

Correlation Between MRSM Teachers' Belief, Awareness And Practice Of Socio-Emotional Learning In Negeri Sembilan

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Abstract: Resuming teaching and learning in the classroom after the pandemic is a challenge for both teachers and students. One of the major challenges faced is the increased socio-emotional burden that persisted throughout the two years of Covid-19 impacting the world. Addressing this challenge requires an appropriate teaching and learning approach as an adjustment for teachers and students returning to school. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is one of the approaches that should be chosen as a practice in the classroom. This study was conducted to determine the level of belief, awareness, and practice of SEL among the teachers of MARA Junior College of Science (MRSM) throughout Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, to examine the relationship between these three constructs among teachers. The importance of this study lies in identifying the significant factors that influence teachers to adopt SEL and enhance social emotional care for both teachers and students.

Keywords: Social Emotional Learning; teachers SEL; teachers' belief; teachers' awareness; teachers' practice; Malaysia; secondary education.

1. Introduction

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) refers to the process of developing the skills and abilities needed to recognize and manage emotions, develop and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions [15]. Implementing SEL during the teaching of subjects like Science can help students develop social and emotional skills while improving their learning achievements, especially after the setbacks caused by the pandemic. Research has consistently shown that students who receive high-quality SEL instruction demonstrate higher levels of academic performance, socio-emotional skills, and mental health [4]. In addition to addressing students' learning needs, SEL also meets the socio-emotional support requirements of teachers who have been equally impacted by the pandemic. Studies have indicated that teachers' social welfare, classroom management, and communication skills improve when they have experience in teaching socio-emotional skills [5].

In Malaysia, a study by Hanisah Halim, Jusiah Idang, Guan Teik Ee, Murnizam Halik, and Sabariah Sharif [8] found that the majority of teachers not only consider SEL to be very important or important for students but also vital for their success. Incorporating SEL aligns with the goals of the national curriculum in Malaysia and equips students to face the challenges of the 4th Industrial Revolution [12], contributing to the development of first-class human capital in line with the National Education Philosophy that emphasizes love, respect, and moral values.

Despite the known benefits of SEL, there is limited research on the factors influencing the use and implementation of SEL practices in Malaysian schools. One such factor that may play a crucial role is teachers' belief. Teachers' belief refers to the attitudes and values held by teachers regarding

the importance of certain topics or practices [11]. Research has consistently shown that teachers' belief is a strong predictor of teachers' behavior and students' outcomes [11], [4]. Therefore, teachers who believe in the importance of SEL practices are more likely to engage in SEL and promote its skills in their classrooms.

Apart from belief, teachers' awareness of SEL practices may also influence their use and implementation. Awareness refers to the knowledge and understanding held by teachers about SEL practices and their benefits [4]. Teachers who are aware of SEL practices may be more inclined to adopt these practices and foster SEL skills among their students.

Given the potential significance of belief and awareness in the use and implementation of SEL practices, it is crucial to investigate the relationship between these variables to further understand their impact. This study aims to determine the level of belief, awareness, and practice of SEL among teachers at MARA Junior College of Science (MRSM) in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, and to examine the interplay between these constructs.

2. Literature Review

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is a concept that emphasizes the importance of developing students' social and emotional skills alongside their academic skills. This approach is grounded in the belief that a student's emotional well-being is as crucial as their cognitive development, and that social and emotional skills are essential for success not only in school but also in life. Celik and Erbay-Cetinkaya [2] argue that the SEL movement aims to promote learners' mental health, happiness, and academic achievements, making it an appropriate approach for resuming teaching and learning in the classroom after COVID-19.

According to the CASEL Model 2019, there are five core skills that teachers need to master about SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills [5]. Implementing these cores through SEL practices in the classroom can help students overcome the socio-emotional challenges faced after the pandemic.

However, findings from a study by Esen-Aygun and Sahin-Taskin [5] revealed that many teachers had never heard of SEL before, and those who were aware of the concept lacked sufficient information about it. Interestingly, despite the lack of awareness, teachers unknowingly engaged in activities that fostered their students' socio-emotional skills, indicating their attempts to address socio-emotional development challenges in their classes [5].

This phenomenon highlights the knowledge gap of factors influencing the use of SEL. A study by Walker and Martin [14] found that many teachers incorporated SEL practices in their classrooms without being explicitly aware of it or conducting impact assessments. These results suggest that teachers might practice SEL unknowingly, underlining the importance of studying the role of teachers' belief in SEL implementation.

Kagan [7] defines teachers' belief as implicit assumptions, often unconsciously held, about students, the classroom, and the academic material to be taught. These assumptions can influence teachers' attitudes and, consequently, their teaching practices. Thus, teachers' implicit beliefs, which might not include awareness of SEL knowledge, can determine the learning materials chosen and the values practiced during teaching, aligning with the concept of SEL according to CASEL 2013[5].

Another important aspect is teachers' knowledge about SEL. Limited knowledge in this area has been found to result in a lack of socio-emotional care for students [5]. Mohammad and Mohamed [10] argue that while SEL-based learning has been applied, teachers need guidance on the SEL approach to effectively implement it in the classroom. Mohamed [9] further supports this by highlighting a lack of knowledge as a constraint in delivering SEL and love pedagogy. These findings indicate that teachers' knowledge about SEL is a crucial factor influencing socio-emotional care for students and the successful implementation of SEL programs in schools.

Building on the causal relationship between teachers' knowledge and socio-emotional care for students and the findings of the studies by Mohammad & Mohamed [10] and Mohamed [9], it is logical to predict that the level of teachers' SEL awareness can serve as an independent variable influencing teachers' SEL practices. Hence, it is essential to examine the level of teachers' SEL awareness to determine whether belief or awareness has a greater impact on teachers' SEL practices. This understanding is crucial for maximizing SEL practice in classrooms and ensuring the effective socio-emotional care of teachers and students.

3. Methodology

This study used quantitative technique. Quantitative technique has some kinds of research design that can be

employed in various studies such as experimental design, correlation design, and survey design [3]. For this research, survey design was used. According to Creswell [3], survey designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviours, or characteristics of the population. Creswell [3] continues, "Surveys help identify important beliefs and attitudes of individuals.". Since this research studies teachers' belief, awareness and practices, survey design was chosen to be employed.

3.1 Research Design

This study respondents were a sample selected by stratified sampling of teachers in service (n = 105) of three MRSM throughout the same state. The sample was selected to represent the population, S = 210 of the relevant characteristics, which means, MRSM teachers only. Questionnaires were administered to measure the level of belief in the importance of SEL practices, the level in awareness of knowledge in SEL practices and the level of teachers' involvement in SEL practices.

The SEL Belief factor was measured using a 4-point Likert type scale, with 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. The scale consists of 12 items, such as "Keeping students' own socio-emotional needs present naturally to me" and "I feel confident in my own ability to provide instruction on Socio-Emotional Learning". The Awareness factor about SEL knowledge was measured using the same 4-point Likert scale. The scale consists of 6 items such as "Through university preparation, I feel well prepared to identify and meet the socio-emotional needs of my students" and "There are many workshops and professional development opportunities that help meet the socio-emotional needs of students offered in my district". The SEL Practice is also measured using the same 4-point Likert scale and consists of 12 items, such as "Teachers talk to students with a focus on encouraging students" and "Teachers provide challenging work for students".

3.2 Instrument and Validity

The research tool is a questionnaire containing 30 items adapted from 3 valid and reliable instruments. The three selected instruments were developed by past researchers who measured the same variables in their previous studies with their respective coefficients $\alpha > .74$. All three instruments in the English version were translated to ensure that all items were fully understood by all respondents to determine their true scores related to the questions of each item, as well as the meaning conveyed in the original instrument.

A pilot study was conducted prior to actual study on a group of 30 respondents possessing the same qualifications as this research sample. This pilot study confirms the research constructs and increase the reliability of the measurement consistency.

3.3 Data Collection

Data was collected using an online questionnaire at <http://www.docs.google.com> to allow respondents to answer at appropriate time. Questionnaires were distributed every 2 weeks to different colleges to avoid bias. This also to ensure no significant difference between respondents who answered

early and those who answered later.

3.4 Data Analysis

Collected data is analyzed using inferential statistics to test hypotheses. Researchers use Pearson's correlation coefficient to examine the direction and strength of the relationship between the factor of belief in SEL practices and the factor of awareness of SEL practices. The results of the Pearson correlation analysis showed a significant positive relationship between belief in SEL practices, awareness of SEL practices, and involvement in SEL practices ($r = .55, p < .001$; $r = .60, p < .001$; $r = .49, p < .001$, respectively).

Next, a multiple regression analysis was also conducted to predict the value of the practice based on the values of both the factors of belief and awareness.

3.5 Limitations

Few limitations needed to be taken into account when interpreting the results of this study. First, the sample was limited to MRSM teachers in the same state only, which may limit the applicability of these results to other populations. Second, this study relies on self-reported measures, which may be susceptible to bias or recruitment. Third, this study does not examine the controlling or connecting factors that may influence the relationship between SEL belief, awareness and practice.

Despite these limitations, this study provides important insights into the relationship between SEL belief, awareness and practice among teachers in MRSM throughout Negeri Sembilan.

4. Results

The relationship between belief and practice and the relationship between awareness and practice are strong, $r = .63, r = .64$, while the relationship between belief and awareness is moderate, $r = .59$.

Correlations

		X1	Y1
X1	Pearson Correlation	1	.629**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	127	127
Y1	Pearson Correlation	.629**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	127	127

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 1: Correlation between Belief, X1 and Practice, Y1

Correlations

		X1	X2/Y1
X1	Pearson Correlation	1	.587**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	127	127
X2/Y1	Pearson Correlation	.587**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	127	127

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 2: Correlation between Belief, X1 and Awareness, X2

Correlations

		X2/Y1	Y1
X2/Y1	Pearson Correlation	1	.635**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	127	127
Y1	Pearson Correlation	.635**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	127	127

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 3: Correlation between Awareness, X2 and Practice, Y1

Since all correlations were positive, researchers decided to conduct a Multiple Regression Test. This test was conducted to predict the value of variable X1 based on the value of X2 and Y1, the value of variable X2 based on the value of variable X1 and Y1, then the value of Y1 based on the value of X1 and X2. This test is only suitable because this study has more than 1 predictor, X1 and X2. Found as a whole, the regression model is significant $F(2,124) = 62.87$ and $R^2 = 0.503$. The factors of belief ($b = 0.47, t = 5.01, p = 0.00$) and awareness ($b = 0.68, t = 5.09, p = 0.00$) are significant predictors of practice in this study.

The regression formula for this model is: Belief .47, Awareness .68 and Practice .61. This means 50.3% of the variation in teachers' SEL practices can be explained by teachers' SEL belief and teachers' SEL awareness.

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	X2, X1 ^b		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Y1

b. All requested variables entered.

Figure 4 (a): Multiple Regression Table

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.710 ^a	.503	.495	3.380

a. Predictors: (Constant), X2, X1

Figure 4 (b): Multiple Regression Table

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.604	1.907		-.317	.752
	X1	.470	.094	.391	5.005	.000
	X2	.682	.131	.405	5.187	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Y1

Figure 4 (c): Multiple Regression Table

This study shows a positive, significant and strong relationship between belief, awareness and practices of SEL among teachers of MRSM in Negeri Sembilan. The results show that MRSM teachers in Negeri Sembilan have a strong belief in the importance of SEL practices in schools. However, these teachers' belief only moderately influenced their awareness of SEL. Even so, the awareness of MRSM teachers in Negeri Sembilan towards SEL practices in schools is strong.

5. Discussion

The strength of the relationship between awareness and practice is stronger by .006 than the strength of the relationship between belief and practice. This result shows that awareness is a greater factor than belief in influencing the practice of SEL. It proves teachers' SEL knowledge and understanding influence the effectiveness of teachers' SEL practice more than teachers' attitudes and values of SEL. This also means, awareness leads to higher practices.

Teachers' belief in the importance of socio-emotional learning is high in this study. This shows that teachers in MRSMs of Negeri Sembilan value social and emotional skills as very important for students' success. Hence it is important for teachers to not only believe but to also enhance their SEL knowledge and understanding to tackle the lack of socio-emotional care for students in the classroom. According to CASEL [13], using evidence-based SEL programs has been shown to lead to various positive student outcomes, including increased academic achievement and improved behavior.

In addition to the body of knowledge in SEL, researchers would like to propose a model to describe the relationship between SEL belief, awareness, and practice of MRSM teachers in Negeri Sembilan. This model is based on a conceptual framework that has been built in the systematic literature review done in the proposal process of this study. The conceptual framework was developed based on both SEL Model and the Socio-Cognitive Theory Model. Researchers decided to propose this model due to the positive, significant, and strong correlations between belief with awareness, between belief with practice, and between awareness with practice. The proposed research model is as follows:

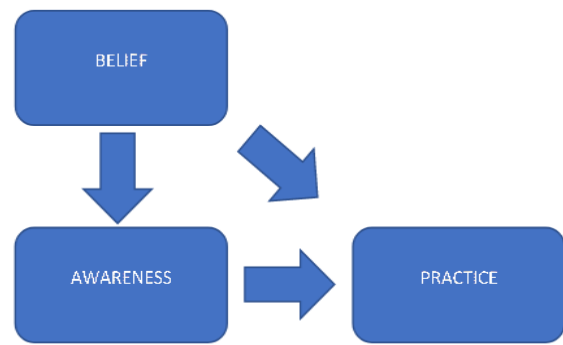


Figure 5: Teachers' Belief, Awareness and Practice of SEL Model Framework

In this model, teachers' awareness about SEL is the main factor that affects teachers' practice in applying SEL techniques in the classroom compared to SEL belief. Teachers who are aware of SEL are more likely to apply SEL into their teachings compared to teachers who only believe that SEL is important without having knowledge and understanding of SEL. By using this model, future programs of SEL in school should concentrate on building teachers' knowledge and understanding of SEL.

Programs for the implementation of SEL in schools are important in terms of improving students' socio-emotional skills [1]. In recent years, there has been an increase in interest in these skill development programs as a promotion of success at school and throughout life [6]. Concerning these, it is also possible, that other factors, such as school culture, professional development, or teachers' attitudes towards mental health, may influence the relationship between SEL belief, awareness, and practice.

Future studies should also consider the use of more objective measures of SEL practices, such as observations or interviews with students. This will provide a more accurate and reliable assessment of SEL practices and may help the validity of the results in this study.

6. Conclusion

In this study, we determined the relationship between belief in the importance of SEL practice, awareness of SEL knowledge, and involvement in SEL practices among teachers in MRSM colleges in Malaysia. The findings revealed that awareness is a more critical factor than belief in promoting SEL practices among teachers. This highlights the importance of teachers' SEL knowledge and understanding in driving effective implementation of SEL techniques in the classroom.

Our research contributes to the field by shedding light on the significance of teachers' awareness in fostering SEL practices. It emphasizes the need to prioritize building teachers' knowledge and understanding of SEL to enhance their ability to provide socio-emotional care to students effectively.

Furthermore, the study indicates that teachers in MRSMs of Negeri Sembilan hold a high belief in the importance of socio-emotional learning. This finding aligns with previous

research and underlines the value MRSM teachers place on social and emotional skills for students' success.

Consequently, we proposed a model framework that integrates the SEL Model and the Socio-Cognitive Theory Model. This model emphasizes the role of awareness as the main driver of SEL practices among teachers, surpassing the influence of mere belief. By utilizing this model, future programs focusing on SEL implementation should prioritize enhancing teachers' awareness and understanding of SEL concepts.

We also recognize the limitations of the study, including the sample's regional scope and the reliance on self-reported measures. To address these limitations, we recommend future research to consider broader sampling and incorporate objective measures of SEL practices, such as observations and interviews with students. Additionally, investigating other potential factors, such as school culture, professional development opportunities, and teachers' attitudes towards mental health, can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between beliefs, awareness, and SEL practices.

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