

# Innovations

## **Social-Emotional Readiness among Kindergarten Pupils of San Vicente Central School**

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**Abstract:** *This study utilized a phenomenological approach in exploring the lived experiences and views of kindergarten parents regarding the social-emotional readiness of their children. The qualitative research was grounded in Piaget's theory on social and emotional development, Bowlby's Attachment theory, and Vygotsky's Theory of Social Development. Through purposive sampling, fifteen (15) parents participated in the study. Using Colaizzi's method for data analysis, three major themes emerged: (1) social-emotional unconstraints; (2) coping mechanisms; and (3) anticipated views. The results revealed that parents faced behavioral problems regarding their children that affected their readiness to enter formal schooling. Despite these challenges, parents implemented coping practices to train their children to become independent and aspired for enhanced programs and services through strengthening the kindergarten curriculum. This study provides a foundation for future research and curriculum enhancement. It is recommended that the Department of Education provide seminars and training to kindergarten teachers to strengthen their skills and knowledge in teaching. Additionally, schools should provide facilities that develop the social-emotional readiness of pupils.*

**Keywords:** 1. Policy-maker, 2. Hyperactivity, 3. Growth, 4. Transition, 5. Academic achievement

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### **I. Introduction**

Republic Act 10157 or "The Kindergarten Education Law" made kindergarten the compulsory and mandatory entry stage to basic education. Section 2 of this Act provides that all five-year-old children shall be given equal opportunities for Kindergarten Education. Education for children in early years lays the foundation for lifelong learning and for the whole development of the child. Collie et al. (2018) inferred that social and emotional skills at school entry are also associated with later academic achievement. However, the question arises: how can we mold children holistically if they are not yet prepared to face the real world?

Hyperactivity, tantrums, and meltdowns are among the outbursts kindergarten

learners display in school due to the fact that early school age children (5-7) are still learning how to regulate their emotions. These erratic behaviors obstruct kindergarteners from acquiring the lessons taught in school. Emotional wellbeing of learners was among the domains of school readiness identified by Altun (2018). In Pan et al. (2019), findings showed that different school readiness profile membership had unique academic growth patterns and could predict academic growth above and beyond child and family background variables. Moreover, children with the Positive Development profile had higher academic achievement over time, while children with personal and social strengths profiles had the largest growth rates.

While many studies have investigated school readiness of elementary school learners, there is a scarcity in literature regarding the social-emotional readiness of kindergarten pupils as perceived by parents. Specifically, the expert views of teachers from the island schools of San Vicente Districts, Division of Northern Samar have never been sought in any research, be it quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods. Similar to the challenges faced by teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic as documented by Panela (2022a, 2022b), parents also experienced significant adjustments in preparing their children for schooling, particularly regarding social-emotional readiness.

## **II. Objectives**

The main objective was to determine the problems, supports, and apprehensions of parents regarding the social-emotional readiness of their kindergarten children.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

What problems were encountered by parents regarding their child's readiness for kindergarten?

1. What supports did parents provide regarding early childhood experiences related to social-emotional readiness?
2. How did parents perceive the preschool education curriculum?

## **III. Methodology**

### **a. Research Design**

This study employed the phenomenological approach to gain insights into the lived experiences and views of kindergarten parents regarding the social-emotional readiness of their children. Phenomenology is an approach that seeks to understand and describe the universal essence of a phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004). The researcher found this approach most appropriate to conduct a thorough analysis of the experiences of the parent-participants, similar to the approach utilized by Panela (2022a) in exploring teachers' experiences during the pandemic.

**b. Participants and Sampling**

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that allowed the researcher to deliberately select participants based on specific qualities relevant to the phenomenon being studied (Nikolopoulou, 2022). This sampling approach was deemed appropriate as it enabled the selection of information-rich cases that could provide valuable insights into parents' experiences regarding their children's social-emotional readiness. The selection criteria ensured that participants had direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation and could articulate their experiences thoughtfully. The fifteen (15) participants were parents of kindergarten pupils who were currently enrolled at San Vicente Central School, representing diverse family backgrounds, educational levels, and socioeconomic statuses. This diversity in participant profiles contributed to obtaining varied perspectives on social-emotional readiness while maintaining the commonality of having children transitioning to formal education. Prior to their participation, all parents were informed about the purpose and nature of the study and provided their consent voluntarily.

**c. Data Collection**

In gathering data for the study, semi-structured interviews were used. A semi-structured interview is a data collection method consisting of open-ended questions asked to participants, followed by probe questions to further explore their responses and topics of interest (Dejonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The researcher developed semi-structured interview questions covering the insights of participants, with follow-up questions to clarify responses and achieve the purpose of the study. The content was validated by a research expert. The researcher attached an agreement including informed consent, confidentiality assurance, time and place commitments, permission to record, and delineation of ethical principles of research. For data storage methods, the researcher used note-taking and questionnaires for comprehensive responses.

**d. Data Analysis**

The study utilized Colaizzi's process for phenomenological data analysis (cited in Sanders, 2003; Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). This method involved a thorough review of each transcript through multiple readings to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content. Following this initial immersion, significant statements relating to the social-emotional readiness phenomenon were carefully extracted from each transcript and documented on separate sheets with corresponding page and line numbers for reference. These extracted statements were then transformed into formulated meanings that captured the essence of parents' experiences. The researcher subsequently organized these formulated meanings into logical categories, clusters of themes, and subthemes to establish coherent patterns. These organized findings were then integrated into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon, followed by the development of the fundamental structure that represented the essence of parents'

experiences regarding their children's social-emotional readiness. As a final validation step, the research findings were presented to the participants to verify that the researcher's interpretations accurately reflected their lived experiences.

**e. Research Reflexivity**

As a kindergarten teacher who regularly observed the struggles of parents in addressing their children's social-emotional readiness for formal schooling, the researcher acknowledged that her professional experience might influence her perspective in ways that differ from other researchers. This positionality was carefully considered throughout the research process to maintain objectivity while leveraging professional insights. The researcher engaged in continuous self-reflection to identify potential biases and ensure these did not unduly influence data interpretation. Rather than viewing this insider perspective as a limitation, the researcher recognized it as an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, provided that appropriate measures were taken to maintain research integrity. A reflexive journal was maintained throughout the study to document personal reactions and insights, creating transparency in the research process. The researcher understood that the findings would serve as a foundation for developing targeted programs and projects at the school level, which further emphasized the importance of conducting the research with methodological rigor and ethical sensitivity.

**f. Ethical Considerations**

The study meticulously adhered to ethical principles given its focus on the lived experiences and perspectives of kindergarten parents regarding their children's social-emotional readiness. Several ethical safeguards were implemented throughout the research process. First, informed consent was obtained from all participants after providing detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and confidentiality measures. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms in all research documents and securely storing data with restricted access. The researcher was particularly attentive to the sensitivity of discussing children's behavioral challenges, ensuring that interviews were conducted in a non-judgmental, supportive environment. Member checking was employed to verify that participants' experiences were accurately represented in the findings. The study received approval from the appropriate institutional ethics committee, and ethical considerations centered on situations depicted exclusively from participants' experiences, views, and observed behaviors, avoiding any potential harm to the participants or their children.

**IV. Results and Discussion**

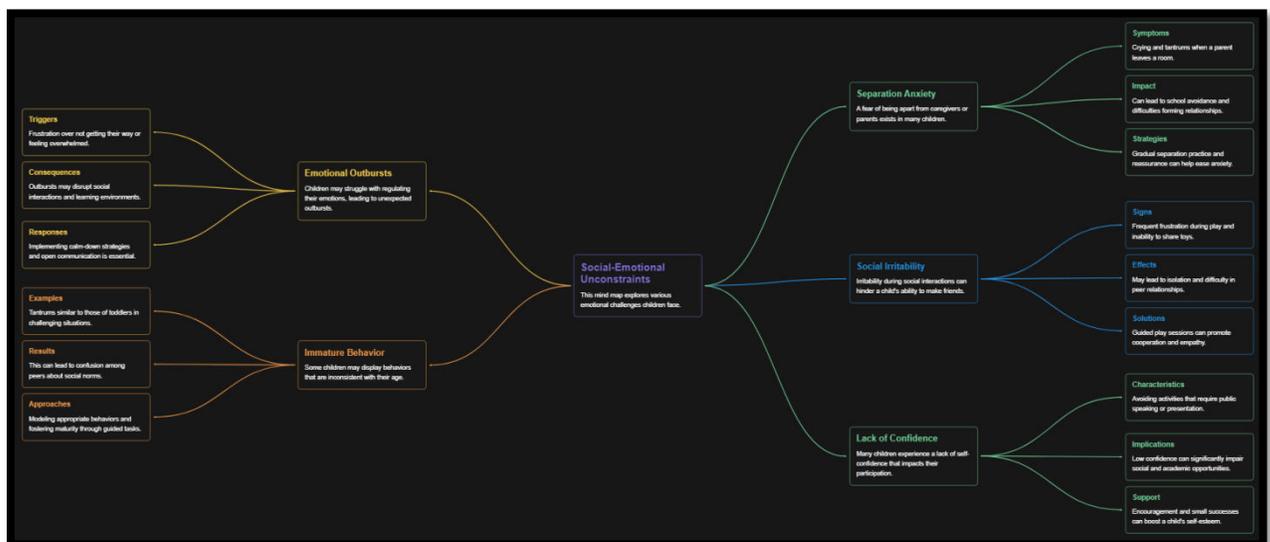
The state of social-emotional readiness of learners in kindergarten from parents' perspectives is important to determine their children's academic performance. The

information collected from parents proves useful in addressing current problems faced by teachers and may improve early childhood development curriculum. Parker et al. (2021) found that generally, most students' social-emotional skills were rated as medium to high; however, there was minimal growth each year. Students with high social-emotional skills remained at this level, and students with low social-emotional skills also did not develop significantly. Throughout the study, students with high social-emotional skills outperformed those with medium or low social-emotional skills in literacy and mathematics. This result emphasizes the importance of social-emotional skills in supporting learning and their significance in the K-12 curriculum.

From the data analyses, three themes emerged: social-emotional unconstraints, coping mechanisms, and anticipated views. These themes suggest that parents faced behavioral problems with their children that affected their readiness to enter formal schooling. Nevertheless, parents implemented coping practices to train their children to be independent and aspired for improved programs and services through strengthening the kindergarten curriculum. Green et al. (2019) demonstrated an association between school readiness—including internalizing/externalizing behaviors, fine and gross motor skills, and language abilities in early childhood—and measures of student wellbeing in later childhood.

### Social-Emotional Unconstraints

The transition from home to school is a significant challenge for both parents and children due to the new environment and educational setting. Some parents had difficulties letting go of their children because they believed their children were not yet emotionally ready.



Children should develop multifaceted skill sets, including emotional readiness, before entering kindergarten to increase their likelihood of performing well on standardized assessments, achieving skill mastery earlier, and helping close the overall achievement

gap among students (Harmon &Viruru, 2018). This theme is illustrated in the following participants' statements:

- [1] "I always assist my child in going to and from school since he cannot do it by himself. He is afraid when I'm not in his sight."
- [2] "He is crying whenever he doesn't want something."
- [3] "My child is easily irritated when playing with her friends since she is an only child."
- [4] "She behaves like a toddler because that's how she's treated, so she is not as mature as expected for her age."
- [5] "I know my child can do more compared to others in his age level, but when doing it in front of a crowd, he loses focus. He is not confident."

The social-emotional unconstraints identified in this study align with Gregory et al. (2021), who found that early developmental limitations in social-emotional domains predict diminished wellbeing outcomes in later childhood. Similarly, Parker et al. (2006) identified that difficulties in peer relationships and emotional regulation during early development create obstacles to academic performance that persist throughout schooling. The emotional outbursts, separation anxiety, and social irritability expressed by parents are significant indicators of what Collie et al. (2019) termed "behavioral profiles" that can predict future academic trajectories. Green et al. (2019) further demonstrated that these early behavioral challenges, rather than being transient developmental phases, represent potential risk factors for mental health concerns if not adequately addressed during this critical transitional period from home to school environment.

### **Coping Mechanisms**

The instinct of parenting was reflected in this theme. As parents, they did their best to ensure their children's comfort. In their respective homes, they trained their children gradually to be independent and to cope with fear and anxiety when facing a new chapter in their educational journey.



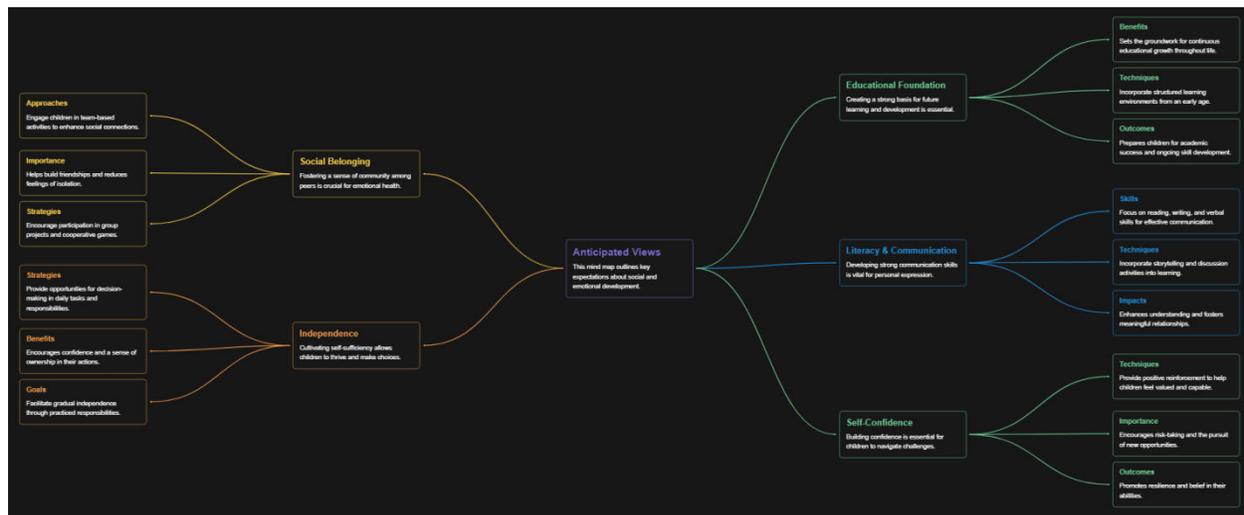
Working on the emotional readiness of learners helps ensure a better chance to reach their full potential for academic success (Wood, 2019). This theme is illustrated in the following participants' statements:

- [1] "I let him do simple household chores that he can at his early age so that he realizes the responsibility of being the eldest among the three siblings."
- [2] "Communication plays an important role in developing an emotionally-stable child. Bedtime is my best time to talk with her about the day's happenings and remind her to do good deeds."
- [3] "As a mother, I want my child to be self-motivated. I reward her for every good thing she does, even simple things."
- [4] "I allow her to play outside to boost her self-esteem and to learn how to deal with playmates and friends."
- [5] "In making choices, I let my child choose or decide whatever he wants so that he can realize the importance of decision-making and be responsible for the consequences."

The coping mechanisms employed by parents in this study reflect what Mashavave et al. (2011) describe as active knowledge-sharing alliances, where parents intuitively develop strategies that foster independence and emotional regulation. These parent-initiated interventions align with Pan et al.'s (2019) finding that children with strong personal and social skill profiles demonstrate the largest growth rates in academic contexts. Wood's (2019) assertion about emotional readiness is particularly salient when examining how parents intentionally scaffold decision-making opportunities, household responsibilities, and peer interactions. Additionally, the open communication and positive reinforcement strategies mirror what Kirk and Jay (2018) identified as essential relationship-building components that work synergistically with environmental factors to support children's social-emotional development during this critical transition period.

## Anticipated Views

Parents had expectations for every step their children took. They desired to build up their children to face the real world through kindergarten education.



Kirk and Jay (2018) noted that the three elements of environment, play, and relationships work synergistically to support children's social and emotional development. When one element does not exist or is not well-developed, the other two are affected, limiting the effectiveness of social and emotional supports for children. Classrooms where all three elements are present are more likely to offer guided participation that is desirable and supportive of kindergarten children's social and emotional development. This theme is illustrated in the following participants' statements:

- [1] "Kindergarten is the stepping stone for a strong foundation of education. Children should be inculcated with confidence, and their abilities should be discovered at an early age."
- [2] "A feeling of belongingness is important to build an emotionally-independent individual. The Kindergarten Curriculum should focus on group activities where children are trained to mingle with others."
- [3] "Children should know macro skills such as reading, writing, listening, viewing, and speaking, which are ingredients to develop holistically."
- [4] "Since kindergarten is the transition from home to formal school, children should be trained to be independent so they will view living in this world as needing interaction with others."
- [5] "The Kindergarten Curriculum should also emphasize various approaches and strategies that uplift children to believe in themselves, realizing that each one of them has a role to play."

The anticipated views expressed by parents reflect their aspirations for a

holistic kindergarten curriculum that balances cognitive, social, and emotional development. These expectations align with Altun's (2018) paradigm shift in school readiness, which emphasizes multi-dimensional preparedness beyond pure academic measures. The parents' focus on developing independence and self-confidence resonates with Harmon and Viruru's (2018) critique of rigid academic curricula that can disempower young children. Furthermore, the emphasis on social belonging and group activities supports Gregory et al.'s (2021) findings that early social-emotional competence predicts better long-term wellbeing outcomes. The parents' desire for a curriculum that develops macro skills while fostering self-belief reflects what Pan et al. (2019) identified as the "Positive Development profile," which correlates with higher academic achievement over time and demonstrates how parental expectations are instinctively aligned with evidence-based educational approaches.

## V. Conclusion and Recommendation

Three themes emerged from this study: (1) Social-Emotional Unconstraints; (2) Coping Mechanisms; and (3) Anticipated Views.

This study provides a description of the lived experiences of parents regarding the social-emotional readiness of kindergarten pupils. These parents faced behavioral problems as their children entered a new chapter in their educational journey, yet they were supportive in helping their children cope through strategies aimed at developing independent individuals based on parental expectations.

Hence, it is highly important to extract parents' expert views and experiences relative to the social-emotional readiness of their kindergarten children to guide instruction, program developers, and policy-makers. To explore parents' experiences more deeply, intensive interviews with their neighbors and community members are recommended. Further studies relating to this research are also recommended.

Similar to how teachers adapted during the pandemic by nerfing and navigating the new normal (Panela, 2022a) and finding balance amid techno-dependence (Panela, 2022b), parents also developed coping mechanisms to support their children's social-emotional development. The findings underscore the need for focused interventions and curriculum enhancements that address the social-emotional unconstraints identified by parents while building upon their existing coping strategies.

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