CRNA MAIN SURVEY: CASE STUDY REPORT

Country Report of Malaysia

INSIGHTS INTO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA: NURTURING RESILIENCE AND SOCIOEMOTIONAL SKILLS IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract:

This report delves into the landscape of early childhood education (ECE) in Malaysia, specifically focusing on the development of resilience and socio-emotional skills (SES) among 4 to 6-year-old children. Through a combination of focus group and individual interviews, insights into educators' perceptions, practices, and challenges in nurturing resilience and SES were obtained. Educators recognize SES and resilience as foundational competencies crucial for children's social interactions, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping strategies, drawing upon various sources to deepen their understanding and implement effective pedagogical approaches. Challenges such as the lack of formal assessment tools tailored to resilience were identified, prompting educators to rely on observation, judgment, and individualized communication strategies when providing feedback to parents. Cultural and linguistic perspectives were also highlighted as significant factors shaping the understanding and implementation of SES and resilience in Malaysian ECE settings. Practices employed at ECEC facilities to nurture resilience include building social support networks, teaching emotional regulation skills, and promoting independence and self-confidence among children, ultimately contributing to their holistic development and future success. These findings underscore the critical role of early childhood educators in fostering SES and resilience, calling for efforts to develop standardized assessment tools and promote culturally inclusive pedagogical practices to enhance the quality of ECE in Malaysia and beyond.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education in Malaysia, Resilience, Socioemotional Skills, cultural interpretation of the terms resilience and socioemotional skills, approaches to nurture resilience in children, adversities and difficulties faced by preschool children in Malaysia.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education Policy: In Malaysia, formal education commences at the age of four (4) with preschool, although it is not mandatory. However, the majority of children under six (6) years old enroll in preschool as a preparatory step before entering the formal school system. Early childhood education (ECE) in Malaysia is structured into two age groups: children under four (4) attend nurseries or childcare centers known as 'TASKA,' while those aged 5–6 attend preschools. These institutions are overseen by different authorities, with TASKA regulated by the Department of Social Welfare and preschools governed by the Ministry of Education.

Curriculum-wise, Malaysia follows two national curricula: the PERMATA National Curriculum for children aged 0–4 years old and the National Preschool Standard Curriculum (NPSC) for children aged 5 to 6. The NPSC emphasizes several objectives, including effective communication, fostering positive self-concept and confidence, and promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills. One of its strands, the Personal Competence Strand, focuses on socioemotional development, interaction skills, and leadership.

Preschool education in Malaysia aims to comprehensively develop children's physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social aspects in a safe and enriching environment. The curriculum emphasizes fun, creative, and meaningful activities to improve skills, boost confidence, and instill a positive self-concept, preparing children to face challenges and engage in further learning. The focus lies on nurturing confident communicators who can socialize effectively, tackle challenges, demonstrate eagerness to learn, and are prepared for subsequent educational endeavors.

Development of resilience and relevant SES in early childhood: In both the NPSC curriculum for 5–6-year-olds and the PERMATA Negara curriculum for 0–4-year-olds, there is a clear emphasis on fostering resilience and socio-emotional skills (SES) in early childhood development. The NPSC specifically highlights the importance of cultivating children's personalities to be *'berdaya tahan'* or resilient, alongside promoting qualities such as effective communication, teamwork, virtuous behavior, and empathy. Resilience, as defined in the curriculum, refers to the ability of children to confront and overcome challenges with wisdom, confidence, tolerance, and empathy.

Similarly, the PERMATA Negara curriculum underscores the significance of developing resilient children, alongside other characteristics like confidence and independence. Here, resilience is defined as *'berjati diri'* or possessing a positive self-concept, being motivated to try new things, and daring to take risks. These definitions collectively highlight the importance of instilling in children the ability to navigate challenges, setbacks, and uncertainties with courage, adaptability, and self-assurance.

By integrating resilience-building components into early childhood curricula, Malaysia aims to equip children with the necessary skills and mindset to thrive not only during their formative years but also beyond school-age. This holistic approach to education acknowledges the multifaceted nature of resilience, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. Moreover, by nurturing resilience from a young age, children are better prepared to cope with life's inevitable ups and downs,

develop healthy coping mechanisms, and cultivate a resilient outlook towards future challenges and opportunities.

2.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

(i)   To determine how much the terms 'resilience' and 'socioemotional skills' are recognized by ECEC teachers, operating in different types of facilities.

(ii)   To find out the efforts and practices by ECEC teachers in nurturing and developing 4 to 6-year-old children's resilience during the past few months.

(iii)   To compile various practices for nurturing resilience in 4 to 6-year-old children.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research uses a multiple case study design to generate in-depth understanding of the issues on resilience and SES developments in 4-6 year-old children, from the perspectives of the EC teachers, and the practices and activities they use in nurturing these skills in children. Instead of using the single case study, this research utilizes multi-case studies to better explore the complexity and richness of the practices amongst different type of facilities and to strengthen the validity and generalizability of the findings (Yin, 2003; Adam, et al., 2022).

The qualitative study began with focus group interviews (FGI) with the administrators or managers of different ECE facilities before undertaking the main case study interviews (CSI) with the senior ECE teachers. This preliminary study (FGI) is a powerful tool for gaining deep, multifaceted insights into the performance of early childhood teachers, their beliefs, knowledge and understandings of certain issues and concepts, practices and perspectives on the topic of study (Bloor, et al., 2001). The interview was conducted in Malay to allow the participants to respond and explain more effectively in their native language (Schembri & Jahić Jašić, 2022).

PRELIMINARY SURVEY (FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW) - 6 participants

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MAIN SURVEY (MULTIPLE CASE STUDY DESIGN) - 7 participants
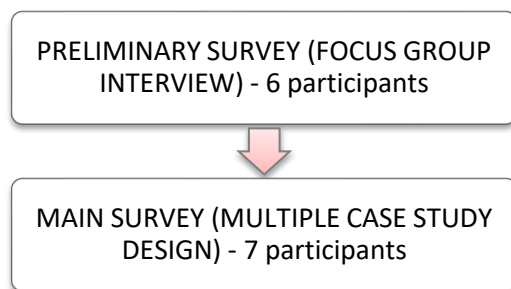
In this research, participants from various types of ECEC facilities were invited to participate. The information gathered from the FGI was very useful in developing appropriate interview questions for the main case study interview (refer to Box 1 and Box 2 in the Appendix) and for understanding the practices and set-up of the different ECE facilities in Malaysia.

3.1 Focus Group Participants

The Focus Group participants comprised of the administrators/operator or manager, coordinator and head teacher, representing a mix of public and private, with one respondent affiliated with a religious-based ECE facility. With a collective experience ranging from 11 to 30 years in ECEC, the participants brought a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the discussion. Furthermore, the age range of the participants spanned from over 30 to over 60 years-old, indicating a diverse range of perspectives and

experiences (Table 1). Overall, the Focus Group Interview provided a comprehensive and multifaceted exploration of topics related to resilience and socioemotional skills in early childhood education.

Table 1: Participants of Focus Group Study (FGI)

Focus Group Interview (Preliminary Survey)	Background information
No. of participant	6
Positions	3 - Facility operators/managers 3 - Preschool coordinators/Head Teacher
Type of Facility	2 - Public, 4 - Private (1 - Religious-based)
Experience in ECEC	11 – 30 years in ECE profession/business
Gender	1 - Male, 5 - Females
Age of respondents	30 to 60 years old

3.2 Multi-Case Study Participants

The main survey comprised of seven case studies (involving seven participants), all of whom were preschool senior teachers from different type of facilities and locations in Malaysia. The facilities represented included two public and four private institutions, with one being religious-based. Notably, all participants were female, spanning an age range from over 30 to over 60 years-old. This composition underscores the predominantly female workforce in the ECEC sector and the wealth of experience and perspectives brought forth by the participants, reflecting a broad spectrum of institutional backgrounds and professional tenure within the field of early childhood education. The summary of participants is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Participants of Multi-Case Studies (Case Study Interviews) (CSI)

Main Survey (Multi-case Study Interviews)	Background information
No. of case study (participant)	7
Positions	7 - Senior ECE teachers
Type of Facility	1 – Government preschool 1 - Government agency's kindergarten 4 - Private kindergarten 1- Private Religious-based kindergarten
Experience in ECE	11 to 22 years as ECE teacher
Gender	7 - Females
Age of participants	30 to 60 years old

4.0   OUTCOME OF THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW (PRELIMINARY SURVEY)

4.1   Term Perception of 'Socioemotional Skills' (SES) and 'Resilience' by ECE Facility Managers/Administrators/Operators

Analysis of the Focus Group Interview (FGI) revealed insightful perspectives on socioemotional skills (SES) and resilience by the operators/administrators and managers of ECE facilities. Regarding SES, it was evident that all participants possessed a comprehensive understanding of the term, reflecting a shared knowledge base within the early childhood education (ECE) community. Notably, participants emphasized various characteristics associated with high SES levels, such as adept interpersonal skills, emotional regulation, confidence in communication, adaptability to new environments, and empathy towards others. These descriptions underscored the multifaceted nature of SES, encompassing social, emotional, and behavioral competencies crucial for children's holistic development.

Conversely, the understanding of resilience among FGI participants exhibited a split, with 50% demonstrating clear comprehension and the remaining 50% exhibiting partial understanding. Additionally, participants expressed concerns regarding the level of awareness among early childhood teachers, with many perceiving limited knowledge or unfamiliarity with the term.

4.2 Appropriate Phrasing of the Term 'Resilience', as Perceived by ECE Facility Managers/Administrators/Operators

The discrepancy in understanding was attributed, in part, to linguistic nuances, prompting suggestions to adopt the English term 'resilience' alongside its original definition to ensure clarity and consistency in communication (for the main survey – the case-study interviews).

4.3 Characteristics of Resilient Children, as Perceived by ECE Facility Managers/Administrators/Operators

Despite variations in comprehension, participants provided nuanced insights into the characteristics of resilient children. Attributes such as confidence, assertiveness in expressing opinions, willingness to embrace challenges, perseverance in the face of setbacks, problem-solving abilities, and a positive mindset emerged as hallmarks of resilience. Furthermore, resilient children were perceived as proactive in seeking assistance when needed, demonstrating resilience not only in academic settings but also in navigating life's complexities.

4.4 Educational Programs Implemented to Nurture 'Resilience' and Relevant 'Socioemotional Skills', as Perceived by ECE Facility Managers/Administrators/Operators

FG participants alleged that their teachers have conducted many educational programs and activities, though not specifically for nurturing resilience and SES, but these activities indirectly do support the development of the resilience and SE skills. Examples of activities mentioned were: group problem-solving, math puzzles, collaborative STEM projects and creative art and craft projects, storytelling and role-playing exercises, etc.

4.5   Approaches Used by Teachers to Nurture 'Resilience' and Relevant 'Socioemotional Skills', as Perceived by ECE Facility Managers/Administrators/Operators

Focus group participants described that their teachers were using approaches in the curriculum originally designated for academic learning, such as project work, inquiry learning, field trips, drama and theatre performances, and debate. Instead, the teachers were employing emotional and humanistic methods to develop resilience and SES in children, which was revealed from the data collected from the Main Survey conducted on teachers at the same childcare facility.

To sum up, the outcomes of the preliminary survey with ECE managers/operators and administrators highlights the importance of fostering resilience alongside SES in early childhood development. While SES encompasses foundational social and emotional competencies, resilience serves as a crucial adaptive mechanism, enabling children to navigate adversity and thrive in diverse contexts. By incorporating resilience-building strategies into ECE curricula and professional development initiatives, educators can cultivate a supportive environment conducive to children's holistic growth and development. Moreover, promoting a shared understanding of resilience within the ECE community facilitates collaborative efforts in nurturing resilient mindsets and behaviors among young learners, laying a robust foundation for lifelong wellbeing and success.

5.0   OUTCOME OF MULTI-CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS (THE MAIN SURVEY)

The outcomes of the survey conducted among early childhood education (ECE) senior teachers yielded valuable insights into various aspects related to socioemotional development and resilience in young children. Firstly, the survey shed light on ECE teachers' perceptions of 'socioemotional skills' and 'resilience', revealing diverse interpretations and understandings among respondents. Additionally, it explored where ECE teachers learned about these concepts, indicating a range of sources from formal training to professional development workshops. Furthermore, the survey delved into ECE teachers' perspectives on the difficulties or adversities faced by children aged 4-6, providing nuanced insights into the challenges perceived by educators in the field. Moreover, it examined ECE teachers' beliefs regarding successful adaptation or resilience in young children, elucidating their expectations and aspirations for children's socio-emotional well-being.

The survey also identified specific activities, practices, and interactions implemented by ECE teachers to foster resilience in children, highlighting the practical strategies employed in educational settings. Additionally, it explored the educational programs and materials utilized at ECEC facilities to nurture resilience, showcasing the institutional approaches to supporting children's socioemotional development. Furthermore, the survey collected responses to scenarios, detailing how ECEC teachers would interact with children facing various challenges and adversity, providing rationale for their chosen approaches based on their professional expertise and understanding of child development.

Finally, the survey investigated the usage and contents of evaluation and assessment tools for resilience, as well as the provision of feedback to parents on their children's resilience, revealing the broader ecosystem of support and collaboration within ECE contexts. Overall, the survey outcomes offer

valuable insights into the perceptions, practices, and strategies employed by ECE teachers in promoting socioemotional wellbeing and resilience among young children.
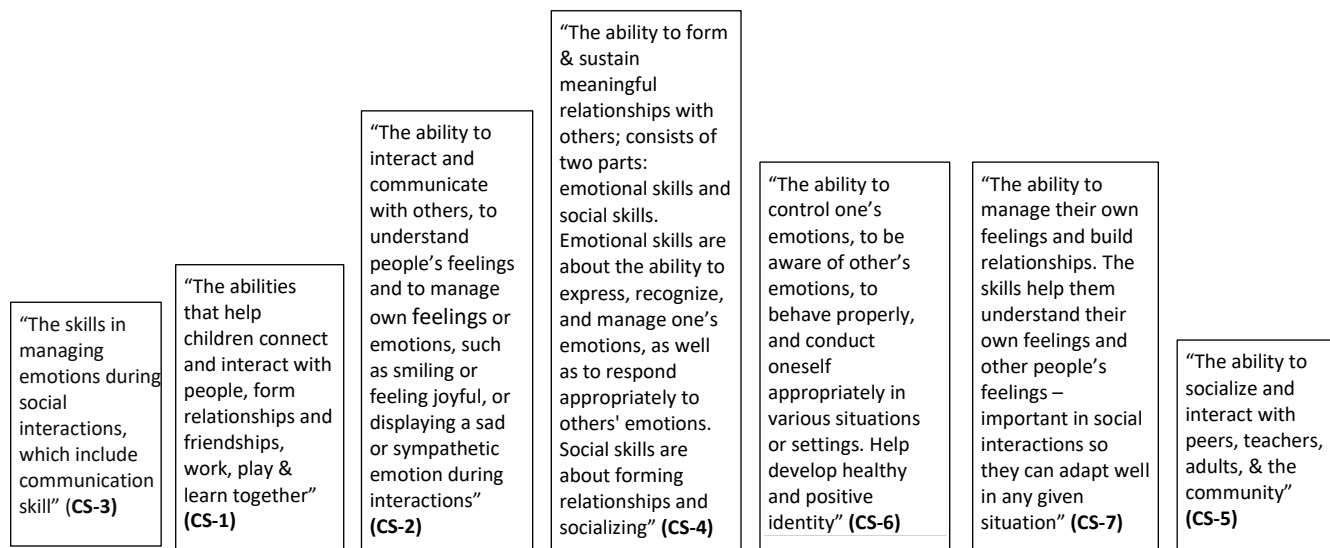
The findings from the main study, analyzed through thematic analysis, revealed several key themes that encapsulated the participants' perspectives on various aspects of early childhood education (ECE). The themes emerged organically from the data and were presented systematically to provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants' insights.

5.1 Socioemotional Skills (SES) and Resilience

In this comprehensive exploration of socio-emotional skills (SES) and resilience within early childhood education (ECE) settings, a rich tapestry of perspectives emerges from the thematic analysis of various case studies. Participants demonstrate a coherent understanding of SES as foundational competencies crucial for children's social interactions and emotional regulation. The significance of communication, emotional management, and empathy is underscored as essential skills for fostering SES, contributing to children's holistic development. Moreover, resilient children are depicted as possessing distinct attributes such as adaptability, perseverance, and a positive mindset, which are essential for overcoming challenges and thriving in diverse environments. The importance of nurturing SES and resilience from a young age is unanimously advocated by participants, highlighting the lifelong impact of socio-emotional development on children's well-being and success. Ultimately, the synthesis of findings underscores the critical role of early childhood educators and caregivers in fostering resilience and equipping children with essential life skills to navigate life's challenges with optimism and determination.

5.2 Understanding Socioemotional Skills (SES)

Participants across the case studies share a coherent understanding of socioemotional skills (SES) as crucial abilities that facilitate social interactions and emotional regulation among children. Case Study 1 (CS-1), Case Study 4 (CS-4) and Case Study 7 (CS-7) emphasize that SES enable children to form relationships, share, and adapt to new situations effectively. Similarly, CS-2 and CS-3 elaborate on the importance of SES in communication, highlighting its role in understanding others' feelings and expressing ideas clearly (Fig.1). This consensus underscores SES as foundational competencies essential for navigating interpersonal dynamics and fostering emotional well-being among children. Fig. 1 shows extracts of EC teachers' descriptions of what they understand by the term socioemotional skills (SES).
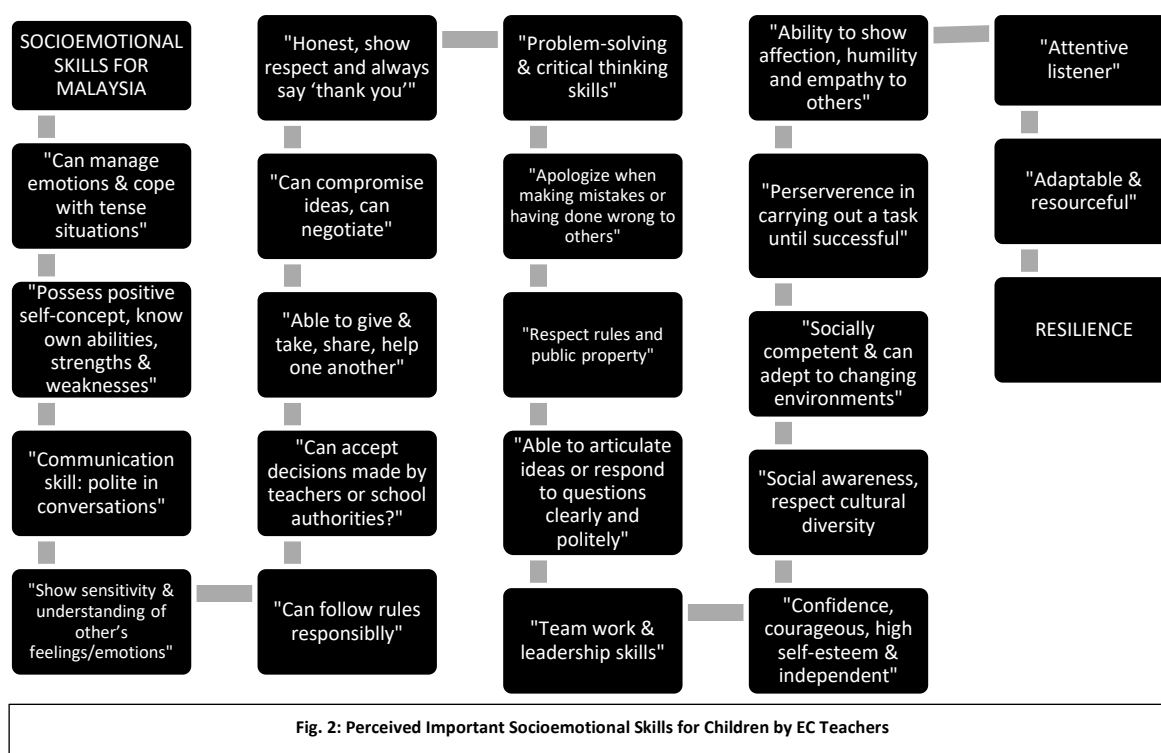
"The ability to form & sustain meaningful relationships with others; consists of two parts: emotional skills and social skills. Emotional skills are about the ability to express, recognize, and manage one's emotions, as well as to respond appropriately to others' emotions. Social skills are about forming relationships and socializing" **(CS-4)**

"The ability to interact and communicate with others, to understand people's feelings and to manage own feelings or emotions, such as smiling or feeling joyful, or displaying a sad or sympathetic emotion during interactions" **(CS-2)**

"The ability to control one's emotions, to be aware of other's emotions, to behave properly, and conduct oneself appropriately in various situations or settings. Help develop healthy and positive identity" **(CS-6)**

"The ability to manage their own feelings and build relationships. The skills help them understand their own feelings and other people's feelings – important in social interactions so they can adapt well in any given situation" **(CS-7)**

"The abilities that help children connect and interact with people, form relationships and friendships, work, play & learn together" **(CS-1)**

"The skills in managing emotions during social interactions, which include communication skill" **(CS-3)**

"The ability to socialize and interact with peers, teachers, adults, & the community" **(CS-5)**

Fig.1: Perception of the term 'Socioemotional skills' (SES) by EC Teachers

5.2.1 Perceived Essential Socioemotional Skills (SES) for Children in Malaysia

Within the realm of socioemotional skills, participants underscore the significance of communication and emotional management as essential competencies for children's development. For example, Case Study 3 (CS-3) emphasizes the importance of clear expression and polite response, while CS-6 stresses the interrelation between emotional and social skills, highlighting communication as pivotal for building relationships. Furthermore, participants such as CS-2 and CS-7 highlight the critical role of emotional regulation in understanding and managing one's own emotions, indicative of its profound impact on social interactions and psychological wellbeing (Fig.2).

SOCIOEMOTIONAL SKILLS FOR MALAYSIA

"Can manage emotions & cope with tense situations"

"Possess positive self-concept, know own abilities, strengths & weaknesses"

"Communication skill: polite in conversations"

"Show sensitivity & understanding of other's feelings/emotions"

"Honest, show respect and always say 'thank you'"

"Can compromise ideas, can negotiate"

"Able to give & take, share, help one another"

"Can accept decisions made by teachers or school authorities?"

"Can follow rules responsiblly"

"Problem-solving & critical thinking skills"

"Apologize when making mistakes or having done wrong to others"

"Respect rules and public property"

"Able to articulate ideas or respond to questions clearly and politely"

"Team work & leadership skills"

"Ability to show affection, humility and empathy to others"

"Perserverence in carrying out a task until successful"

"Socially competent & can adept to changing environments"

"Social awareness, respect cultural diversity

"Confidence, courageous, high self-esteem & independent"

"Attentive listener"

"Adaptable & resourceful"

RESILIENCE

Fig. 2: Perceived Important Socioemotional Skills for Children by EC Teachers

Amongst the most frequently mentioned socioemotional skills by the case study participants are communication skills, emotional self-regulation, social awareness, teamwork skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, resilience, and hardworking. Most of these are 'soft-skills' which have been prescribed in the preschool curriculum for EC teachers to foster and nurture and to be achieved by children appropriately according to their milestones development. The focus group participants and the EC teachers seem to have good understanding and coherence in their thought about the most essential SES to be acquired by Malaysian children, who would be the country's workforce in the future.

To quote CS-7, she said: "*I believe that these skills aren't just for preschool – they are for life. When children learn to manage their feelings and get along with others, they are setting themselves up for success in school and beyond. It's like giving them the confidence and tools they need to tackle whatever comes their way. It's like laying the groundwork for their future success and happiness. I observe that when children feel confident, respected, and supported, they're more engaged in learning and happier overall.*"

5.2.2 Characteristics of Children with High Socioemotional Skills (SES)

High SES children are depicted as possessing distinct attributes that contribute to their social adeptness and emotional intelligence. Table 3 showed the responses from the 7 case studies interviews. It is observed that all the participants were able to list down the appropriate characteristics of children

possessing good socioemotional skills. It is interesting to note that these teachers understand the term 'SES' very well. For example, CS-5 describes high SES children as sociable individuals capable of making friends easily and respecting others, can solve own problems and resolve conflicts with others. Similarly, CS-1, CS-5, CS-6, and CS-7 emphasize sociability, responsibility, politeness, empathy and cooperative demeanor as attributes of high level socioemotional skills for children, underscoring the importance of emotional intelligence in fostering positive relationships and supportive environments.

5.2.3   Importance of Nurturing SES in Young Children

Table 3 shows all case study participants consistently advocate for the early nurturing of SES, recognizing its profound impact on children's holistic development. CS-4 underscores the pivotal role of SES in shaping children's characters, academic success, and overall well-being. Similarly, CS-7 stresses the lifelong significance of SES development, emphasizing its contribution to children's success in various domains of life. These perspectives collectively highlight the critical importance of early intervention and support in fostering positive socio-emotional outcomes and equipping children with essential life skills.

Table 3: Characteristics of Children with High Socioemotional Skills (SES)

CS-1	CS-2	CS-3	CS-4	CS-5	CS-6	CS-7
• Self-control & can cope with tense situations • Positive self-concept & confidence • Persistence and perseverance • Resilience • Polite • Attentive listener • Good social skills • Empathy • Tolerance • Responsible • Honest • Respect • Cooperation • Rule-abiding	• Control emotions • Respect others • Have many friends • Can befriend anyone • Team player • Have empathy • Diligent • Eager to learn • Responsible • Follow rules • Does not panic when facing difficulties • Cheerful • Excited to try new things • Good manners • Can wait for turn	• Control emotions & sensitive to the emotions of others • Enjoy helping others • Empathetic and caring • Communicate politely • Good at building friendships, have many friends • Pleasant & easy-going personality • Able to lead • Able to make decisions • Responsible • Optimistic • Open-minded	• Calm, cheerful and friendly • Academically successful • Active in co-curricular activities e.g. sports and arts • Successful in managing everyday learning • Shows leadership • Responsible	• Have many friends & best friends • Connect to others easily • Can solve own problem or resolve conflict with others • Can follow school's rules • Independent • Collaborative • Aware of people's emotions and respond appropriately • Respect teachers, parents and elders • Polite and responsible	• Have many friends • Communicate well • Happy, cheerful & high self-esteem • Able to lead • Responsible • Good negotiation skills • Can manage & cope with stress, anxiety and failures (resilient) • Cooperative & collaborative • Empathetic • Can resolve conflict • Dare to try and take risks	• Confident and kind-hearted • Cooperative & collaborative • Kindness and caring • Attentiveness • Empathy • Excels in problem-solving & learning • Creative in solving problems or resolving conflicts • Serve as a positive influence in classroom (willing to help classmates who have learning problems) • Polite, good manners

5.3   Resilience as Part of SES

The analysis reveals that 'resilience' emerge as a cornerstone of SES, essential for navigating challenges and setbacks with optimism and determination as a foundational trait that empowers children to confront obstacles effectively. CS-1 mentioned "*persistence and perseverance*" as part of SES. Similarly, CS-2 describes SES as "*does not panic when facing difficulties*" and CS-6 indicated "*can manage and cope with stress, anxiety and failures*" as mitigating factors against negative social behaviors and a catalyst for

adaptive coping strategies. These insights underscore 'resilience' as an integral component of SES, fostering adaptive responses to adversity and fortitude in the face of challenges.

To sum up, the participants' perspectives on SES, elucidate its multifaceted nature and highlight its profound implications for children's development and wellbeing.

5.3.1 Understanding Resilience

Participants across the case studies demonstrate varying levels of familiarity with the term 'resilience' but converge on its importance in overcoming challenges. Case Study 1 (CS-1) initially associates resilience with adults but later expands her understanding to include children, defining it as the ability to overcome problems or difficulties. Similarly, CS-2 equates resilience with *"toughness"* and *"determination"*, reflecting a perception of resilience as perseverance in the face of adversity. These interpretations highlight resilience as a multifaceted concept encompassing problem-solving skills and emotional fortitude. Further, CS-7 emphasizes resilience as the ability to remain strong and positive during tough situations, underscoring its relevance in navigating life's challenges.

5.3.2 Characteristics of Resilient Children

The characteristics of resilient children elucidated across the case studies underscore their adaptability, perseverance, and positive mindset. CS-3 describes resilient children as those who face problems calmly and seek solutions independently or with the help of others. Similarly, CS- 6 emphasizes resilience as a never-give-up attitude, highlighting traits such as self-confidence, creativity in problem-solving, and emotional resilience. Notably, CS-5 emphasizes the importance of maintaining high spirits and perseverance, reflecting resilience as an enduring quality that propels children to overcome obstacles.

5.3.3 Importance of Nurturing Resilience

Participants unanimously advocate for the cultivation of resilience in young children, recognizing its pivotal role in fostering holistic development and future success. CS-1 underscores the importance of nurturing resilience from a young age in educational settings, emphasizing its long-term benefits for children's socioemotional wellbeing. Similarly, CS-4 highlights the integral role of resilience in kindergarten education, emphasizing self-independence and emotional control as essential components of resilience-building. Furthermore, CS-7 stresses the lifelong significance of resilience, advocating for its cultivation to help children succeed in school and beyond. These insights collectively underscore the critical importance of early intervention in nurturing resilience and equipping children with the skills needed to thrive in diverse environments.

In summary, the analysis reveals a nuanced understanding of resilience among participants, highlighting its multifaceted nature and implications for children's development. While interpretations of resilience vary, there is consensus regarding its significance in promoting children's wellbeing and adaptive capacity. Resilient children are depicted as confident, resourceful, and emotionally intelligent individuals capable of thriving in the face of adversity. The findings underscore the importance of early

childhood educators and caregivers in fostering resilience through supportive environments, positive reinforcement, and skill-building interventions.

5.4   Discovering 'Socioemotional Skills' and 'Resilience' from Teachers' Perspectives

Teachers play a pivotal role in uncovering and nurturing 'Socioemotional Skills' (SES) and 'Resilience' among young learners. From their vantage point, understanding the origins of these concepts is essential. Teachers draw upon various sources, including academic training, professional development workshops, curriculum guidelines, and personal experiences within educational settings. Through these diverse pathways, educators gain insights into the significance of SES and resilience in children's holistic development. They recognize the interconnectedness of socioemotional competencies and resilience-building strategies, acknowledging the profound impact these skills have on children's wellbeing and future success. Through their continuous exploration and application of effective pedagogical approaches, teachers strive to cultivate environments that foster the growth of SES and resilience, laying the foundation for children to navigate life's challenges with confidence and adaptability.

Table 5: Where EC Teachers Learnt about SES and Resilience

CS-1	CS-2	CS-3	CS-4	CS-5	CS-6	CS-7
•ECEC undergraduate and post graduate studies •Preschool curricula (National Preschool Standard Curriculum and PERMATA curriculum briefing by Ministry of Education officials. •Professional development courses and trainings (workshops) •Seminars/webinars /conferences •My own learning as trainers in ECE courses for new teachers	•Undergraduate studies in ECEC •Workshops and seminars •ECE curricula (PERMATA and NPSC)	•Undergraduate courses •Professional development trainings and workshops •Seminars and conferences •Meetings with facility management teams •Own reading. •Continuous reading and learning when I was required to prepare our facility's report or presentations to visitors or parents	• Undergraduate ECE courses • Training courses, workshops • Seminars and conferences • Talks and discussions with other EC teachers, parents and community	• Undergraduate ECE courses • Training courses & workshops • Seminars and conferences • Talks and discussions with other EC teachers, parents and community • Continuous briefings and presentations by Ministry of Education officials on the curricula, evaluation process, data inputs system, etc.	•Montessori Teacher Training Program (Montessori certificate) •Preschool curricula (National Preschool Standard Curriculum and PERMATA curriculum) •Professional Development courses/workshops •Webinars/conferences, and interactions with experts. •Own reading •Continues learning when needed to prepare guidelines or report to parents, and provide information on our kindergarten website and Facebook.	•Undergraduate ECE courses •Professional development trainings and workshops •Seminars and conferences •Meetings with facility's top management teams •Own reading before conducting training to new teachers and trainees •Interaction and involvement in management planning team. •From expert meetings

CS-1, CS-5 and CS-6 first learned about the term 'SES' from the courses and briefings by Ministry of Education officials about the pedagogy and implementation of the National Preschool Standard Curriculum. However, it was the first time they had come across the term 'resilience'. CS-5 explained how she was more familiar with the Malay language term '*berdaya tahan'*, which translates into '*possessing emotional strength and a positive mindset'.* She had then mistakenly conflated the two terms, assuming '*berdaya tahan'* was an accurate translation of 'resilience': "*I thought the meaning is about building strength and self-confidence in children."*

In the case of CS-6, when asked how she first learned about 'SES' and 'Resilience', she responded saying: CS-6 said (quote), "*I am quite familiar with these two terms (SES and resilience). I learned about them from the Montessori courses and my undergraduate courses a long time ago. I also learned about these two terms from seminars and training workshops that I have attended from time to time, especially in the Montessori Programs and the Malaysian Preschool's Curriculum Implementations and Evaluations, and also from my own readings. I have written a book on Pedagogies of ECEC in 2020, and in our kindergarten's Facebook, we provide weekly tips to parents on childcare, growth and development, touching on the aspects of SES and resilience.*"

In the case of CS-7: *"I learned about these two terms from the many ECCE courses that I have attended since I started my career in this field. Social-emotional skills and resilience are most essential strands emphasized within our PERMATA Curriculum (0-4 year-olds) and National Preschool Curriculum (4+-6 year-olds), therefore every EC teacher should know and understand them fully."*
Further, when the transcripts of the case studies were analyzed through thematic analysis, the result revealed several key themes that encapsulated the participants' perspective on various aspects of ECE. The themes emerged organically from the data and were presented systematically to provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants' insights.

- **Training and Professional Development**

The participants in the qualitative research exhibited a strong reliance on academic training and professional development as primary sources for their understanding of socioemotional Skills (SES) and resilience in the context of early childhood education (ECE). CS-2, CS-3 and CS-4 elucidate how their undergraduate studies in Early Childhood Education introduced them to these concepts. This sentiment is echoed by CS-6, who attributes her familiarity with SES and resilience to her extensive academic background, including Montessori courses and undergraduate studies. Similarly, CS-7 underscores the importance of continuous professional development through ECE courses in shaping her knowledge of SES and resilience. These findings highlight the foundational role of academic training in equipping educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to foster socioemotional development in young children.

Moreover, participants emphasized the significance of ongoing professional development opportunities such as workshops, seminars, and training courses in deepening their understanding of SES and resilience. CS-2 recounts how her 12 years of service at a childcare center exposed her to various workshops and seminars, contributing to her knowledge of SES. Similarly, CS-4 underscores the value of attending training courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences in enhancing their understanding of children's SE learning and character development. This emphasis on continuous learning reflects the dynamic nature of ECE and the evolving understanding of socioemotional development.

Furthermore, the analysis across case studies reveals discrepancies in the level of emphasis placed on resilience compared to SES within the curriculum frameworks. While SES is repeatedly emphasized in the curriculum, resilience tends to receive less attention, as observed by CS-1. However, participants recognize the importance of both concepts in promoting holistic development in young children. CS-5 highlights the essential role of SES skills in the Malaysian preschool curriculum, while also acknowledging the significance of resilience, albeit under a different terminology. This discrepancy

underscores the need for greater awareness and integration of resilience concepts within ECE curriculum frameworks to ensure comprehensive socioemotional development.

Overall, the thematic analysis underscores the pivotal role of academic training and continuous professional development in shaping educators' understanding of SES and resilience in ECE. By drawing insights from diverse sources and experiences, educators are better equipped to foster socioemotional development and resilience in young children, ultimately contributing to their overall well-being and success.

- **Cultural and Linguistic Perspectives**

Another significant theme that emerged from the qualitative research is the influence of cultural and linguistic perspectives on the understanding of socioemotional skills (SES) and resilience in early childhood education (ECE). Participants across the case studies highlighted the importance of cultural and linguistic considerations in defining and implementing strategies to promote SES and resilience in diverse contexts.

For instance, CS-1 discusses the use of the Malay term '*berdaya tahan'* to convey resilience within the Malaysian context. This linguistic nuance reflects cultural values such as wisdom, conviction, tolerance, and empathy, which are integral to resilience in the local context. Similarly, CS-5 emphasizes the cultural significance of SES skills within the Malaysian preschool curriculum, highlighting the need for cultural sensitivity in curriculum development and implementation.

Moreover, participants underscored the role of cultural practices and beliefs in shaping children's socioemotional development and resilience. CS-7 emphasizes the integration of cultural values and traditions into ECE practices to foster resilience among young children. This aligns with the broader recognition of culture as a foundational aspect of child development and learning, as advocated by scholars in the field of multicultural education.

Furthermore, linguistic nuances in defining SES and resilience were evident across the case studies, reflecting the diverse linguistic landscape of Malaysia. Participants discussed the importance of linguistic clarity and accuracy in conveying these concepts to children and parents from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This highlights the need for culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogical practices in ECE settings to ensure effective communication and understanding among all stakeholders.

Overall, the thematic analysis underscores the significance of cultural and linguistic perspectives in shaping the understanding and implementation of SES and resilience in ECE. By acknowledging and integrating diverse cultural and linguistic perspectives, educators can create inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments that support the socio-emotional development and resilience of all children.

5.5   Difficulties and Adversities Faced by Children

In asking the EC teachers to describe what they consider as "difficulties" and "adversities" faced by children aged 4-6, they responded as below:

(1) Difficulties related to developmental problems:
- Difficulties adjusting to the new environment at preschool
- Dislike coming to preschool, feeling insecure when parents are not there to help with the daily routines
- Dislike the food, drink or vegetable meals served at the preschool
- Behavioral problems: impulsive behavior, hyperactive syndrome, fighting, bullying, tantrums and meltdowns
- Learning difficulties: speech delay, lacking basic skills such as reading and writing, difficulty concentrating, having communication issues, etc.
- Social problems: overly passive, shyness, social isolation, low self-esteem, difficulties working in groups, etc.
- Emotional problems: sad and stress (due to high parental expectation), overly dependent and overly sensitive.
- Other developmental problems: a child at 4 years old still wanting to drink from a bottle, and a 4 years old child who still wearing diaper to school because of unsuccessful toilet-training at home.

(2) Adversities and trauma related to upsetting tragedy that happened at home or to member of the family:
- Parental separation or divorce
- Bereavements due to death of loved ones
- Absence of father (because he was being held in drug rehabilitation institution)
- Family member involved in car accident

5.6 Practices to Nurture Resilience in 4-6 years old children

Nurturing resilience in children involves a variety of approaches and practices, including empathetic, adaptation-based, holistic, integrative, and cooperative methods. These diverse approaches collectively support the holistic development of children, preparing them to navigate life's challenges with confidence and adaptability. In addition, educators organize developmental and holistic educational programs to develop resilience among children.

5.6.1 Empathetic Approach and Adaptation-based Approach

To foster resilience in children, the participants use a combination of empathetic and adaptation-based approaches. Peer support, tailored encouragement, and inclusive classroom activities are examples of empathetic approaches that foster SES development. Moreover, the adaptation-based approach acknowledges and utilizes the competencies acquired in reaction to challenging situations. Through the implementation of strategies such as paired learning, compassionately attending to individual needs, and fostering empathy through group projects, educators may effectively leverage children's innate resilience. Furthermore, incorporating parents and experts guarantees all-encompassing assistance, cultivating a smooth educational journey that emphasizes complete growth and leverages on children's innate abilities.

• Peer Assistance and Integration

To develop empathy and peer support, the participants in CS-1, CS-2, and CS-4 emphasize attentive listening, pair struggling children with confident peers, and promote inclusive interactions. These acts serve as examples of how empathy and adaptability play an important role in creating resilience. For example, CS-1's practice of pairing a "slow" or "shy/sad" child with the "best" student in the class adapts to each child's unique requirements and creates a nurturing environment where understanding and mentoring flourish. Teachers can effectively use the innate resilience of their confident peers to support the emotional development of their struggling classmates by tailoring their instruction to the specific dynamics of each student pair.

• Tailored Assistance and Encouragement

Personalized attention and encouragement, such as adapting seating arrangements for children with communication difficulties and face-to-face sessions for those struggling with speech as described by CS-1 and CS-2, highlight the importance of addressing individual needs with compassion. Children's skills and confidence are greatly enhanced by these participants' constant encouragement and praise, which they tailor to each child's unique problems and strengths. Through ongoing adaptation of their approaches to each child's growing requirements, educators transform potential hurdles into chances for resilience and progress.

• Fostering Empathy in the Classroom Through Activities

Mutual respect, empathy, and cooperative problem-solving are fostered through activities such as "share and tell" sessions, reading sessions, and group projects by CS-1, CS-2, and CS-4. In addition to addressing children's issues, CS-4's focus on communication and active listening fosters peer collaboration and empathy.

• Parental Cooperation

Collaborating with parents and teachers, as demonstrated by CS-2 and CS-4, where parents and teachers work together in partnership, help children to become more confident, encourage them to try new things, praise perseverance, help the children find their passion, and celebrate efforts.

5.6.2 Holistic Educational Approach

Integrating a Project Approach fosters resilience and social-emotional skills (SES) by immersing children in collaborative problem-solving, fostering self-confidence, and nurturing coping abilities. In addition, the application of a Holistic Daily Routine Approach places a strong emphasis on organised routines that support children's independence, self-control, and sense of belonging. Regular schedules help children maintain their independence, self-control, and sense of belonging.

• Project-Based Learning

The project approach highlighted by CS-3 and CS-5 helps children develop resilience and SES by encouraging them to be involved in group problem-solving and encouraging cooperation, self-assurance, and coping mechanisms. For instance, the CS-3 nature diary project, not only improves observational skills but also cultivates a sense of belonging and empathy in the children.

5.6.3 Integrative and Cooperative Method

Developing a Cooperative and Integrative Approach to Foster Resilience highlights the establishment of secure and encouraging learning environments marked by kindness and actions that promote resilience.

- Establishing Secure and Helpful Learning Environments

To foster resilience in children, CS-5 and CS-7 place a strong emphasis on creating safe, secure situations where children feel appreciated and supported. Teachers build a foundation for children's confidence and flexibility by modelling resilient behaviors and creating a warm, supportive environment. These settings support the growth of children's self-assurance and flexibility.

Incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) into CS-7 and rotating leadership roles in CS-5 are two strategies that guarantee resilience-building is ingrained in routine interactions and activities. These strategies help children develop resilience and SES by encouraging teamwork, mutual aid, and confidence-building strategies. Integrative approaches also guarantee that resilience-building is embedded in everyday interactions, encouraging children to cooperate and support one another.

In CS-6, the integration of Islamic principles and Montessori methodology guarantees adherence to school policies while fostering resilience and SES via cooperative learning, individual accountability, and ethical instruction. These abilities are further enhanced by educational initiatives like STEM projects. The teacher establishes a comprehensive learning environment that fosters children's complete development by fusing Islamic beliefs with Montessori principles.

5.6.4 Holistic and Developmental Programs

In the preschool programs across CS-1 to CS-7, a diverse range of activities are implemented to not only foster resilience but also develop socio-emotional skills (SES) among children.

Physical-based program promotes physical activities such as body coordination and synchronization, instilling resilience and determination as children learn the value of practice and persistence. Similarly, engaging in safe risk-taking activities such as climbing trees or building bridges encourages children to venture outside their comfort zones, tackle challenges, and glean lessons from setbacks, fostering resilience along their developmental path. Moreover, participation in games or sports offers valuable lessons in competition, cooperation, and sportsmanship, equipping children with the resilience to navigate both success and failure while enhancing their collaborative and communication skills with peers.

Literacy-based programs that implement literacy activities such as shared reading play a crucial role in nurturing both literacy skills and socio-emotional development. By engaging in group reading sessions, children not only enhance their language abilities but also learn to express themselves, listen to others, and empathize with different perspectives, thus promoting social interaction and emotional intelligence.

Utilizing project-based teaching and learning strategies, especially in subjects like STEM, encourages children to work in teams, share responsibilities, and build friendships. By engaging in collaborative projects, children develop problem-solving skills, adaptability, and communication skills, all of which are essential for resilience and socio-emotional growth.

Moreover, events like school holiday activities, cultural performances, and parent partnership groups foster community engagement, belongingness, and support networks, all of which play crucial roles in nurturing resilience and socio-emotional skills in children. Overall, these diverse programs and activities create a holistic learning environment where children not only acquire academic knowledge but also develop the social, emotional, and behavioral competencies needed to navigate life's challenges with confidence and resilience.

The case studies demonstrate how educators nurture resilience by adopting important approaches and implementing comprehensive developmental programs. These practices help children enhance their academic and social-emotional skills and develop resilience, enabling them to face life's challenges with assurance and adaptation.

5.7 Suggested Actions by Early Childhood Teachers in Hypothetical Cases (Scenarios) and the Rationale for the Actions

Scenario 1: A child was left out (he/she was not included in the group of friends).

CS-1: What I would do: I would encourage the child to talk to me and share his/her feelings as to why he/she does not want to join the group. I would also ask the child if I can share his/her problems with other children in the class. I would then ask the class if they would like to help him/her by being friends, while using spiritual advice that "God loves people who help others, and we need to be kind to one another".
Why I would use this approach: I consider this is an emotional and learning problem so the best approach should be to show kindness and empathy and to persuade his/her peers to support and help the child catch-up with the basic skills. I also have found spiritual advice to be very effective in nurturing a caring classroom.

CS-3: What I would do for this scenario: I would use an example of a child who lacks socialization because she is an only child. Since she is new to the kindergarten, I introduced her to all the children in my class and asked if anyone wanted to be her friend. Many raised their hands. I picked two most popular children in the class to 'mentor' her - to show her how to follow the routine and the rules at the kindergarten and to engage in learning activities.
Why I used this approach: A dependent child is more likely to feel helpless and this can lead to generalized anxiety and stress. In this case, I have to develop her self-confidence in order to make her feel independent. The 'mentors' got her to join their play group, while guiding and supporting her through the project. In the process, she learned to connect with other kids and built friendships.

CS-4: What I would do for this scenario: I would befriend this child and introduce the child to the class, and facilitate introductions, perhaps with a handshake or traditional salutation

(*Assalamu'alaikum*). I would emphasize the importance of being friendly with each other and that no one should be excluded or left alone.

Why I would use this approach: In this case, I would use a 'compassionate and inclusive' approach to address social exclusion and at the same time, build the child's social skills, resilience and a sense of belonging.

CS-5: What I would do for this scenario: I would pair the 'loner child' with one or two children who have higher SES and resilience (usually they are more matured, a few months older, and have better academic achievement), so they can assist and guide him/her.

Why I would use this approach: I have seen this technique work whereby many 'loners' become more confident, less shy and would participate in group activities. I believe children need to be guided and taught how to build positive peer relationships, good social and emotional skills, self-confidence, empathy, and positive self-image while they are still young – in daycare and preschools.

CS-7: For this scenario: I would approach the child who was left out with empathy and understanding. I would invite them to join in an activity or playtime with other children, ensuring they feel included and valued. I would also take the opportunity to observe the dynamics of the group and intervene if necessary to promote inclusivity and kindness among the children.

Why I would use this approach: I would do so because feeling left out can be distressing for a child and may impact their sense of belonging and self-esteem. By actively involving them in activities and fostering a supportive environment, I aim to boost their confidence, strengthen their social connections, and help them develop resilience in overcoming feelings of exclusion.

Scenario 2: He/she had a fight with his/her friend.

CS-1: For this scenario, I would first let them calm down, then bring them together face-to-face to reflect about what had happened and acknowledge their feelings. I would remind them that disrespectful behaviors are not okay and then talk about the consequences of their actions. I would then ask if they want to apologize and make peace by shaking hands or high-fiving. If not, I will give them more time to cool down.

Why I would use this approach: Impulsive behavior needs a humanistic and empathetic approach.

CS-2: For scenario 2, I would use the example of a child fighting with another child over a toy (which actually has happened before in my class). I would ask the children to stop fighting and comfort the 'upset' child. I will give a one-minute time-out to the 'aggressive' child to help him/her calm down. Once both children are calm, I will talk to them about proper behavior when sharing toys. I will emphasize the importance of asking politely when wanting to borrow a toy, for example saying, "Can I borrow your toy, please?" and asking him/her to repeat it after me. While speaking to both children, I will remain calm and impartial, not showing favoritism towards either child. I will emphasize that it is never acceptable to hurt others or fight with friends over toys. There are plenty of other toys they can play with. I will ask both children to apologize to each other and resume their friendship.

Why I would use this approach: Often, egocentric children lack understanding of other people's feelings and they lack the vocabulary to express themselves politely when asking for things. This

can lead to conflict. Therefore, it is crucial to teach them the appropriate words to use when requesting for toys or items that belong to others. It is also important to show them how to reconcile after a disagreement.

CS-6: For this scenario 2, I would separate both children so they can calm down. Then I will talk to each child separately and ask for their perspective of how and why the fight happened. We would then discuss what should and shouldn't be done when a person is angry. After both children have calmed down, I will ask them to apologize to each other, shake hands, and promise to control their anger in the future. I emphasize that we need to be kind and learn to be together as they will be in the same classroom for many more months.

Why I would use this approach: I take these steps to separate the children and talk to them individually because I recognize that some children are not equal in their maturity and managing their emotions. I remind them that we have to learn to live and play nicely with others because that is what being a community is like.

Scenario 3: A person in a close relationship with him/her moved away (his/her favorite teacher, a close friend, etc.)

CS-3: For scenario 3, I would use an example of a close friend moving away. One week after a popular child had moved away, his classmates often expressed how much they missed him. They suggested a video-call so they could see and speak to him again. I contacted the child's mother and scheduled a suitable time for the video-call. The children were so thrilled to see their classmate again. After three video-calls over two weeks, the children felt happy and satisfied knowing that their friend was okay and the feelings of missing him gradually faded away.

Why I used this approach: This approach stemmed from the children's own idea. As a teacher, I facilitated the opportunity for them to overcome their longing for their friend. I believe that feeling affection for a friend is a good thing, and finding ways to cope when you lose it, is resilience. (2 other case studies also chose this scenario but they did not provide any justifications for their actions)

Scenario 4: An upsetting incident occurred at home (he/she was scolded by his/her parents, parents had a fight, the atmosphere at home is negative, etc.)

CS-1: For scenario 4, I would use the example of a death in the family. Here, I would give the child special attention, show patience and compassion, and let the child release his/her emotions and sadness through drawing or painting. I would then ask to talk about his/her drawings and listen to his stories. In class, I would avoid talking about death in general. I would slowly bring him/her back to continue with normal activities at the school but with plenty of care and gentleness. I believe play is important, it helps grieving children heal, and it's a form of therapy. I would also communicate with the child's guardian to closely monitor the child's emotional and educational progress.

Why I would use this approach: A child in grief needs a lot of loving care, sympathy and compassion from all around him/her. An approach based on patience and compassion is the best way to help a child get back to normal life.

CS-2: For scenario 4, I would use an example of an incident that has occurred. A child arrived to class seeming sad, and when asked, he explained his mother hadn't prepared his packed lunch because she was late for an important day at work. When I suggested he eat the food provided by the kindergarten, at first he was sad and was almost about to cry. I then explained that it is hard for his mother in the mornings to manage so many things, and if he ate lunch prepared by the kindergarten, it would help ease his mum's burden. The child then agreed and said he would tell his mother that he doesn't need to bring packed lunch from home anymore because he will eat the food served at the kindergarten. Although he is only 4 years old, I am happy that he can empathize the problems faced by his mother.
Why I used this approach: I wanted the child to understand the difficulties his mother has to endure with all the house chores and also her work at the office, and to feel empathy to his mother. I also wanted him to be open to try and open to change.

CS-4: I will use the example of a child whose mother was involved in a car accident. The child arrived late and showing signs of extreme distress and trembling due to the trauma of having just been involved in a minor car accident. After sitting him down, I asked him if he wanted to talk about what happened. He then recounted to me how another car suddenly collided with theirs while his younger sibling was inside the car. The loud sound of the collision and the feeling of almost being thrown from the car left him deeply shaken. His classmates were made aware of the accident and showed sympathy and willingness to help him, offering him ride to and from kindergarten.
Why I used this approach: I employed a strength-based approach. The child himself already had good ability and strengths in dealing with his difficulties, but he needed moral support and words of affirmation to reinforce his belief that everything would return to normal once his mother's car was fixed. The assurance from his friends gave him strength and motivation to believe that the problem would soon be resolved.

CS-5: For scenario 4, I would use the example of a child whose parents are in the process of getting a divorce amid a custody battle. I observed that the child is experiencing deep anxiety and has become withdrawn. I encouraged her to speak to a counsellor, but she was not comfortable talking to a 'stranger'. I asked a few students who are more mature and caring to be close to her. During lessons, I would also give her lots of encouragement and individual attention.
Why I used this approach: I saw that the child was more comfortable around her peers and felt safe in the classroom. I wanted her to know that at school, there are people who care about her and want her to be happy. So I believe emotional support from peers helped her cope with her distress.

CS-6: For scenario 4, I would use the example of a child whose parents were going through a divorce and were living separately. The steps I took to help the boy cope with his problem was by giving him more attention at school and during lessons. At other times, I would approach him and tell him stories e.g. spiritual stories, folklore, etc. His mind was then gradually filled with stories from our conversations, and he started responding and asking questions, becoming more engaged in class.

Why I used this approach: Recognizing that the child is consumed by the stresses at home, I decided to provide him with an escape through story-telling. He was then distracted from his negative feelings and instead became more curious and involved in thinking about those stories.

CS-7: Actions I would take to help the child in scenario 4: I would provide a safe and comforting space for the child to express their feelings and emotions. I would listen attentively, validate their experiences, and offer reassurance and support. I would also engage the child in calming activities or play to help them relax and cope with any stress or anxiety they may be experiencing.
Why I would use this approach: I would do so because experiencing upsetting incidents at home can be emotionally challenging for a child and may affect their well-being and behavior at childcare. By offering emotional support and a nurturing environment, I aim to help the child process their emotions, build resilience in coping with adversity, and feel secure and cared for during difficult times.

Many of the scenarios above have already been encountered by the teachers in the case studies in their daily work, and so they were able to describe how they would act and why. The teachers were cognizant that these children are still developing their social and emotional skills, therefore it is important to guide them in building their resilience through a humanistic and empathetic approach with adaptations to the special needs of the children. Some of the teachers think that spiritual guidance is also an important way to support children's development and coping skills during difficult times. Many of the teachers also indicated the need for the parents to be involved in helping their adjusting and overcoming their problems and difficulties.

5.8   Exploring Methods to Assess Children's Resilience Achievement

Measuring children's achievement in resilience is a complex task due to the multifaceted nature of resilience and the lack of standardized assessment tools. In this research report, we conduct a thematic analysis based on interviews with seven participants from various early childhood education settings. The analysis explores the methods used by educators to assess children's resilience, the availability of assessment tools, and the content of assessments.

- Lack of Formal Assessment Tools

Across multiple case studies, participants highlighted the absence of formal assessment tools specifically designed to measure children's achievement in resilience. CS-1 mentions the use of anecdote records for assessing resilience due to the absence of formal evaluation tools. Similarly, CS-7 expresses a lack of awareness regarding specific instruments for measuring resilience, citing the focus of existing assessment tools on academic performance rather than social-emotional skills. This theme underscores the need for the development of assessment tools tailored to resilience in early childhood education.

- Reliance on Observation and Judgment

In the absence of formal assessment tools, educators rely heavily on continuous observation and judgment to assess children's resilience. CS-2 admits to using her own judgment based on continuous

observations of children before and after interventions aimed at fostering resilience. Similarly, CS-3 describes using observation and anecdotal records to assess children's resilience, focusing on their efforts to overcome challenges. This theme highlights the importance of educators' expertise and intuition in evaluating children's resilience in the absence of standardized measures.

- Components of Assessments

While formal assessment tools may be lacking, educators identify key components that should be included in assessments of resilience. CS-4 outlines criteria such as self-confidence, self-esteem, emotional expression, problem-solving abilities, and courage as essential elements of resilience assessment. Similarly, CS-6 emphasizes the importance of observing children's behaviors, character, motivation, independence, and persistence in completing tasks. This theme underscores the multidimensional nature of resilience and the need for assessments to encompass a range of social-emotional skills and competencies.

The thematic analysis reveals commonalities across case studies in terms of the challenges faced in measuring children's achievement in resilience and the strategies employed by educators to overcome these challenges. While formal assessment tools are lacking, educators demonstrate resourcefulness in using observation, anecdotal records, and judgment to assess resilience. Key components of assessments include self-confidence, self-esteem, emotional regulation, problem-solving abilities, and social skills. However, there is a need for the development of standardized assessment tools tailored to resilience in early childhood education to provide educators with more reliable and valid measures of children's resilience.

In summary, measuring children's achievement in resilience presents challenges due to the lack of formal assessment tools and the multifaceted nature of resilience. Educators rely on continuous observation and judgment to assess resilience, focusing on key components such as self-confidence, emotional regulation, and problem-solving abilities. However, there is a need for the development of standardized assessment tools specifically designed to measure resilience in early childhood education. Future research should focus on identifying reliable and valid indicators of resilience and developing assessment tools that capture the complexity of children's social-emotional development.

5.9   Providing Feedback to Parents: Strategies and Approaches

Effective communication between educators and parents is crucial for supporting children's holistic development in early childhood education settings. The thematic analysis conducted to explore the types of feedback provided by EC teachers to parents regarding their children's progress and achievements on resilience and socioemotional skills (SES) reveals the following themes.

- Regular Feedback Mechanisms

Participants highlight the importance of regular feedback mechanisms for keeping parents informed about their children's progress. In CS-1, the participant mentions providing feedback on children's achievements in SES and resilience during teacher-parent meetings held every three months. Similarly, in CS-2, the participant emphasizes providing feedback to parents every two or three months, with an emphasis on academic achievements and fostering resilience. This theme underscores the significance of establishing structured communication channels to ensure consistent and timely feedback to parents.

- Individualized Communication

Educators emphasize the importance of individualized communication when providing feedback to parents. CS-3 mentions providing narrative reports to parents detailing their children's achievements in SES, characters, interests, and talents. Similarly, CS-7 discusses conveying feedback on children's resilience through informal conversations with parents, highlighting specific instances or behaviors that demonstrate resilience. This theme underscores the need for personalized feedback strategies to address parents' unique needs and concerns.

- Confidentiality and Privacy

Participants stress the importance of maintaining confidentiality and respecting parents' privacy when sharing feedback about their children. CS-1 mentions that children's records are confidential, and only parents or guardians can access them. Similarly, CS-6 discusses providing feedback to parents through WhatsApp messaging, which offers a convenient and private communication channel. This theme underscores the importance of building trust and rapport with parents by ensuring that sensitive information about their children remains confidential.

Feedback to parents in early childhood education plays a vital role in promoting children's development and fostering collaboration between educators and parents. Establishing regular feedback mechanisms, individualizing communication strategies, and respecting confidentiality and privacy are key components of effective feedback practices. Educators should strive to maintain open and transparent communication channels with parents to ensure that they are informed about their children's progress and achievements, ultimately supporting children's holistic development and well-being.

6.0 INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Practices Implemented at ECEC Facilities to Nurture Resilience

The survey findings underscore the multifaceted strategies employed by ECEC facilities in Malaysia to foster resilience among young children. One notable approach is the emphasis on building social support networks, which provides children with a sense of belonging and security. By facilitating positive peer interactions and encouraging cooperative activities, educators create environments where children feel supported and valued, fostering their resilience in the face of challenges.

Furthermore, the survey reveals a focus on teaching emotional regulation skills as a key component of resilience-building efforts. Educators recognize the importance of helping children understand and manage their emotions effectively, enabling them to cope with stressors and setbacks. Through activities such as storytelling, role-playing, and mindfulness exercises, children learn to identify and express their feelings in constructive ways, enhancing their emotional resilience.

Additionally, the promotion of independence and self-confidence emerges as a significant practice in nurturing resilience. Educators provide opportunities for children to explore, experiment, and take on challenges autonomously, fostering a sense of agency and self-efficacy. By celebrating children's achievements and encouraging them to persevere in the face of obstacles, educators cultivate a

resilient mindset that empowers children to navigate life's ups and downs with confidence and resilience.

6.2   Word Perception of 'Resilience' and 'Socioemotional Skills'

The survey findings highlight the nuanced understanding of 'resilience' and 'socioemotional skills' within the Malaysian cultural context. Participants recognize the importance of linguistic clarity and cultural sensitivity in conveying these concepts effectively to children and parents from diverse backgrounds.

The use of the Malay term '*berdaya tahan*' to convey resilience reflects cultural values such as wisdom, confidence, and empathy, which are integral to resilience in the local context. This linguistic nuance underscores the need for educators to consider cultural perspectives when discussing resilience and socioemotional skills in ECE settings, ensuring that these concepts resonate with children and families from different cultural backgrounds.

Moreover, participants emphasize the importance of integrating cultural values and traditions into resilience-building efforts, recognizing the role of cultural practices in shaping children's socio-emotional development. By incorporating culturally relevant activities and stories that celebrate diversity and promote empathy and understanding, educators create inclusive learning environments where all children feel valued and supported in their resilience journey.

6.3   Conclusion

The survey findings highlight the diverse and culturally responsive practices employed by ECE facilities in Malaysia to nurture resilience among young children. By integrating strategies that build social support networks, teach emotional regulation skills, and promote independence and self-confidence, educators create inclusive learning environments where children thrive emotionally and academically. Additionally, by considering linguistic nuances and cultural perspectives when discussing resilience and socioemotional skills, educators ensure that these concepts are accessible and meaningful to all children and families, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment in the ECE setting.

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APPENDIX 1

BOX 1: Topic Guide for the Focus Group Interview

To seek views of ECE facility managers/operators/coordinators on:
1) Words perception of "social-emotional skills" and "resilience" by ECEC facility's managers, operators and administrators
   - How do you understand the term "social-emotional skills"?
   - What would a child with high social-emotional skills be like?
   - Do you think nurturing children's social-emotional skills is important?
   - What kind of social-emotional skills do you think is essential to nurture?
   - How do you understand the term "resilience"?
   - What would a child with resilience be like?
   - Do you think nurturing children's resilience is important?
   - Do you think teachers in your facility know and familiar with the terms "SES" and "resilience"?
2) Appropriate phrasing to ask this to your teachers about "resilience".
3) Educational programs and materials implemented at the facility to nurture resilience and relevant social-emotional skills (if any).
4) Approaches use by the teachers of your facility to develop "resilience" and relevant "social-emotional skills" in your children? Please describe what you know about the specific activities and practices.

BOX 2: Topic Guide for the Individual Case Study Interview
Aims: To seek views of senior EC teachers on:

5) Word perception of "social-emotional skills"
   - Have you heard of the term "social-emotional skills"?
   - What kind of social-emotional skills do you think are essential? (in your country or culture (Please list as many skills as you can think of)
   - What would a child with a high level of social-emotional skills be like?
   - Do you think nurturing children's social-emotional skills is important?
6) Word perception of "resilience"
   - Have you heard of the term "resilience"?
   - What do you understand about the term "resilience"?
   - What would a child with resilience be like?
   - Do you think nurturing children's resilience is important?
7) If they have heard of the word "social emotional skills" or "resilience," where they learned about it.
8) What do you think are "difficulties" or "adversities" for children aged 4- 6?
9) What do you consider it would be like for a child, aged 4-6 to "adapt successfully" or "bounce back" (to be resilient)?
10) Specific activities, practices or interactions EC teachers implement to develop resilience in children.
11) Educational programs implemented at the facility to nurture resilience (if any).
12) Choose at least two selected (hypothetical) scenarios given, and describe what approaches you would use and why you would do so.
13) What evaluation tools and contents you use to assess children's achievement in resilience (If any)
14) Provision and feedback content to parents on their children's achievement in resilience (If any).