

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR'S PERCEPTION ON THEIR EFFICACY TO MANAGE CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS AND THE NEEDS OF A SCREENING TOOL: PILOT FINDINGS

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ABSTRACT

Behavior problems among young children in early childhood education centers are found to be at a growing rate from the literature. Behavioral problems if left untreated may lead to more severe outcomes for some children. Behavior problems pose by young children in the early childhood classroom interrupt with classroom instruction. Early Identification which directs to early intervention is an evident based method to treat children at-risk of behavioral issues. Early intervention prepares children at-risk by providing an effective positive behavior support that may reduce the option of special education referral. However problem behaviors in the early childhood classroom are remain under recognized or not widely addressed. Literature reports that, teachers due to their workload may delay the referral and when they are unable to handle the problem behaviors, removal will be the short-term solution. A pilot test was carried out on Genius Negara educators from Perak state. Targeted number of respondents for the pilot test was 30 but the response rates were 47 in total. To test the scale reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's Alpha value is calculated. Alpha value 0.88 reported, suggests that the instrument proposed is reliable. A T-Test is performed to prove the sample mean represent the population mean.

Keywords: early identification, developmental delays, behavior problems, screening, need analysis

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are always been responsible to ensure the delivery of quality programs in their practice. The new roles of the contemporary early childhood teachers are such as planning for what children will learn, guiding and teaching so that children learn, assessing what children learn, and arranging the classroom environment so that children learn (Morrison, 2014). Among all the key points of providing a successful early year's programs, behavior management is very crucial. Teacher's knowledge of each child helps them to plan appropriately challenging curriculum and to tailor instructions that responds to each child's strength and needs (Statement, 2005). Inability of teachers to handle the behavior issues in

the classroom often leads to distress situation. Behavior problems in the classroom often interferes the classroom learning and teaching sessions. It is very crucial for early year's teachers to know, and identify between the typical behavior and challenging behavior. Screening or early identification to detect developing behavior problems is as important as knowing the functions of the behavior. This research focuses on identifying teachers' perception to manage behavior problems. The study was conducted in Genius Negara in Peninsular Malaysia which was formally known as Permata Negara with the sample size derived from teachers teaching children age 4 years old and below.

However, in evaluating and promoting optimal child development and well-being, the domains of development and behavior must be considered together as they are not separate constructs but rather parts of the whole (Weitzman & Wegner, 2015). Behavior problems among children are a deviation from the accepted pattern of behavior on the part of the children when they are exposed to an inconsistent social and cultural environment (Reddy et al., 2016). A behavior is defined to be a problem if the behavior give rise to significant disturbance to the psychological well-being and the future life of the child and needs early intervention by professionals (Samarakkody et al., 2010). In the recent years, we are observing more children coming to school with behavior problems than ever before and teachers face the challenge of managing their behavior (Beazidou et al., 2013).

Behaviour Problems in Early Childhood

Behaviour Problems refers to any behaviour viewed as atypical, odd or abnormal (Rita & Allen, 2006) that interferes with a child's cognitive, social, or emotional development. It is found inappropriate because it is harmful to a child, his peers or adults around them (Kaiser & Rasminsky, 2009). Behaviour problems referred to as challenging behaviours is one of the core features of children at risk of developing special needs. Behaviour which is inappropriate to the situation, repetitive and not age-appropriate some early alarm for parents and teachers of young children. In 2014, The US Census Bureau estimated a population of approximately 1.8 billion of youth from 5 to 19 years around the world (States & Report, 2015). Similarly, there was a community study conducted to estimate the prevalence of children and adolescents with mental and emotional disorders from 27 countries and every world region. The meta-analysis study indicated a pooled estimation of 13.4% (241million) children and adolescents affected by any mental disorders. The most common group of mental disorders are anxiety disorders, affecting 117 million; disruptive behaviour disorder, affecting 113 million; ADHD, affecting 63 million; and depressive disorders, affecting 47 million (Polanczyk et al., 2015).

What does it mean to diagnose a child as having a behaviour problem? Many children in the early childhood classrooms are found to be aggressive, some are bullies, and many tell lies at least occasionally, but a child must have these problems to an exaggerated degree in order to be diagnosed with a behavioural problem. If the child fails to meet every one of the recognised diagnostic criteria for a particular disorder, their behaviour then falls within the full standard range (Donna & Clifford, 2003). However, what is considered disordered and what is typical behaviour among young children is still being a concern of professionals of several disciplines. Mostly teachers and parents of young children always in a dilemma to determine which is a behaviour problem and which is typical behaviour. To make oneself clear on this, there must be a clear cut criterion to determine to avoid assumptions.

Developmental norms frequently are used to decide whether a particular child behaviour is at risk or not (Gelfand & Drew, 2003, pg 11).

All children continue to use behaviour once in a while, when they are frustrated, angry or having a bad day as a coping mechanism. Some even use to express some confusing and challenging events like divorce, the arrival of new siblings, parents illness or job loss, or a family move. Children usually manage to cope with extra support and understanding.

However, some children have many severe and persistent problems, and they may come to rely on challenging behaviour as the best way to respond to a situation (Kaiser & Rasminsky, 2009).

According to Donna and Clifford 2003, there are three general criteria to identify a behaviour pattern as abnormal. First, the child's actions or emotions must be painful or objectionable to himself and others. The behaviour causes distress of some type to the child or others. Second, the behaviour interferes with the child's everyday functioning at school, at home, or in another context. The third consideration is behaviour's cultural or social appropriateness. If a behaviour does not represent an understandable form of defiance, then it is considered to be socially and culturally inappropriate. Behaviour problems are also characterised as externalising or internalising behaviours. Externalising includes tantrum, physical or verbal aggression, and self-injury; internalising behaviours are reflective of internal states such as withdrawal and non-compliance, obsession and anxiety (Green et al., 2016). In this research externalising behaviors among children in the ECE centres are the focus of the study because those are the symptoms clearly seen from children's responses to a situation., which is expressed as symptomatic behaviours.

Educators Perceptions of Managing Children's Behaviour Problems in Early Childhood Education Centres

Behaviour problems related to emotional disturbance pose by young children in the early childhood programs classroom is to be found very disruptive during the teaching and learning sessions. Some behaviours are so defiant that early childhood educators are failing to predict the cause of it. Behaviour problems are also associated with social and emotional disturbance. Some of the social and emotional disturbance defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1977, relevant to behaviour problems which persist over a long time of period that affects a students' educational performance are as following (Lerner et al., 2003).

- a. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teacher;
- b. Inappropriate types of behaviour or feelings under normal circumstances;
- c. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; and
- d. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

Emotional and behaviour disorders, although not all are coined and gets aggravated by the child's social environment. Environmental circumstances may unintentionally develop conditions that cause and support undesirable and inappropriate behaviours. Whereas, some undoubtedly due to some sensory issues experienced by the child at the point the behaviour

arises. A rapid developmental change occurring in young children from toddlers to childhood years causes the potential for children to develop behaviour problems that interrupt with the classroom instructions. While some behaviour problems are observed to fade as the child grows, there is a large number of children who may suffer from persistent behaviour conditions, and it is under-recognised (Poulou, 2015). The cause of children exhibit behaviour problems in the classroom remains as a query as there is no one definite under relying on reasons for the occur.

Educators are the main person directly connected to the children in the classroom environment. Commonly, educators make a referral for special education services when children continue to have issues like learning problems, defiant, inappropriate physical behaviours, aggressive behaviours and attention and focus related behaviours (Briesch et al., 2013). The presence of children or students with behavioural problems is found to affect the behaviour of teachers negatively in the classroom (Erbas & Dunlap, 2010). In the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), implementation of differentiated instructions to meet a variety of educational needs of children was strengthened for the development of inclusive education. On this note, educators are expected to adapt and make educational provision inclusive instead of referring students with special needs to a special school. By thoroughly engaging students with behavioural problems in the academic task, the disruptive behaviours in the classroom are expected to reduce. To have a meaningful classroom engagement educators can employ several techniques like placing students with behavioural problems near to the teacher, preparing academic task relevant to students ability and acknowledge students desired behaviours (Yildiz, 2015). However, many mainstream teachers are struggling to meet the range of student's educational needs, which they find very problematic (Bruggink et al., 2013). Given that research indicates that managing classroom behaviour is their most challenging role of teachers alongside with lack of formal training and ongoing support (Johansen et al., 2011).

According to (Yumus & Bayhan, 2016), early childhood educators have insufficient knowledge and skills for the understanding of behaviour problems, developing daily task suitable for the children's interest and needs. Educator's age, level of education and teaching experience and teachers' self-efficacy are the contributing factors for teachers' inability handling children who are at risk of behaviour problems. His findings also indicated that teachers are unable to employ the proper strategy to deal with behaviour problems. A final point from Yumus & Bayhan also indicates that inexperience in understanding children's behaviour problems prevents teachers from structuring appropriate intervention plans to combat the behavioural issues faced in the classroom. The lack of intervention plans will not only fail to solve the behaviour problem but also increase the tendency for more behaviour issues to emerge. There is a lack of research on preschool educators' role and competencies or self-efficacy coping with these difficulties and mainly the emotional ones, which are often under-recognised (Poulou, 2015). Similar findings were found in a study conducted by (Nornadia Mohamad Razali et al., 2013) on the obstacles of implementing inclusion in Malaysian preschool. The study indicated that educators are not prepared to include children with a disability like autism in the class because they do not understand the characteristics of children with autism. General educators have reported that they have low confidence or inexperience to select the right method of investigation on why children pose inappropriate behaviours in the classroom (Kim et al., 2009). When ECE educators receive sufficient coaching on effective behavioural management practices, young children who are engaged in behavioural issues improve in their social and emotional skills. Educators require an

understanding of children's behaviour problems, but above all, a constructive suggestion for everyday practice is vital (Bruggink et al., 2014).

Besides this, there are also several findings reported on educators attitudes towards managing behavioural problems is influenced by the support system available in the school environment. A research study indicates that centre level support or school level support should be given individually to educators who are struggling with challenging classroom (Zinsser & Curby, 2014). Lack of support from the school or centre is being one of the contributing factors of teacher burnout due to job-related stress (Guhao, 2016). A study by (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2014) has reported that early childhood educators are experiencing a high level of stress due to poor work conditions, workplace relationships, intrapersonal factors and children's challenging behaviours. Despite this, educators who are supporting children with behaviour problems in the classroom is not supported by their working environment and efforts needed to increase high-quality early childhood workforce (Zinsser et al., 2016). In the same perspective (Miller et al., 2017) pointed out that the more support the teacher reported receiving from the school environment, the fewer possibilities of children being rejected from preschool programs. Conclusively educators with high tolerance level, sufficient training, professional development courses, availability of support from the school environment ensure children with behavioural problems are accepted in the general education programs. Educators are consistently motivated to find a solution to accommodate the learning needs of these children when educators themselves perceive sufficient support.

Educators Efficacy to Manage Children's Behaviour Problems

Self-efficacy is a construct from the social cognitive theory posited by Albert Bandura. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's beliefs (confident) about his or her capabilities to execute a specific task within a given context (Stajkovic, 2002). The strength of people's convictions in their own effectiveness is likely to affect whether they will even try to cope with given situations (Bandura, 1977). In applying acquired skills having strong self-efficaciousness intensifies and sustains the effort needed for optimal performance, which is difficult to achieve if one is plagued by self-doubts (Bandura, 1982). Thereupon, to perceive a high self-efficacy towards problem behavior teachers' must have consistent trainings, sufficient practice on the perceived and newly learnt skills and guided supervision to increase their competencies in work situations. People must experience sufficient success using what they have learned to believe in themselves and in the value of the new ways (Bandura, 1988).

In this study the Genius Negara early childhood program teachers' sense of self-efficacy to problem behavior is the research concern. Teachers are directly responsible for providing intervention when children exhibit problem behaviors in the classroom. As for teachers to provide a successful intervention, it is depending on their skills and the prior knowledge acquired in the subject. Part of this skills and prior knowledge is what builds teachers' sense self-efficacy or the increase in teachers' perception of their ability to manage problem behaviors in their respective classroom. A study conducted to examine the role of teacher efficacy in strengthening classroom support found that even experienced teacher's needs ongoing training and awareness of resources available to manage problem behaviors in their classroom (Gebbie et al., 2012). It is found that there are several professional variables identified influencing preschool teachers' sense of self efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Those professional variables related to teacher's sense of self-efficacy are student engagement, teaching strategies and classroom management (Toran, 2017). Teachers who

managed a large number of children with problem behaviors and did not report any feelings of stress in response to child behavior problems may have felt less motivation, pressure, or connection to the goal of maintaining a high-quality classroom (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2014). To maintain a high quality classroom environment, teachers must build their sense of self-efficacy and believe that they are able to manage children's problem behavior. While teachers are supporting the emotional well-being of the children in the classroom, a need to assess the kinds of support teachers perceive from their work-place climate is crucial. Efforts to improve teacher's workplace climates would in return contribute to lower rates of turnover and teacher burnout and increased job satisfaction and teaching quality (Zinsser et al., 2016).

Teachers' sense of self-efficacy towards children's problem behavior in the early childhood programs in Malaysia is a primary concern to be addressed in this research. Teachers' sense of self-efficacy is measured in the past studies across various educational construct from preschools to tertiary education including pre-service teachers in Malaysia. There are many empirical studies conducted on teacher's sense of self-efficacy focusing pedagogical practices but specifically less in problem behavior among young children in the early childhood programs. Teachers' teaching efficacy is the most shared construct, research studies like to explore. Teaching efficacy upon 122 trainee teachers of University Of Science Malaysia was measured in a study. The research found that, the trainee teachers perceive high level of self-efficacy in classroom management, teaching strategies and student engagement. Whereas, low self-efficacy was reported when facing students with problem behaviors (Ahmad Zamri Khairani, 2017). A study conducted examining teachers perception of including children with autism in preschool, a component of the study findings reviewed on teachers' obstacles and challenges for an inclusive classroom. In the study, teachers stated that, they were not provided with proper guidance and there was no training given to teachers involved in the inclusive classroom. Teachers expressed that, cooperation and support from several parties especially administrators, teachers colleagues and parents are also much needed (Nornadia Mohamad Razali et al., 2013). Specific to problem behavior, there was a study conducted on 60 special education teachers under the division of special education Malaysia. The purpose of the research was to range the level of special education teachers' knowledge towards behavior management in the special education classroom. Findings reported, teachers in special education programs have high level of knowledge and are able to manage students problem behavior (Noor Aini Ahmad & Norhafizah Abu Hanifah, 2015). Similarly, a very pioneer study conducted on teachers perception on inclusive education in Malaysia, indicates that inclusive classroom could be successfully implemented if the level of teacher's competency is increased. Opportunities to attend courses, pedagogical adjustment and collaboration with the organization are found to be some factors contributing to teachers' high self-efficacy (Manisah Mohd Ali et al., 2006). Besides that, emotional competency including self-awareness, social awareness, self-management and relationship management groups play an important role in improving self-efficacy among preschool teachers (Yahya Don et al., 2014). Malaysian teachers are also found unprepared for inclusive education, and that addressing teacher's attitude towards inclusion, building up teachers confidence (efficacy) and skills and challenging negative of children at-risk and their families should be government priorities for further professional development (Bailey et al., 2015). While so many studies conducted focusing on inclusive education, less studies conducted specifically on teachers' perception on their self-efficacy to problem behavior in the preschool environment. Most inclusion studies were conducted in the primary and secondary mainstream schools, unfortunately less in early childhood programs. Therefore the need to study problem behavior and teacher's self-efficacy at the preschool level is needed for a

successful inclusion classroom in accordance to Malaysian's Education Blueprint (2013-2025).

The Need for Screening

Screening generally refers to a brief procedure that attempts to differentiate those who might have signs of minor problems which might grow worse through time or those who have a high risk of developing the problems later. The children identified are provided services that are intended to avoid or diminish the problem of concern. Screening in schools can be used to identify a multitude of possible problem areas, including academic problems, disabilities or health concerns (Hoff et al., 2015). American Academy of Paediatrics suggest that developmental screening should be carry out at 9, 18, 24 or 30 months. Effective screening means, being able to pick up cases that are not immediately obvious and identify incipient problems (those that are just beginning) with a high degree of accuracy. The reason for screening young children with emotional or behavioural disorders is based on the assumption that early identification and treatment are more effective, efficient, and humane than letting problems fester (Kauffman, 2009; page 137).

In the current practice, screening young children for developmental delays is done in primary care settings. A primary objective when administering an instrument is to collect reliable and valid information to use in decision making. Many times the measures used to collect targeted information may be lengthy, using long, detailed instruments to provide a wealth of information about numerous domains of functioning (DiStefano & Kamphaus, 2007). Medical practitioners use several clinical assessment instruments to gain first-hand information about the child's issues, and the proper diagnosis is given upon that. Educators and school team, based on their observation in the classroom, referral suggestion is given to the parents for clinical assessment. However, classroom educators or school team is not eligible to assume the child's diagnosis. In the case of a child attending early childhood programs, educator's prior information and knowledge on early identification is a crucial step for a referral. Many children are deprived of early intervention because most of these problems remain undiagnosed, and sometimes, they are of interest only when children are unable to adapt to school requirements and teachers complain about their behaviour (Balaj et al., 2011). Unlikely, to record the observational details, ECE educators or school team may not be able to use the clinical assessment instrument for screening purpose in the classroom setting. This is because ECE educators or school team is not trained to admin the clinical assessment instruments. Most of the clinical instruments are (a) excessive time required for administration, scoring and interpretation; (b) prohibitive costs; and (c) development with non-representative norming samples (Studts & Van Zyl, 2013).

Screening is important for educators because, most oppositional behaviours, often pose a challenge in the classroom and leave adverse effects on classroom functioning. Disruptive and defiant attitudes and actions can hinder class activities and make learning difficult for both the child with disruptive behaviours and other children in the classroom. The time teachers spend focusing on correcting disruptive and oppositional behaviours takes away from time that could be spent achieving academic goals (Purpura & Lonigan, 2009). It is a blessing indeed for educators to have a structured teacher-rated behaviour screening instrument, which is brief, easily scored, user-friendly and freely available. In conclusion, the purpose of screening for early identification in the classroom setting is not to lamely label children with or without disorders, but instead promoting early detection and intervention in such cases (Studts & Van Zyl, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate educators self-efficacy to manage behavior problems in their preschool classroom and the need to develop a screening tool to identify symptomatic behavioural problems.

Research Questions

The study attempted to investigate educators perception on their efficacy to manage behavior problems from different relevant areas and answer the following research questions:

- i) What are educators perceptions on their efficacy to manage children's behavior problems in the classroom?
- ii) What are educators perceptions on the techniques used for behavior management?
- iii) What are educators perceptions on the availability of support for behavior management in the school system?
- iv) What are educators perceptions on the needs of screening tool?

METHODOLOGY

Participants of Pilot Test

Permata Early Childhood Educators from the state of Perak of both genders participated in this pilot test to report their perceptions on behavior management and the needs of a screening tool. There are total numbers of 54 Permata educators in Perak state. As for the pilot test a minimum number of 30 participants needed, however the response rate was 47.

Instrument of the Study

Instrument designed for this phase is a set of need analysis survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire; consist 5 sections with 50 items: Section A: Educators Details; Section B: Managing Classroom Behavior; Section C: Specific Techniques Used for Behavioral Problems; Section D: Availability of Support for Behavior Problems and Section E: Needs of Screening Tool. The survey questionnaire reached the participants through online as well as google mails. The aim of this survey questionnaire is to understand from educators, the need to design a screening tool to identity symptomatic behaviors among young children in early childhood educations classes. The items for this questionnaire is a combination of three existing and validated survey questionnaire that is Teacher's Efficacy Scale by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), Teacher Classroom Management Strategies Questionnaire by The Incredible Years, Inc., USA and Working with Challenging Behavior Preschool Survey (WCBPS) by Shauna Miller (2014). The questions formed used 5 point Likert scale. Data was analyzed using SPSS and yielded the results discussed in the next section of the paper.

RESULTS

Results are presented below under 4 headings: 1. Educators perceptions in managing children's behavior problems in the classroom (in response to sub **RQ I**), 2. Educators perceptions on the techniques used for behavior management (In response to **RQII**) 3. Educators perceptions on the availability of support for behavior management in the school system (In response to **RQ III**) and finally 4. Educators perception on the needs of screening tool (In response to **RQ IV**).

Educators Perceptions in Managing Children's Behavior Problems

In general from literature and problem statements it is found that early childhood educators have insufficient knowledge and skills in understanding of behavior problems, developing daily task suitable for the children's interest and needs (Yumus & Bayhan, 2016). As for this section, mean value more than or equals to three represents positive perceptions towards behavior management and techniques used. Based on the sample mean of section B, 3.67 which assumes that Permata educators have positive perception on managing classroom behaviours. The hypothesis test is performed to prove the sample mean represents the population mean. A t-test is performed with;

Null Hypothesis, $H_0: \mu \leq 3$: Educators have negative perceptions towards behaviour management.

Alternative Hypothesis, $H_1: \mu > 3$: Educators have positive perceptions towards behaviour management.

A right tail t-test performed with Degree of freedom (df) 45, Critical Value (CV) = 1.68, with confidence interval 95%, $\alpha = 0.05$. The t score of the sample data obtained from SPSS is 10.09. Since t score is greater than CV, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This proves that Permata educators have positive perceptions towards managing children's behavioural problems in the classroom.

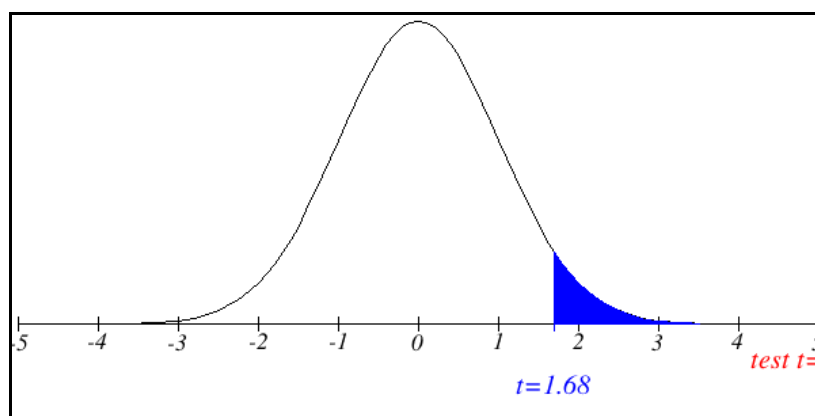


Figure 1. Educators Perceptions in Managing Children's Behavior Problem

Educators Perceptions on the Techniques used for Behavior Management

Based on sample mean of this section, 3.52 which assume the Permata educators are using behavioural techniques to manage children's behavior problems in the classroom. The hypothesis test is performed to prove the sample mean represents the population mean. A t-test is performed with;

Null Hypothesis, $H_0: \mu \leq 3$: Educators do not have sufficient knowledge on behaviour management techniques.

Alternative Hypothesis, $H_1: \mu > 3$: Educators have sufficient knowledge on behaviour management techniques.

A right tailed t-test performed with Degree of freedom (df) 45, CV = 1.68, with confidence interval 95%, $\alpha = 0.05$. The t score of the sample data obtained from SPSS is 10.024. Since t score is greater than CV, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This proves that Permata educators are able to manage children's behavior problems with suitable techniques.

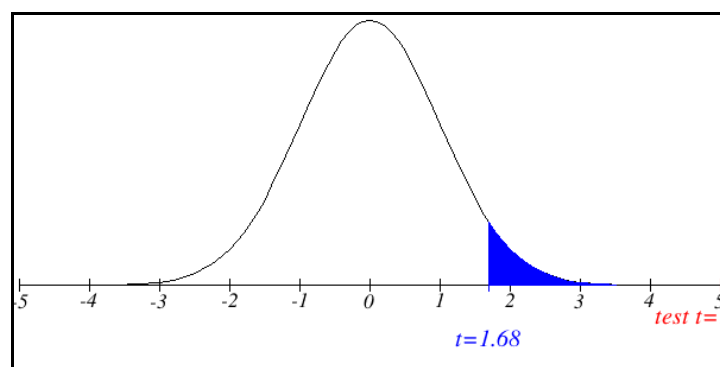


Figure 2. Educators Perceptions on Techniques used for Behavior Management

Educators Perceptions on the Availability of Support for Behavior Management in the School System

Literature claims ECE educators often find it challenging on how to address behavior problems among children in the classroom. The reason being, educators are found having lack of support from the school system for behavioral issues (Miller, 2014). In this section mean value greater than three assumes the educators are having enough support from the school system for behavioral issues. Based on the sample mean of section D 2.99 indicates lack of support available in the school system for behavioral issues. To decide if the sample mean truly represents the population, a t-test is performed with;

Null Hypothesis, $H_0: \mu \leq 3$: Lack of support availability in the school system.

Alternative Hypothesis, $H_1: \mu > 3$: Availability of support in the school system.

A left tailed t-test performed with parameters; $df = 45$, $CV = -1.68$, Confidence interval 95%, $\alpha = 0.05$. One sample t-test analysis of sample data gives a t score of -0.052 . Since t score is greater than CV, the null hypothesis is accepted which means educators are not getting sufficient support from the school system for behavioral issues posed by children in the classroom.

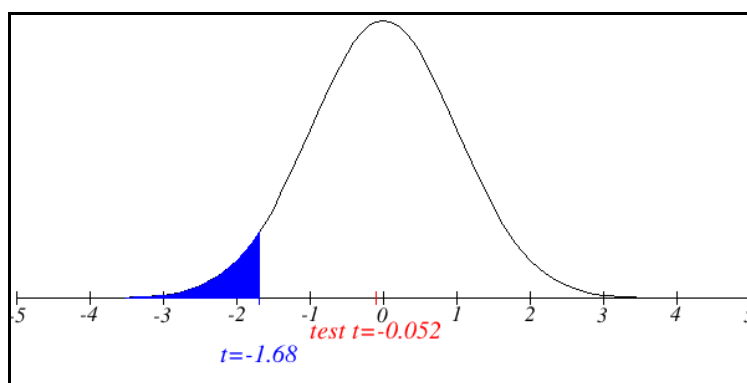


Figure 3. Educators Perceptions on the Availability of Support

Educators Perception on the Needs of Screening Tool

There are a number assessment tools introduced by the Ministry of Education (MOE) for the purpose of assessment and evaluation (Curriculum Development Division, MOE), but none for early identification of behavior symptoms especially in the nursery schools. In this section mean value greater than or equal to 4 indicates that educators needs a screening tool to identify symptomatic behaviors among children. Based on the sample mean of section E 4.34 indicates educators strongly support to have a screening tool to identify behavior symptoms. To decide if the sample mean truly represents the population, a t-test is performed with;

Null Hypothesis, $H_0: \mu \leq 4$: Educators doesn't need a screening tool to identify symptomatic behaviors.

Alternative Hypothesis, $H_1: \mu > 4$: Educators needs a screening tool to identify symptomatic behaviors.

A right tailed t-test is performed with parameters, $df = 45$, $CV = 1.68$, Confidence interval 95% $\alpha = 0.05$. One sample t-test analysis of sample data gives a t score of 4.12. Since t score is greater than CV, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This means the research proves that educators' support the needs to have a screening tool in the school system to help them identify symptomatic behaviors among young children.

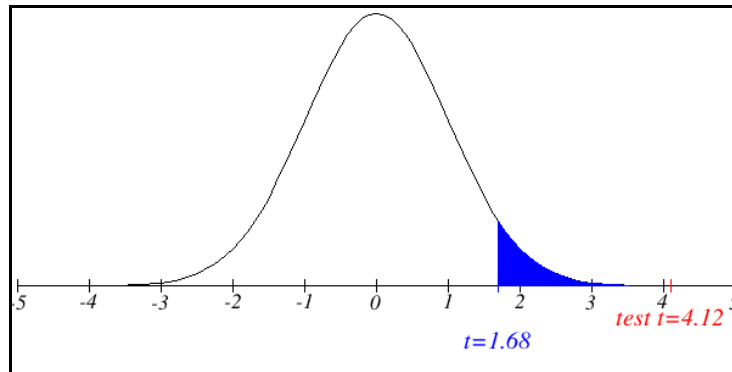


Figure 4. Educators Perceptions on the Needs of Screening Tool

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article have discussed about early childhood educators perception on their efficacy to manage children's behaviour problems and the need to develop a screening tool to identify children's behaviour to be symptomatic of developmental delays. Based on the pilot test result, early childhood educators in Permata centers have positive perceptions towards managing behavior problems of children in the classroom. By working with children over the years they have actually learnt behavioral techniques which are being used for better classroom control. However, educators feels availability of supports like access to experts for behavior issues, behavior consultants, behavior modification plans, behavior trainings and screening tools in the school system they will be able to handle children more efficiently. Therefore from the data collected, educators have stated positive opinion that they need support like screening tool to identify and understand children's behavior to be typical or symptomatic to a disorder. Hence the findings from the need analysis will shed a strong reason to develop the Symptomatic Behavior Difficulties Screening Tool (SymBest). Screening practice available is most likely for children in preschools and primary schools for Literacy and Numeracy. There is a need to identify children at-risk of developmental delays as early as 3 to 4 years old or earlier.

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