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## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN CLASSROOM FOR PRESCHOOLERS: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract:

Effective implementation of social and emotional learning in the classroom for preschoolers was getting more attention, thus, there were various implementation methods and recommendations. This study explored effective social and emotional learning implementation from teachers' perspectives. This single case qualitative research adopted the instrumentation of a semi-structured interview with seven open-ended questions. This study involved the participation of four preschool teachers from a private preschool in Setia Alam, Selangor. Social and Emotional Learning implementations in this study followed the recommendations from Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and the Five guiding principles on social and emotional learning by McGraw Hill Education. The findings from this study emphasized two main themes of teachers' awareness and children's outcomes. The first theme described teachers' ability and skills in observing and evaluating children's development levels and needs that could later impact their classroom management. The second theme of children's outcome described the benefits of effective social and emotional learning implementations towards preschool children's development from teachers' perspectives. The findings also emphasized the importance of teachers' knowledge and skills towards the implementation of effective social and emotional learning in the classroom. Thus, it could be concluded that effective social and emotional learning implementation could be achieved through a conducive learning environment, that includes active engagement and activities that could support children's social and emotional development.

### Keywords:

Awareness, Classroom Management, Learning Environment, Social and Emotional Learning

## Introduction

The progress of human development was the combination of two factors, namely, genetics and environment (Berk, 2013). Two genetically healthy children who grew up in a different set of environments could result in a different outcome. A genetically healthy child who grew up in an environment that facilitates his developmental needs might become a healthy and successful person who possessed the skills that he needs to achieve his goal. On contrary, a genetically healthy child who grew up in a poor environment, might not have the opportunities and the facilities to develop with balanced nutrition or to learn and practice his skills to achieve his goal. Physical, social and emotional, and cognitive were the three broad domains of development that were overlapped and interacted with each other. The human developmental period was divided into five stages which were, the prenatal period, infancy and toddlerhood, early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence. Development milestones were subjected to development domain and periods where, different areas of development occur at different timelines (Berk, 2013). This study focused on social and emotional competencies development during the early childhood period of four until six years old. Social and emotional competencies were described as a multidimensional element that facilitates the ability to understand and manage own emotions, understanding others' emotions and needs, ability to establish and maintain relationships, ability to demonstrate responsible decision making and to manage own behaviors (National Research Council, 2015, p 139).

Social and emotional learning (SEL) was defined as a process of social and emotional core competencies implementation in recognizing and managing emotions while achieving positive goals, respecting the diversity of others, establishing a positive relationship, making responsible decisions, and handling interpersonal and intrapersonal situations effectively (Osher et al., 2016). School plays an important role in fostering these social and emotional skills in parallel with teaching academic competencies (Elias & Zin, 2006). CASEL (2021) listed 5 SEL core competencies as follows, (1) the ability to reflect own feelings, values, and behaviors, (2) the ability to view a situation from a different perspective and respect social diversity, (3) the ability to initiate and sustain a positive relationship between others, (4) the skills to self-motivate, self-discipline, and to manage impulse and stress and (5) the ability to make a decision with consideration of self and others.

Mohamed (2021) in a study on teachers' knowledge and practice on SEL involving 332 preschool teachers in Selangor reported an average score for teachers' knowledge on the SEL topic, however, the score for SEL application was recorded as low. In another study by Mohammad and Mohamed (2020) on SEL modules for preschools in Malaysia indicated that the implementation of SEL in the classrooms was average. Rohaizad (2015), conducted a study on preschool children's social and emotional competencies development in Malaysia, cited a preliminary study done by Rohaizad, Kosnin, and Mislán (2012), reported that preschool children in Malaysia score relatively low in social and emotional competencies element where the assessment items were according to KSPK, DSKP (2018) personal competence strand. In the same study, data findings on interview results among preschool teachers, reported on the lack of proper and systematic modules for SEL, teaching aids, and the fact that the topic of SEL was not emphasized in the preschool classroom learning process, contributed to the low score in the social and emotional competencies assessment. The same studies also reported on the SEL teaching process that often involved story-telling and conversation which make the learning process less interesting and the exchange of teaching content was reported to be less effective.

The objective of this study was to explore the implementation of SEL in the classroom and the benefits of SEL implementations towards preschool social and emotional development from teachers' perspectives. SEL implementations for this study were through well-planned, clear, and integrated classroom activities that could foster the development of social and emotional competencies among preschool children.

### **Literature Review**

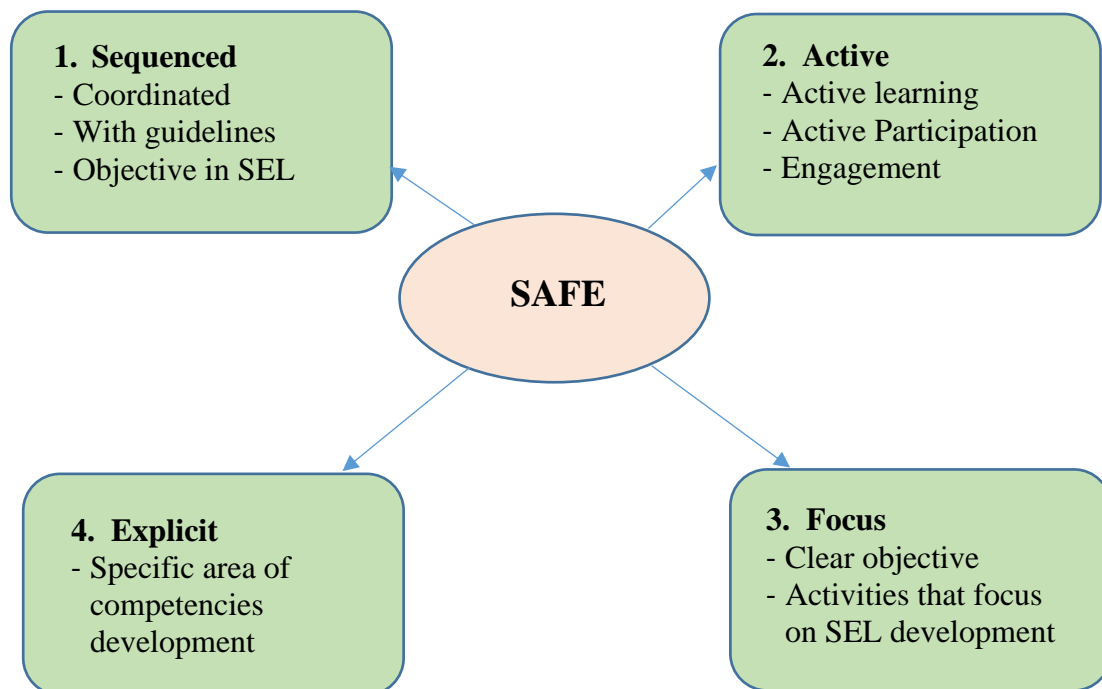
Social and emotional development starts from birth and was a continuous process that occurred until adulthood. The cortex region of the brain was rapidly developed between the age of 3 months until 10 years old and was essential for cognitive, motor function, language, planning, decision-making skills, memorizing, and emotional development (Wachs et al., 2014). The implementations of SEL through classroom activities for this study were according to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory that involved the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and later in 1986, Bronfenbrenner added chronosystem as the 5<sup>th</sup> level in the ecological level where it was defined as the impact of prior life events or experiences, discretely or sequentially towards subsequent development (Bronfenbrenner, 1988).

The Ecological theory was conceptualized with the elements that Bronfenbrenner described as the Person, Process, Context, and Time (PPCT) model (Tudge et al., 2017). The first element of "Person" was unique with its characteristics and temperament that defined an individual. The focus of the implementation of SEL in this study was towards the elements of the process, context, and time. The effectiveness of "Process" was dependable upon the "proximal processes" that were integrated into daily interactions and activities that promote active engagement. "Context" was the interaction between teachers, children, and peers during the implementation of SEL through well-planned classroom activities and was considered as part of the preschool children's microsystem, where immediate daily interaction could lead to effective social and emotional development. The "Time" element in this study referred to the time of occurrence or duration of occurrence of a proximal process in which an effective proximal process must occur regularly and with increasing complexity.

### ***Social and Emotional Learning***

In Malaysia, Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran, Pendidikan Prasekolah, (KSPK, DSKP, 2018), published by the Ministry of Education, were a guideline for public and private preschools for syllabus and teaching plans preparation. The subject of SEL for preschool children was categorized as Personal Competency Strand in KSPK, DSKP (2018). This strand focused on the development of social and emotional competencies among preschool children between the age of four to six years old. The Personal Competency Strand focused on the development of one's emotional management skills, as well as building one's social skills. The objectives of this strand were divided into three main categories, (1) to know and manage emotions, which was defined as the ability to identify own and others' emotions, and to be able to express and understand those emotions, (2) to achieve positive emotions focusing on the development of self-control, and the ability to demonstrate self-confidence and responsibility towards self and others, and (3) to develop social skills that include understanding the needs and emotions of others and the ability to demonstrate proper communication and social skills to maintain positive and healthy relationships with others. These development categories were divided into two accomplishment levels which involved the two years of the preschool session in Malaysia.

The systematic SEL approach emphasized the importance of establishing a conducive learning environment that practices SEL across classrooms setting, schools, families, and communities. It should be well designed, evidence-based and integrated with the curriculum, and practiced throughout school interactions. Effective implementation of SEL programs in both classroom and school base was dependable on the implementation of SAFE. These acronyms represent sequenced activities, active, focused, and explicit (Durlak et al. 2011, Oberle & Schonert-Reichi 2017 & CASEL 2021). Effective SEL should involve planned activities with clear and focused objectives in developing social and emotional competencies and encourage active participation and engagements. McGraw Hill Education (2017) published guidelines in integrating SEL into school days which highlight five guiding principles in helping students to master the social and emotional competencies. These guidelines were to create a nurturing environment that integrates SEL in daily interactions and classroom activities with continuous communication and children-centered instruction that empower SEL among preschool children.



**Figure 1: Illustration of SAFE acronym based on the study by Durlak et al., 2011 and CASEL**

McGraw Hill Education (2017) published a guideline for SEL implementations as daily school activities for educators. This guideline highlighted five principles for SEL implementations to assist the educators and preschool children in social and emotional competencies development. These principles guide the teachers in delivering the SEL and the implementation of instructions in the classroom. SEL for preschool children requires the teachers to act as the primary roles of educators and facilitators. Teachers should master and be able to deliver effective SEL with the implementation of these guiding principles along with the implementation of the acronym, SAFE as stated above. The five guiding principles were listed

as create, integrate, communicate, instruction, and empower. Table 1 summarizes these guiding principles along with a description of each principle.

Systematic and coordinated SEL implementations should be incorporated with the diversities of approaches, clear instructions, and the application of SAFE. The teaching approaches should encourage cooperative and contextual learning and be integrated with academic curricular. These implementations could result in positive classrooms climate that supports a strong relationship between teachers and preschool children, and among peers. School-level SEL implementations involved ongoing planning and evaluations, together with continuous improvement by all members of the school community. The implementation requires active engagement and positive culture that could stimulate the feeling of belongings and respect towards others, thus promoting positive social, emotional, and academic development.

**Table 1: Five Guiding Principles of Social and Emotional Learning Implementation**

<b>Guiding Principle</b>	<b>Description</b>
Create	Consciously create nurturing, caring, and safe environment. Strategies include, greet students by name on daily basis, collaborative development of activities expectations with students, rewarding positive behaviors and showing respect, creating opportunities for students to express or present works in multiple ways and establishing school-wide anti-bullying, respecting others policy while monitoring school settings which include toilets, classrooms, and playground.
Integrate	Integrate SEL skill development activities in daily routine and academic instructions. Strategies include offering diversity in learning environments, such as learning layout that include indoor and outdoor setting, learning approaches of play, contextual and project-based whilst incorporating SEL competencies development.
Communicate	Continuous communication among stakeholders. Potential stakeholders include students, families, teachers, school administration, and staff and community members. Communication strategy towards families is to provide SEL concepts and processes by notes or activities notifications. Provides training on SEL towards parents and school staff which includes teachers.
Instruct	Provide students with specific guidance and instructions in activities. Give rationale of learning SEL, expectations, and model the activities by role-playing or demonstrations. Provide opportunities for students to apply the skills in activities and repeat the skills learned in suitable activities and situations throughout the year.
Empower	Encourage students to take charge of their SEL development. The key strategy is for teachers to believe that students are intelligent and capable to learn and

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grow which later will reflect with students to believe in their capabilities. Provide feedback, accomplishments data, and discussion on their achievements. Collaboratively plan learning activities with students, where teachers act as a facilitator. Provide opportunities to safely fail and learn from failure.

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Past study on effective SEL implementations reported that SEL could improve social and emotional competencies skills, attitudes, and behaviors (Durlak et al., 2011), cultivate positive traits, significantly reduce anxiety and depression, improve positive attitudes toward school (Sklad et al. 2012), reduce negative behaviors in the classroom (Larson et al., 2018), enhance interactions and relationships between peers and teachers (Kirk & Jay, 2018). Several studies also reported on the effectiveness of SEL in improving academic achievement (Durlak et al. 2011 & Sklad et al. 2012). A follow-up study on SEL implementations by Taylor et al. (2017) highlighted the long-term impact of SEL implementations should involve the participation of schools, families, and communities. Systematic, objective-oriented with clear goals for social and emotional competence developmental interventions have been shown to improve emotional and social competence that includes cooperation, with a significant decrease in the display of negative emotions and challenging behaviors (Mondi et al. 2021).

### Methodologies

This study adopted a qualitative single instrumental case study design that focused on the SEL implementations in preschool classrooms. The population of this study involved private preschool teachers that were registered under the Ministry of Education in Malaysia. Private preschools were chosen because of the diversities in teachers' educational backgrounds and teaching experiences. The diversities in preschool teachers' skills will be evaluated to understand the impact of these elements towards lessons, activities management, and implementations approaches. The SEL implementations in this study involved two preschool classes with the participation of 4 preschool teachers. The participated preschool teachers for this study meet the minimum educational requirements as published by Malaysia's Ministry of Education. The implementations of the intervention were managed by the respective preschool teachers who participated in this study, for at least twelve weeks on daily basis with a duration of at least 30 minutes per day. Table 2 below illustrated the example of SEL implementation integrated with the academic lesson and active activities.

**Table 2: Example of SEL Implementation Plan**

Academic Subject	Description
Literacy	<p>SEL:</p> <p>Divide children into small groups to provide opportunities for children to develop social and emotional competencies with Continuous instructions, communication, and encouragement from teachers.</p> <p>Active activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper crumpling and tearing</li> <li>• Activities with leaves, flour, playdough and create words</li> </ul>

Mathematics	<p>SEL: Divide children into small groups to provide opportunities for children to develop social and emotional competencies with Continuous instructions and encouragement from teachers.</p> <p>Active activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hopscotch game and number recognition or addition</li> <li>• Jumping on trampoline and ball throwing for counting</li> <li>• Make shapes using playdoh</li> </ul>
Science	<p>SEL: Divide children into small groups to provide opportunities for children to develop social and emotional competencies</p> <p>Active activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food tasting– sweet, bitter, sour, etc.</li> <li>• Smell different items – flowers, fruits, coffee.</li> </ul>
Religious Study	<p>SEL: Continuous instructions, communications, and encouragement from teachers</p> <p>Active activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature walks to know The Creator</li> <li>• Prayer movements</li> </ul>

The data collection method for this study involved the participation of 4 preschool teachers through semi-structured interviews sessions that were conducted separately for each participant. The interview questions include the elements of observation where it could describe the preschool children's achievements from the teachers' perspective. The interview sessions were aimed to collect information on teachers' background in education and teaching experiences, their preliminary knowledge on the topic of SEL and social and emotional competencies development, and later to obtain their experiences, perspectives, and opinions on the implementations of SEL in the classroom and their perceptions towards the outcome from the implementations. The interview protocol consists of a demographic form and seven open-ended questions that were developed to anticipate participants in expressing their experience and perception. The questions in the teachers' interview instrument followed guidelines from a similar study on teachers' perception in SEL by Youngblood (2015), and Humphries et al. (2018).

The interview sessions were conducted in different sessions for each teacher and lasted for approximately 40 minutes. A demographic form was provided to record teachers' consent and basic information on their educational backgrounds and teaching experiences. Interview data were recorded with a voice recording device and transcribed using Transcribe software. Interview transcriptions were analyzed with the aid of Nvivo software.

### **Data Analysis**

Interview data were analyzed with the adaptation of the six steps of thematic analysis introduced by Braun and Clark in 2006. This systematic approach contained six analysis phases, (1) data familiarisation, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing the themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report.

#### ***Phase 1: Data Familiarisation***

Interview recordings were transcribed and manually checked, and the files were saved separately for each participant.

#### ***Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes***

This process required the steps of data familiarisation by reading through the dataset and highlighting the content of interest and coding it as a content key-note. Codes were used to identify the data that is significant and appears meaningful for a researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2016). The codes were generated with the aid of NVIVO. Table 3 below shows examples of codes generated.

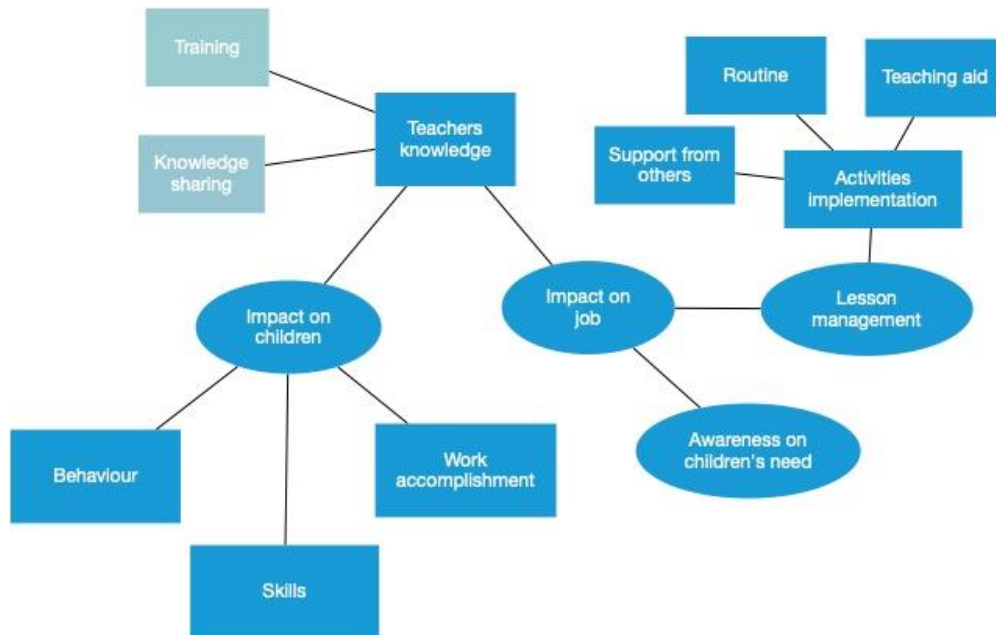
**Table 3: Example of Codes Generated.**

<b>Data Extract</b>	<b>Codes</b>
Very helpful, from the training we know what we want (lesson objective) and how we need to apply the knowledge towards children, and we want to see the effect on them and us when we help them to learn. Training is really important.	- Teachers' knowledge - Impact of training
Each child is different. My students, during the start of the school session, really have some difficulties with their behaviors and sensorial.	- Awareness of children's need
Yes, because the children feel fun, they're not afraid and could socialize, relaxed and they felt that the activities were fun.	- Perception on activities
Ok, for example, in a group, I asked them to build lego as tall as they could, only with one color, for example, red, and make sure everyone do it together.	- Lesson management

#### ***Phase 3: Searching for Themes***

This phase involved the steps of analysis and exploration of the dataset in a comprehensive view of possible potential themes that might emerge (Braun & Clarke, 2006, Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This process involved coded data being reviewed to identify similarities, connections, and overlapping between codes across the dataset. The themes were generated according to the generated codes and their description to illustrate the content of the dataset. These processes were done with the aid of Nvivo to minimize mistakes and to allow the researcher to have a broader view on data content, codes directions and to analyze the dataset, codes, and themes systematically. Figure 2 illustrated the initial themes generated from the teachers' interview dataset.

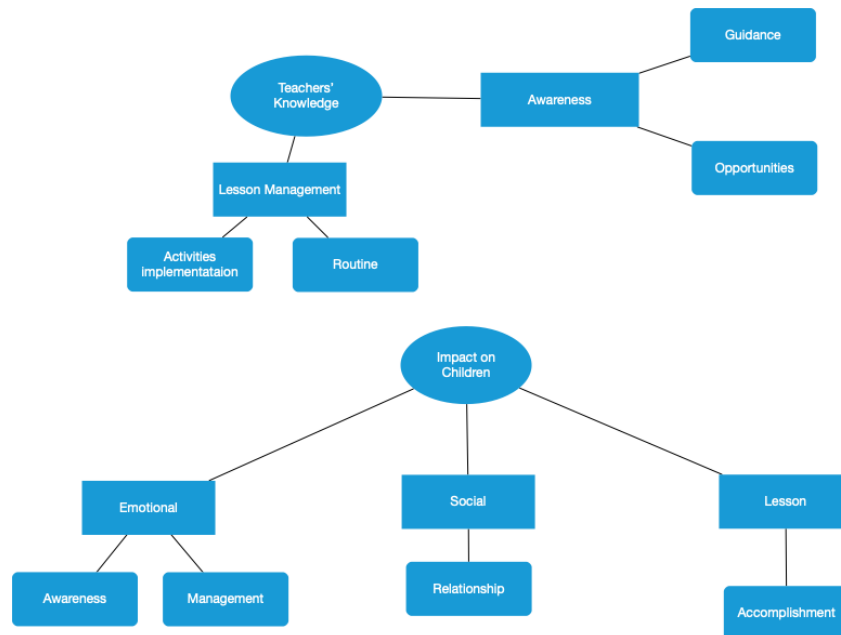




**Figure 2: Illustration of The Initial Themes**

#### ***Phase 4: Reviewing Themes***

Phase 4 involved two-level analytic processes of reviewing and refining the theme. The first analytic level involved the codes to be reviewed and analyzed, with the purpose to ensure that the codes description and the content fit the theme. The first process was done concerning the content of the coded data. The second process was similar to the first but the analysis involved the whole dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There were two main themes generated that described the teachers' knowledge and the impact of SEL implementations on preschool children. The first theme described the content on teachers' awareness and lesson management, while the second theme discussed the outcome of the implementations towards the preschool children's development from teachers' perspectives. Figure 3 illustrated the themes and sub-themes generated after the two-level of the phase 4 analysis process.



**Figure 3: Themes and Sub-Themes After the Phase 4 Analysis Process.**

#### ***Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes***

The phase 5 analysis process involved the themes generated in phase 4 to be further refined and defined by clarifying the direction and content of each theme and overall themes. This process should be carried out according to the research question to ensure that the themes were not repeated and overlapped (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A good thematic analysis involved themes that were related but did not overlap and were not repetitive, where, ideally themes should focus on one perspective. This process involved a narrative explanation on each theme directly related and explained the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The narrative explanation of a theme should provide unique points, and contribute to the overall understanding of the data and connect with other themes of the analysis (Kiger & Varpio, 2020), and illustrate the direction of the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

#### ***Phase 6: Producing the Report***

A report should provide a convincing description of a research study and should describe the analytical process and the findings of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The report should provide logical, rational, and interesting interpretations of the dataset based on themes generated and should answer the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **Results**

The findings of this study will be discussed according to the final themes generated in the relevance of research objectives. Figure 4 below, illustrated the final themes generated for this study after 5 phases of the analysis process. Two main themes were generated from the data collected in teachers' interviews that could explain teachers' perspectives on SEL implementations in preschool classrooms. The first theme was teacher's knowledge, which consists of two subthemes of lesson management and awareness of children's needs. The

second theme of children's outcome focused on the benefit of SEL towards children and the theme was divided into 3 subthemes of emotional, social, and lesson.



**Figure 4: Finalized Themes for This Study**

### ***Teacher's Knowledge***

Data on teachers' knowledge were divided into classroom lesson management and their ability to observe preschool children's needs. Demographic data on the participants showed diversities in teachers' educational backgrounds and teaching experiences, and these conditions were expected and included in the discussion. Interview data showed that the teachers were given opportunities to attend training and the preschool management organized internal series of training sessions and encouraged knowledge sharing sessions between teachers. Teachers' training and the possession of content and pedagogical knowledge, and relevant teaching skills were important towards achieving effective teachings and learning processes in the classroom (Kim et al. 2019, Bourdesa 2016, Sirait 2016, Burroughs et al. 2019 and Dange 2020). Knowledge sharing sessions encourage teachers' collaboration that could support learning opportunities which later equipped the teachers with the knowledge and capability for them to work effectively and independently (Kolleck, 2019).

Findings on lesson management subtheme highlighted teachers' ability in creating a conducive learning environment for preschool children to practice their social and emotional skills with the implementation of routines, teachers' support in both instructional and emotional domains, and the creation of situations that encouraged engagement through opportunities for the preschool children to work in groups and to assist their friends. This subtheme described planned lessons and classroom activities that were according to the syllabus. Interview excerpts described that the lessons and SEL implementations were conducted through exploration of environments that allow children to participate and engage with peers, teaching materials, and classroom environment of indoor or outdoor settings. The physical environment could maximize social and emotional support through guided and planned interactions and engagements (Kirk & Jay, 2018), and effective SEL implementations required both instructional support and opportunities to practice the skills (McClelland et al., 2017).

Teachers' awareness of children's needs described teachers' skills in observing and evaluating children's needs which later could be translated into their lesson directions that include lesson objectives and lesson approaches. This subtheme illustrated the implementation of teachers' knowledge in term of unplanned classroom situations that requires the teachers to perform extensive observation, and teachers' ability to be flexible with their lesson and classroom

management. Interview excerpts described teachers' ability to adapt and replanned their lessons according to the classroom situation and children's developmental level. Teachers' abilities and knowledge in their professional field, contents, and pedagogical matters could directly impact students' achievement (Sirait, 2016), and teachers' experience, professional knowledge, and teachers that create opportunities for students to learn might directly associate with students' achievement (Burrough et al., 2019). A pedagogical decision by teachers in lesson management requires teachers' ability in analysing and evaluating the learning process and the ability to link their knowledge of the content with the process (Guerriero, 2014).

### ***Children's Outcome***

The second theme generated from the analysis was children's outcomes. The findings on this theme will be discussed in three subthemes of the impact of SEL implementations on children's emotional, social, and lesson. Data excerpts on teachers' perceptions towards the benefit of SEL implementations in terms of emotional development reported on positive emotional management and acknowledgment of others' emotional needs. Several studies reported on improvement in social and emotional skills after the SEL implementations (Taylor et al. 2017, Begg & Olson 2020), the latter study also reported on reduced anxiousness towards teachers and peers after SEL implementations. Teachers' interview data excerpts for this study reported on the same findings that could be concluded as SEL implementations provide assurance and guidance that could contribute to improving anxiety levels among preschool children that resulted in readiness to participate in classroom activities.

Teachers' perspectives on the second subthemes of social development reported that preschool children show positive improvements in social adaptation and relationships with others. Improvements were also noticeable in terms of engagement with others, the ability to initiate conversation, and the ability to maintain positive relationships with teachers and peers. The ability in managing own emotions and to appropriately express emotions would directly benefit oneself and the overall learning environment in the classroom (Larson et al., 2018). It could be summarized that personal achievement in emotional competencies could positively affect one's social competencies thus benefit others.

Interview data on children's outcome in terms of lesson described positive attitudes towards lesson, with the term of being enjoyed and motivated. The data also reported on active participation, increased confidence in the classroom, the ability for the preschool children to understand the lesson, and the ability to provide feedback. SEL implementation according to guidelines highlighted by McGraw Hill Education (2017) could create a conducive learning environment that supports preschool children's developmental needs especially in social and emotional competencies, and learning should include interaction with others, hands-on experience, the object set for exploration, and continuous feedback and guidance (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

### **Discussion**

The implementation of effective SEL in preschool classrooms requires the possession of knowledge and understanding of the subject and content among preschool teachers. In addition to knowledge, observation skills and the ability to positively react towards classroom situations and needs were additional qualities that were essential in creating a conducive learning environment that could benefit the learning process. Guerriero (2014) described teachers' role as a learning specialist with qualities that include knowledge in content, ability to adapt with

diverse learners, ability to apply problem-solving strategies, ability to observe classroom events, sensitivity towards context, and demonstrate respect for students.

Teachers' training and knowledge sharing sessions were essentials for teachers to obtain knowledge in content and pedagogical approaches. School management plays a vital role in providing opportunities for teachers to attend training and internally organized knowledge-sharing sessions better education quality. Teachers' training content should include theories, approaches, methods, and skills that were relevant to 21st-century learning that could encourage the process of critical thinking through the process of scaffolding (Kim et al., 2019). Diversities in teachers' educational backgrounds and teaching experiences could be balanced and equalized through periodic and systematic training and knowledge sharing sessions.

Other factors that were essential towards effective SEL implementations require the school management to support with the provision of suitable classroom settings, facilities, materials, and teaching aids for SEL implementations in the classroom and throughout the school environment. Intimate classroom setting with suitable teachers to children ratio allowed teachers to personalized learning strategies and to work together with preschool children and develop routines and practices that could cater to children's needs. A smaller classroom setting allowed teachers to closely observe preschool children's behaviors, thus allowing teachers to effectively implement the lesson and activities.

The findings of this study highlighted the benefits of SEL towards preschool children's development where it was reported to positively encourage social and emotional development, attitude, behaviors and increase academic achievements and work completions. Therefore, the development of SEL training modules for teachers and teaching modules that encourage the implementation of SEL should be considered by the preschool curricular unit in the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. These modules could assist teachers in terms of SEL implementations in the classroom and could emphasize the importance and benefits of SEL towards children's development.

## Conclusion

This study reported on teachers' positive perception in the implementation of SEL that could benefit the preschool children socially, emotionally and further assist the children with their lesson. The elements of environment and engagement were considered as the key to effective SEL implementations. The possession of teachers' knowledge in both content and pedagogical allowed the teachers to create rich learning environments that support children's development. The rich environment of learning was according to and consistent with constructive theories in education, encouraging learning with meaningful sources, nurturing students developmental growth especially in social and emotional competencies that includes responsibility, decision making, and initiative, creating situations that encourage collaborative learning, integrating lesson with activities that assist with the skills and creativity, and continuous assessment and observations on students' performance (Grabinger & Dunlap, 1998). Engagement and participation involved active and meaningful interaction between preschool children, peers, and teachers. Strategies in effective classroom management include routines, explanations on rules, and expectations, with clear instructions and procedures that could increase students' engagement (Franklin & Harrington, 2019). SEL implementations integrated with lessons should include proactive activities and an environment that induced an exciting and meaningful experience that could encourage engagement and interactions.

The result of this study and several previous studies showed that SEL could positively impact children's well-being, socially and emotionally. This result tallies with a study by Hamzah and Abdullah (2020) that reported on improved social and emotional competencies among children through the implementation of social and emotional learning, and it was highlighted that the students were provided with the opportunities to collaborate and engage through social and emotional learning approaches. However, structured SEL implementations that were well planned with clear objectives and according to recommendations from previous studies were needed to ensure its effectiveness.

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