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KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS ABOUT EMOTIONAL REGULATION TEACHING METHOD AMONG SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of the emotional regulation teaching method among special education teachers is one of the contributing factors to increasing emotional regulation among students with special needs. Therefore, this article aims to identify and discuss the knowledge level, sources' level and awareness level of emotional regulation teaching methods among special education teachers in Malaysia. A descriptive quantitative study involving 35 respondents selected through the purposeful sampling technique was conducted. The findings disclosed that Malaysian special education needs (SEN) teachers possess a moderate understanding of emotional regulation concepts in general, while their grasp of emotional regulation as outlined in the special education curriculum is notably strong. However, it suggests that their knowledge seems confined to the curriculum guidelines, indicating a limited awareness of emotional regulation beyond these parameters. These findings shed light on the state of knowledge and awareness regarding emotional regulation teaching methods among special education teachers in Malaysia.

Keywords: Emotional Regulation Method, Level of Knowledge, Level of Awareness, Special Education Teacher.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional regulation is fundamental to learning. Emotional regulation is a master aptitude and guarantee of intellectual intelligence (Goleman, 1998). Emotional regulation is an ability to assess, cope, manage and express emotions according to the situation to achieve emotional balance (Gross & Thompson, 2007). Goleman (1998) posited that when emotional regulation is affected due to brain conditions, the functions of intelligence are usually affected as well. Emotional regulation problems are common among students with special educational needs (SEN) due to neurological factors, growth and development factors, peer social rejection factors, parenting factors, and teacher-related factors (Ghafar & Jaya, 2006; Ladd & Troop-Gordon, 2003; Jamil, 2010; Sulaiman,

2013; Wahab, 2015; Daulay, 2017; Toran, 2017; Koneru, 2010; Nasir & Mansor, 2019; Amran, Majid & Ali, 2019; Jais, Low & Hamzah, 2021).

To support students with special educational needs (henceforth, SEN students) to acquire emotional regulation skills, it is important for special education teachers (SEN teachers) to have adequate knowledge and awareness about the emotional regulation teaching method. However, most SEN teachers do not attend training about strategies to facilitate emotional regulation in students. As SEN students are more at risk for emotional regulation problems, SEN teachers can be more vulnerable to stress and easily feel dissatisfied with their jobs as compared to mainstream teachers (Koenen et al. 2017). The teaching and learning process, including those related to classroom management and emotion regulation, is closely dependent on the competency of teachers (Idris, 2010).

According to Wahab (2015), the Malaysian education curriculum still does not have a specific subject that focuses on social and emotional education. This situation also same with curricular content of special education. Generally, special education program in Malaysia do not fully focus on supporting students to learn emotional regulation. A little sources of emotional regulation makes it difficult for SEN teachers to implement intervention methods that are appropriate to the emotional regulation of SEN students. However, it is important for SEN students to have SEN teacher guidance in learning emotional regulation. The emotion regulation intervention initiative for SEN students aligns with the goals of the Education Development Plan 2013-2025 to provide quality education to all students, including those with special educational needs. Meanwhile, Chen et al. (2018) found that many individuals with special needs have not yet shown good achievements in employment, post-secondary education, social participation, independent living, and participation in the community due to challenges associated with social, communication and adaptive skills. Therefore, this study aims to identify SEN teachers' knowledge, sources of knowledge and their awareness level for emotional regulation teaching methods for SEN students. Specifically, three research questions are asked in this study:

1. What is the knowledge level of SEN teachers for emotional regulation teaching method for SEN students?
2. What are the sources of emotional regulation knowledge teaching method relevant to SEN teachers?
3. What is the awareness level of SEN teachers for emotional regulation teaching method for SEN students?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study reported in this paper is part of a larger study that employs Design and Development Research (DDR) design method to develop an emotional regulation module. DDR design method consists of three main phases, which are 1) needs analysis, 2) design and development, and 3) implementation and evaluation (Davis, 2013; Koneru, 2010). This paper only focused on reporting the data from the needs analysis phase. In the need of analyse phase for the study, 35 SEN teachers in Malaysia participated in an online survey. The teachers were identified based on the purposive sampling technique. The criteria of sampling include (i) they must have experience teaching SEN students with emotional regulation problems, (ii) they are the subject teachers for teaching arts and living skills subjects, and (iii) they must have experience in teaching socio-emotional activities to SEN Student. The SEN teachers participated in this study were from various cities in Malaysia, including Kedah, Pulau Pinang, Perlis, Melaka, Selangor, Kelantan, Perak, Johor, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, and Pahang.

The questionnaire used in the online survey consisted of three parts. Part A was constructed with 14 items to measure the knowledge of teaching emotional regulation Part B was constructed with 13 items to measure the source of knowledge of emotional regulation, and part C was constructed with 9 items to measure the level of awareness about emotional regulation teaching methods. A 4-point likert scale was used to obtain the teachers' responses, namely 1 - totally disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - agree, and 4 - totally agree). Cohen et al. (2007) said, the 4 likert scale is one of the appropriate ways to ensure that respondents give their opinion on the instrument question, because the 4 likert scale does not have a midpoint point value. Analysis of data was conducted using Statistical Package for Social Science 27.0 (SPSS).

RESULTS AND FINDING

Teacher Demographic Profile

Thirty-five special education teachers were involve in this study. There are 34 female teachers and one male teacher. Seventeen teachers were serving in the urban schools and 18 in the rural areas. The majority of teachers (51.4%, $n = 18$), have 6 to 10 years of experience in teaching living skills subject in special education programs and 60 % of teachers ($n = 21$) had 5 years and below experience in teaching art subject. The majority of teachers ($n = 33$) reported that the autistic students that they taught faced emotional problems. Other categories of students that they taught who also faced emotional problems are 16 with attention deficit with hyperactivity disorder, 15 with down syndrome, 7 with mental disabilities, 8 with dyslexia, 10 with slow learners and 6 with cerebral palsy. The results from the descriptive analysis in Table 1 shows the knowledge mean scores on emotional regulation teaching methods among the sample of SEN teachers in this study ($n = 35$). Based on the findings of Table 1, the mean score of the knowledge level of SEN teachers on the teaching methods of emotional regulation is considerably high at 3.55 and the standard deviation of .561. Other items with high means are item 11 “I know the emotional management component in the special education curriculum aims for the student to be able to adjust the knowledge in community life”. (example: student able to practice sad emotion according to the situation)” ($M = 3.65, SD = .539$), item 13 “I know emotional management is one of a component of the special education curriculum”. ($M = 3.65, SD = .539$) and item 14 “I know the emotional management component in the special education curriculum aims to the student can build self-confidence”. ($M = 3.65, SD = .539$). The findings indicated that SEN teachers have a basic knowledge of emotional regulation according to the Special Education Curriculum.

Table 1: Knowledge Level of Emotional Regulation Teaching Methods

Questions	Total ly dis-agree	Dis-agree	Agree	Total ly Dis-agree	Mea n	S.D .
1.I know the meaning of emotional management contained in the regulation of emotions	0%	2.9%	65.7 %	31.4 %	3.28	.518
2. I understand the meaning of emotional management contained in the regulation of emotions	0%	2.9%	74.3 %	22.9 %	3.20	.472
3.I can determine between positive and negative emotions	0%	0%	37.1 %	62.9 %	3.62	.490
4.I know the effects of emotional regulation on student	0%	0%	37.1 %	62.9 %	3.62	.490
5.I know the importance of emotional regulation to student	0%	0%	45.7 %	54.3 %	3.54	.505
6.I know the goals of the emotional management teaching and learning process for the emotional regulation of student	0%	2.9%	62.9 %	34.3 %	3.34	.539

continued

7.I know the objective of the emotional management teaching and learning process for the emotional regulation of student	0%	5.7%	60%	34.3 %	3.29	.578
8.I know the examples of the emotional management teaching method for the emotional regulation of student	0%	8.6%	60%	31.4 %	3.22	.598
9.I know that the proper emotional management teaching method can reduce negative emotions.	0%	2.9%	37.1 %	60%	3.57	.557
10.I know the emotional management component in Special Education Curriculum aims to enable the student to practice positive emotions. (example: students are able to practice sad emotion according to the situation)	0%	2.9%	34.3 %	62.9 %	3.60	.553
11.I know the Emotional Management component in the special education curriculum aims for the student to be able to adjust their knowledge in community life. (example student able to practice sad emotion according to the situation)	0%	0%	34.3 %	65.7 %	3.65	.481
12.I know the Emotional management component in the special education curriculum aims for the student to be able to manage emotions. (example: student be able to practice method of controlling emotions which has been studied according to the situation)	0%	5.7%	34.3 %	60%	3.54	.610
13. I know emotional management is one of a component of the special education curriculum	0%	2.9%	28.6 %	68.6 %	3.65	.539
14. I know the emotional management component in the special education curriculum aims to the student can build self-confidence	0%	2.9%	28.6 %	68.6 %	3.65	.539
OVERALL MEAN SCORE					3.55	

Meanwhile, items that showed moderate means are items 1 “I know the meaning of emotional management contained in the regulation of emotions” ($M = 3.28, SD = .518$), item 2 “I understand the meaning of emotional management contained in the regulation of emotions” ($M = 3.20, SD = .472$), item 7 “I know the objective of the emotional management teaching and learning process for the emotional regulation of student” ($M = 3.29, SD = .578$) and item 8 “I know the examples of the emotional management teaching method for the emotional regulation of student” ($M = 3.22, SD = .598$). The findings indicated that teachers need more understanding about the specific teaching methods for emotion regulation.

Next, Table 2 shows source's of emotional regulation teaching methods among the sample of SEN teachers in this study ($n = 35$). The item that showed the highest mean was item 27 "I have discussed with another teacher about methods of teaching student emotional regulation skills" ($M = 3.08, SD = .658$). The finding indicated that teacher's initiative to have a discussion with other teachers regarding methods of teaching emotional regulation was a primary source of them learning about managing emotional problems in students. Other than that, the teachers also learnt ways to manage emotional problems via non-electronic media such as newspapers, articles, books and journal (25.7%) and from listening to their friends' experience sharing (22.9%).

On the other hand, items that showed the lowest means were items 21 "I have attended a related training workshop about the emotion regulation method face to face" ($M = 2.14, SD = .845$), item 22 "I have attended a related training online workshop about emotion regulation methods through Webex, zoom and so on" ($M = 2.11, SD = .832$), item 23 "I have attended a related training workshop about emotion regulation methods organized by the District Education Office, State Education Department or Daily School Management Division" ($M = 2.11, SD = .832$), item 24 "I have attended a related training workshop about emotion regulation methods organized by the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) with its own financial initiative to improve pedagogical skills" ($M = 2.11, SD = .866$) and item 25 "I have attended a related training workshop about emotion regulation method organized by the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) outside of working hours to improve pedagogical skills" ($M = 2.11, SD = .866$). Together, the findings indicated that SEN teachers have attended rather few training workshops about emotion regulation methods and they need more exposure.

Table 2: Sources' Level Of Emotional Regulation Knowledge Teaching Method

Questions	Total ly dis-agree	Dis-agree	Agree	Total ly Dis-agree	Mea n	S.D .
15. I have seen the word emotion regulation in mass media	2.9%	17.1 %	62.9 %	17.1 %	2.94	.683
16. I have heard about emotion regulation in mass media	5.7%	11.4 %	62.9 %	20%	2.97	.746
17. I have read the issue related to emotion regulation in non-electronic media (example: newspapers, articles, books or journals)	2.9%	20%	51.4 %	25.7 %	3.00	.766
18. I have heard about emotion regulation from a friend's story	0%	22.9 %	54.3 %	22.9 %	3.00	.685
19. I have attended a discussion related to methods teaching of emotion regulation	11.4 %	45.7 %	31.4 %	11.4 %	2.42	.850
20. I have seen emotion regulation word in Special Education Curriculum and any document in school	2.9%	25.7 %	54.3 %	17.1 %	2.85	.733
21. I have attended a related training workshop about the emotion regulation method face to face.	22.9 %	45.7 %	25.7 %	5.7%	2.14	.845
22. I have attended a related training online workshop about emotion regulation methods through Webex, zoom and so on.	22.9 %	48.6 %	22.9 %	5.7%	2.11	.832

continued

23. I have attended a related training workshop about emotion regulation methods organized by the District Education Office, State Education Department or Daily School Management Division (choose one)	22.9 %	48.6 %	22.9 %	5.7%	2.11	.832
24. I have attended a related training workshop about emotion regulation methods organized by the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) with its own financial initiative to improve pedagogical skills.	22.9 %	51.4 %	17.1 %	8.6%	2.11	.866
25. I have attended a related training workshop about emotion regulation methods organized by the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) outside of working hours to improve pedagogical skills.	22.9 %	51.4 %	17.1 %	8.6%	2.11	.866
26. I have discussed with the student's parents about methods of teaching students emotional regulation skills.	2.9%	20%	60%	17.1 %	2.91	.701
27. I have discussed with another teacher about methods of teaching students emotional regulation skills.	2.9%	8.6%	65.7 %	22.9 %	3.08	.658
OVERALL MEAN SCORE					2.60	

Table 3 shows the mean score of the awareness of emotional regulation teaching methods among the sample of SEN teachers in this study ($n = 35$). Based on the findings of Table 3, the mean score of the level of awareness of SEN teachers in special education integration programs on the benefits of emotional regulation is considerably high at 3.48 with a standard deviation of .408. The items with high means include Item 31 “*Emotional regulation teaching method increase teacher productivity when handling student*” ($M = 3.54, SD = .505$), Item 32 “*Emotional regulation teaching method increase teacher efficiency when handling student*” ($M = 3.51, SD = .507$), Item 33 “*Emotional regulation teaching method increase quality of teacher work when handling student*” ($M = 3.57, SD = .502$) and Item 34 “*Emotional regulation teaching method increase teacher job satisfaction when handling student*” ($M = 3.57, SD = .502$). These four items indicated teachers have an awareness of the benefits of emotional regulation. Meanwhile, items that showed low means are Item 36 “*Emotional regulation teaching method reduces teacher emotional disturbances such as depression, irritability, and so on when handling students*” ($M = 3.37, SD = .598$) and item 28 “*Emotional regulation teaching method increases student knowledge of managing emotion*” ($M = 3.40, SD = .497$).

Table 3: Analysis of The Mean Score of the Awareness Level

Questions	Totally dis-agree	Dis-agree	Agree	Totally Dis-agree	Mean	S.D.
28. Emotional regulation teaching method increases student knowledge of managing emotion	0%	0%	60%	40%	3.40	.497
29. Emotion regulation teaching method improve students' skill for managing emotion	0%	0%	54.3%	45.7%	3.45	.505

continued

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30. Emotional regulation teaching method reduce negative emotion among student.	0%	0%	51.4%	48.6%	3.48	.507
31. Emotional regulation teaching method increase teacher productivity when handling student.	0%	0%	45.7%	54.3%	3.54	.505
32. Emotional regulation teaching method increase teacher efficiency when handling student.	0%	0%	48.6%	51.4%	3.51	.507
33. Emotional regulation teaching method increase the quality of teacher work when handling student.	0%	0%	42.9%	57.1%	3.57	.502
34. Emotional regulation teaching method increase teacher job satisfaction when handling student.	0%	0%	42.9%	57.1%	3.57	.502
35. Emotional regulation teaching method reduce teacher work stress when handling student.	0%	2.9%	48.6%	48.6%	3.45	.560
36. Emotional regulation teaching method reduces teacher Emotional disturbances such as depression, irritability, and so on when handling students.	0%	5.7%	51.4%	42.9%	3.37	.598
OVERALL MEAN SCORE					3.48	

DISCUSSIONS

The results of this study revealed the Malaysian SEN teachers' knowledge of the meaning, objectives, and methods of emotional regulation, in general is moderate. Meanwhile, teachers' basic knowledge of emotional regulation according to the Special Education curriculum is high. Overall, teachers' knowledge is limited to information on emotional regulation contained in the Special Education Curriculum only. The finding aligns to previous research, which show that SEN teacher need a specific teaching module about regulation emotional teaching method for their reference (Jais et al. 2022). It is because, although SEN teacher have a lot of experience and knowledge about Special Education field but they still need the variety type of references about teaching method to teach SEN students with changeable and predictable behaviour and attitude when they attend the learning process in school (Amran, Majid & Ali, 2019; Kaur, 2021). The finding supported the idea that insufficient of pedagogical knowledge among SEN teachers will affects teachers planning to identify the needs of students in the classroom based on Allam & Martin (2021) studies of primary school SEN teachers in the Philippines. The previous research by Mathiyalagan and Toran (2023) regarding the level of knowledge of special education teachers in Malaysia regarding the socio-emotional management of autistic students is at a moderate level and this problem affecting teachers efficiency in planning activities in the classroom. According to Abdullah et al. (2021) if special education teachers do not have a various of knowledge when handling students with special needs, it will cause difficulties for teachers to achieve the objectives of the teaching and learning process. In conclusion, the organization of education in Malaysia must have the initiative to improve the level of knowledge of special education teachers from various way such as emotion regulation module for reference and a proper handbook for handling SEN student emotion problem.

Second findings for the level of knowledge resources of emotional regulation teaching methods show that the training workshop program attended by SEN teachers who teach in the Special Education Integration Program on emotional regulation teaching methods, in general, is still at a moderate level. Meanwhile, the questions number of 23, 24 and 25 which refer to the initiative of the District Education Office, the State Department of Education, the Malaysian Ministry of Education and SEN teacher initiative to use their own finances to attend training for emotional regulation teaching methods are at a low level. The finding aligns to previous research of Ruppap (2016) who reported that some SEN teachers do not have some effort to improve their knowledge in order to obtain new information and skills that are closely related to their careers. All teacher's should explore new knowledge to improve their current skills, which is they do not expert to teach students with different abilities and academic levels (Norul'Azmi et al. 2018). A previous study by Kuypers (2011) regarding the module development 'The zone of regulation' has introduced SEN teachers about of self-regulation and emotional management method of children which should be one of SEN teachers' references. Kuypers (2011) also organizing the online training related to 'The zone of regulation'. SEN students' need suitable learning process to reach their needs, performance, interests and SEN teachers should adapt the existing curriculum with pedagogical techniques that they have been mastered to attract SEN student to follow learning process. (Hamzah et al. 2019). Beside that, Malaysian Ministry Education, District Education Offices and State Education Departments should prepared the continuous in-service training to improve the professional development of SEN teachers. The finding supported the opinion about training workshop program, organize by school or Ministry of Education should focus the need of the latest educational developments in Malaysia to ensure that, teacher are equipped with useful information (Chien & Nor, 2020). Studies related to the development of teacher professionalism related to autistic students show a high training need to support the 'No Child Left Behind' amendment (Maddox & Marvin, 2013; NRC, 2001; Scheuermann et al. 2003). This opinion is supported by (Rotermund, DeRoche and Ottem, 2017) who states that the development of teacher professionalism such as pedagogy-related training in teaching autistic students can improve the knowledge, skills and competence of teachers to handle students with special needs.

Meanwhile, the research findings for the level of awareness among SEN teachers on emotional regulation teaching method is at the moderate level. In general, SEN teachers feel unprepared to teach SEN students who need the variety of teaching methods (Leblanc, 2019). However, SEN teachers believe if they have knowledge related to emotional regulation teaching method for SEN students, it can improve their competencies when handling SEN students who have emotional problems. This findings align with previous research, which reported that SEN student with emotional problem need a guidance from SEN teacher to teach them on how to regulate their emotion (Cai, 2018). In generally, SEN teacher need to improve their professionalism of career from the aspect of gaining new knowledge by attending teaching workshops to increase their level of readiness, confidence and self-efficacy (Aswaniza & Rosadah, 2018; Chao et al. 2017; Ruppap et al. 2016). The findings of a study by Qi & Nordin (2023) show that the level of SEN teachers teachers knowledge regarding the method of regulation emotion among SEN student is still at moderate level. Qi & Nordin (2023) insisted if SEN teachers have more awareness about emotional regulation teaching methods when handling SEN student with emotional problem, so that it can reduced SEN teacher time in class to calm students during the teaching and learning process.

CONCLUSIONS

The research finding of this study can be concluded that the development of modules for emotional regulation of students with special needs is a requirement for SEN teachers to improve their knowledge of teaching methods for emotional management. Therefore, the findings of closed questions show that the mean level of knowledge and awareness of SEN teachers on the teaching of emotional regulation is at a high level but the source level of knowledge on the methods of teaching emotional regulation is still at a moderate level. In fact, based on open-ended questions, the majority of the SEN teachers in this study indicated that they need courses and reference materials related to emotional regulation teaching methods. Therefore, it is very important to build resources for

teaching methods of emotional regulation in the form of modules that do not require high costs and are easily accessible by SEN teachers.

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