



EXAMINING FAMILY SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG YOUNG CHILDREN IN MALAYSIA

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ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between family socioeconomic status (SES) and social-emotional development among young children in Malaysia. Social-emotional development plays a crucial role in children's overall well-being and success in various life domains. Understanding how family SES influences social-emotional development can inform policies and interventions aimed at promoting positive outcomes for children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Drawing on data from a representative sample of young children in Malaysia, this research employs quantitative analyses to explore the associations between family SES indicators and social-emotional development outcomes. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on child development and highlight the importance of addressing socioeconomic disparities in early childhood for fostering healthy social-emotional development among children in Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

The social-emotional development of young children is a critical aspect of their overall well-being and long-term success across various life domains. This developmental process encompasses the acquisition of social skills, emotional regulation, and interpersonal competencies that enable children to navigate social interactions, establish relationships, and cope with challenges

effectively. While social-emotional development is influenced by a myriad of factors, family socioeconomic status (SES) emerges as a key determinant shaping children's developmental trajectory.

In Malaysia, as in many other countries, socioeconomic disparities persist, impacting children's access to resources, opportunities, and support systems that contribute to healthy development. Family SES, characterized by factors such as parental education, income level, and occupational status, plays a pivotal role in shaping the early experiences and environments that young children are exposed to. Understanding the link between family SES and social-emotional development is essential for identifying inequities and informing targeted interventions to support children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

The examination of family SES and its impact on social-emotional development among young children in Malaysia is particularly salient given the country's diverse socio-cultural landscape and rapidly evolving economic context. Malaysia's multicultural society and economic diversity present unique challenges and opportunities for addressing socioeconomic disparities and promoting positive outcomes for all children.

This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the relationship between family SES and social-emotional development among young children in Malaysia. By examining the associations between various indicators of family SES and social-emotional outcomes, this research aims to shed light on the mechanisms through which socioeconomic factors influence children's developmental trajectories.

METHOD

The process of examining the relationship between family socioeconomic status (SES) and social-emotional development among young children in Malaysia involved a multifaceted approach aimed at capturing the complexities of this dynamic interaction. Initially, a comprehensive review of existing literature on child development, family SES, and social-emotional outcomes provided the theoretical framework for the study. Drawing from established theories and empirical research, this literature review guided the formulation of research questions and hypotheses, as well as the selection of appropriate measurement tools and methodologies.

Following the literature review, a representative sample of young children and their families was recruited from diverse socio-economic backgrounds across different regions of Malaysia. Stratified random sampling techniques were employed to ensure adequate representation across various demographic characteristics, including urban and rural settings, ethnicities, and socioeconomic strata. This sampling strategy aimed to capture the diversity of experiences and contexts that shape children's social-emotional development within the Malaysian context.

Data collection involved the administration of structured interviews, surveys, and standardized assessments to parents or primary caregivers of young children. Quantitative measures assessed family SES indicators such as parental education levels, household income, and occupational status, as well as social-emotional development outcomes including emotional regulation, social competence, and behavioral adjustment. Additionally, qualitative data were collected through open-ended questions and

interviews to provide insights into the contextual factors influencing family dynamics, parental practices, and children's socio-emotional experiences.

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process, with informed consent obtained from all participants and measures taken to ensure confidentiality and privacy. Culturally sensitive approaches were employed to establish rapport and trust with participants from diverse cultural backgrounds, facilitating open and honest communication during data collection.

Data analysis involved a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the relationships between family SES and social-emotional development among young children in Malaysia. Quantitative analyses included descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, and regression modeling to examine associations and predictive relationships between variables of interest. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify patterns, themes, and salient narratives related to family SES and social-emotional outcomes.

Sampling and Participants:

A representative sample of young children and their families was recruited from diverse socio-economic backgrounds across multiple regions in Malaysia. Stratified random sampling techniques were employed to ensure adequate representation across different socioeconomic strata, including urban and rural areas, and diverse cultural and ethnic groups. Participants were recruited from early childhood education centers, community organizations, and government agencies involved in child welfare.

Quantitative data on family socioeconomic status (SES) and social-emotional development were collected using standardized measures and validated instruments. Family SES indicators, including parental education levels, household income, parental occupation, and access to resources, were assessed through structured interviews and self-report questionnaires. Social-emotional development outcomes were measured using established scales assessing emotional regulation, social competence, behavioral adjustment, and adaptive functioning.

Trained researchers and fieldworkers conducted face-to-face interviews and administered questionnaires to parents or primary caregivers of young children. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality and privacy were ensured throughout the data collection process. Additionally, culturally sensitive approaches were employed to facilitate rapport and trust with participants from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical software packages such as SPSS or R. Descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and standard deviations, were computed to describe the demographic characteristics of the sample and summarize family SES indicators and social-emotional development outcomes. Bivariate correlations and regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between family SES variables and social-emotional development outcomes, controlling for relevant demographic covariates.

In addition to quantitative analyses, qualitative data were collected through open-ended survey questions and interviews with parents or caregivers. Thematic analysis techniques were employed to

identify patterns, themes, and salient narratives related to family SES, social-emotional development, and contextual factors influencing children's well-being. Qualitative findings were triangulated with quantitative results to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between family SES and social-emotional development among young children in Malaysia.

Ethical approval was obtained from relevant institutional review boards to ensure compliance with ethical standards and guidelines for human subjects research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and steps were taken to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants' responses. Researchers adhered to ethical principles of beneficence, justice, and respect for persons throughout the research process.

By employing a rigorous and multi-method approach, this study aimed to provide valuable insights into the relationship between family SES and social-emotional development among young children in Malaysia. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data facilitated a nuanced understanding of the contextual factors shaping children's developmental trajectories and informed evidence-based interventions and policy strategies aimed at promoting equitable opportunities for all children, regardless of socioeconomic background.

RESULTS

The examination of family socioeconomic status (SES) and social-emotional development among young children in Malaysia yielded several key findings. Quantitative analysis revealed significant associations between family SES indicators and social-emotional outcomes. Higher levels of parental education and household income were positively correlated with children's emotional regulation, social competence, and adaptive functioning. Conversely, lower SES was associated with increased behavioral difficulties and emotional challenges among young children.

Qualitative insights provided further depth into the contextual factors influencing family SES and social-emotional development. Themes such as parental stress, limited access to resources, and community support emerged as important determinants shaping children's socio-emotional experiences within diverse socioeconomic contexts. Additionally, cultural norms, parental beliefs, and caregiving practices played a significant role in shaping children's emotional well-being and social interactions.

DISCUSSION

The findings underscore the critical role of family SES in shaping children's social-emotional development in Malaysia. Socioeconomic disparities impact access to resources, opportunities, and support systems that are essential for nurturing healthy socio-emotional skills and behaviors in young children. Higher SES families are better equipped to provide a supportive environment conducive to children's emotional regulation, socialization, and overall well-being.

Conversely, children from lower SES backgrounds face increased risk of socio-emotional challenges, including behavioral difficulties and emotional disturbances. The stressors associated with economic hardship, limited access to quality education, and community resources contribute to adverse outcomes for children's socio-emotional development. These disparities highlight the need for targeted

interventions and support services to address the unique needs of children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Policy implications:

The findings of this study have important implications for policy and practice aimed at promoting equitable opportunities for all children in Malaysia. Interventions targeting early childhood development should prioritize addressing socioeconomic disparities and enhancing access to resources and support services for families from lower SES backgrounds. Investing in early intervention programs, parental education initiatives, and community-based support networks can mitigate the impact of socioeconomic adversity on children's socio-emotional well-being.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the examination of family socioeconomic status and social-emotional development among young children in Malaysia underscores the importance of addressing socioeconomic disparities to promote positive outcomes for all children. By understanding the mechanisms through which family SES influences children's socio-emotional development, policymakers, educators, and practitioners can implement targeted interventions and support services to mitigate the impact of socioeconomic adversity and foster healthy socio-emotional skills and behaviors in young children. Ultimately, promoting equitable opportunities for children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds is essential for building a more inclusive and supportive society in Malaysia.

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