in the classroom	12	1	2		15
	(3	2	1	30	7
	.6)	(	(		(4
		3.6)	6.3)	39.2)	7.3)

1 = completely disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = undecided; 4 = agree; 5 = completely agree

3) *The Correlation between Teachers' Self-Perception and Practice*

A bivariate Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r) was calculated to determine the size and direction of the linear relationship between teachers' self-perception and practice. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity were assessed and found to be supported. There was a strong, positive correlation between two variables, $r = 0.673$, $n = 313$, $p < 0.00$, with high levels of self-perception associated with high levels of practice. Table 3 provided further information on the correlation analysis. This finding proves teachers' with good levels of self-perceptions regarding social-emotional development practicing a good social-emotional learning in the classroom.

Table 5: The Correlation between Knowledge, Self-Perception and Practice

Scale	Practice		
Self-Perception	r	r^2	p
	0.673*	0.453	0.00

IV. CONCLUSION

The first five years it is important and fragile years in life. In these years, children develop rapidly in all domains of development. Then, preschool teacher as a first educator to all the children must be knowledgeable and skilled in managing children during this years. With knowledge and skill regarding social-emotional skills teacher are able to stimulate a healthy social-emotional development and subsequently promoting positive behavior among young children. This study aims to investigate the level of self-perception and practice of preschool teachers in promoting social-emotional learning

in the classroom. Besides, the correlation between self-perception and practice also will examine. Result found preschool teachers have a moderate self-perception and practice regarding social-emotional development. The Pearson correlation analysis was performed to determine the relationship between these variables and result shows there is a positive, moderate and significant relationship between the variables with r -value range 0.673. Teacher self-perception and practice on social-emotional development can be improved throughout interval in-service training.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was supported by the grant from the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia GG-2019-003 and GG2019-059.

REFERENCES

1. Badilla, I. (2015). *Stability of Emotional and Behavioural Problems among School going Children in Klang Valley in Malaysia*. 4th Asia Pacific Conference on Public Health.
2. Blewitt, C., O'Connor, A., May, T., Morris, H., Mousa, A., Bergmeier, H., Jackson, K., Barrett, H., & Skouteris. (2019). Strengthening the social and emotional skills of pre-schoolers with mental health and development challenges in inclusive early childhood education and care settings: a narrative review of educators-led intervention. *Early Child Development and Care*, 1- 22.
3. Brackett, M. A., Reyes, M. R., Rivers, S. E., Elbertson, N. A., & Salovey, P. (2012). Assessing teachers' beliefs about social and emotional learning. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 30(3):219-236.
4. Brauner, C. B. & Stephens, C. B. (2006). Estimating the Prevalence of Early Childhood Serious Emotional/Behavioral Disorders: Challenges and Recommendations. *Public Health Reports*, 121: 303-310.
5. Buchanan, R., Gueldner, B. A., Tran, O. K., & Merrell, K. W. (2008). Teachers' perceptions of social and emotional learning in the classrooms. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*.
6. Cooper, J. L., Masi, R. & Vick, J. (2009). *Social emotional development in early childhood: what every policymaker should know*. Report Prepared for the National Center for Children in Poverty.
7. Dowling, M. (2014). *Young children's personal, social and emotional development*. Sage Publications.
8. Durlak, J. A., Domitrovich, C. E., Weissberg, R. P., & Gullotta, T. P. (2015). *Handbook of social and emotional learning: Research and practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
9. Edwards, N. M. (2018). *Early social-emotional development: your guide to promoting children's positive behavior*. Brookes Publishing.

10. Font, S. A. & Maguire-Jack, K. (2020). It's not "Just poverty": Educational, social, and economic functioning among young adults exposed to childhood neglect, abuse, and poverty. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 1-13.
11. Guhn, M., Emerson, S. D., Mahdavian, D., & Gadermann, A. M. (2019). Associations of Birth Factors and Socio-Economic Status with Indicators of Early Emotional Development and Mental Health in Childhood: A Population-Based Linkage Study. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*.
12. Heo, K. H., Cheatham, G. A., Hemmeter, M. L., & Noh, J.(2014). Korean early childhood educators perceptions of importance and implementation of strategies to address young children's social-emotional competence. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 36(1):49-66.
13. Laurens, K. R., Islam, F., Kariuki, M., Harris, F., Chilvers, M., Butler, M., Schofield, J., Essery, C., Brinkman, S.A., Carr, V. J., & Green, M. J. (2020). Reading and numeracy attainment of children reported to child protection services: A population record linkage study controlling for other adversities. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 101.
14. Mohamed, S. & Toran, H. (2018). Family socioeconomic status and social-emotional development among young children in Malaysia. *Journal of Applied Science*, 18(3): 122-128.
15. Nurius, P., LaValley, K., & Kim, M. (2019). Victimization, poverty and resilience resources: stress process considerations for adolescent mental health. *School Mental Health*.
16. Nyawin, L. B. & Majzub. (2017). *Impact of preschool education on children's social-emotional readiness at standard one: Proceeding of the International Seminar on Education* (pp. 1881-1892). Bangi: The National University of Malaysia.
17. Rakap, S., Balikco, S., Kalkan, S., & Aydin, B. (2018). Preschool teachers' use of strategies to support social-emotional competence in young children. *Journal of Early Childhood Special Education*, 11-24.
18. Reiss, F., Meyrose, A., Otto, C., Lampert, T., Fionna, K., & Ravens-Sieberger, U. (2019). Socioeconomic status, stressful life situations and mental health problems in children and adolescents: Results of the German BELLA cohort-study. *Plos One*, 1-16.
19. Reiss, F. (2013). Socioeconomic inequalities and mental health problems in children and adolescents: A systematic review. *Social Science & Medicine*, 90:24-31.
20. Schultz, L. A. & Richardson, B. 2011. Global citizenship education in post-secondary institutions: Theories, practices policies. New York: Peter Lang.
21. Squires, J. & Bricker, D. 2007. *An activity based approach to developing young children's social and emotional competence*. Baltimore MD: Paul Brookes Publishing.
22. State, T. M., Kern, L., Starosta, K. M., & Mukherjee, A. D. 2011. Elementary pre-service teacher preparation in the area of social, emotional, and behavioral problems. *School Mental Health* 3(1):13–23.
23. Wichstrøm, L., Berg-Nielsen, T. S., Angold, A., Egger, H. L., Solheim, E., & Sveen, T. H. (2011). Prevalence of psychiatric disorders in preschoolers. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 53(6), 695–705.

24. Zins, J. E., Bloodworth, M. R., Weissberg, R. P., & Walberg, H. J. (2004). *The scientific base linking social and emotional learning to school's success*. In Zins, J. E., Weissberg, R. P., Wang, M. C. & Walberg, H. J. (Eds). Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say? New York: Teachers College.