

## **OPTIMIZING THE ROLE OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS IN INTERVENTION OF EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD**

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### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian bertujuan menganalisis optimalisasi peran guru TK dalam intervensi gangguan emosi dan perilaku anak usia dini. Fokus penelitian diarahkan pada empat indikator, yaitu pemahaman dan pengetahuan guru mengenai perkembangan emosi-perilaku anak, keterampilan dalam melaksanakan intervensi, sikap kepedulian terhadap kondisi anak, serta kolaborasi dengan orang tua dan evaluasi intervensi. Metode menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain survei. Sampel penelitian berjumlah 30 guru TK Yayasan Sa'adah Martapura, yang ditentukan melalui teknik purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan angket berskala penilaian dan dianalisis dengan statistik deskriptif, kemudian dikategorikan dalam skala rendah, sedang, tinggi, dan sangat tinggi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peran guru TK belum optimal pada sebagian besar indikator. Rata-rata pemahaman dan pengetahuan guru (8,65), keterampilan intervensi (12,94), serta kolaborasi dan evaluasi (10,2) pada kategori rendah. Sementara, sikap dan kepedulian guru terhadap anak (21,28) pada kategori tinggi. Hal ini menunjukkan adanya kesenjangan antara kepedulian emosional guru dan kemampuan konseptual maupun teknis dalam melaksanakan intervensi. Maka, optimalisasi peran guru TK perlu dilakukan penguatan kapasitas dalam bentuk pelatihan, pendampingan, serta kolaborasi berkelanjutan dengan orang tua dan tenaga ahli. Penelitian diharapkan memberikan kontribusi bagi kajian intervensi sosial-emosional anak usia dini, serta manfaat bagi guru, sekolah, orang tua, dan pemangku kebijakan dalam merancang strategi pendidikan yang efektif, responsif, dan inklusif.

**Kata Kunci:** Guru TK, Intervensi sosial-emosional, Gangguan emosi dan perilaku, Anak usia dini.

**ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to analyze the optimization of kindergarten teachers' roles in intervening with emotional and behavioral disorders in early childhood. The research focuses on four indicators, namely teachers' understanding and knowledge of children's emotional-behavioral development, their skills in implementing interventions, attitudes of concern toward children's conditions, and collaboration with parents as well as intervention evaluation. The study employed a quantitative approach with a survey design. The sample consisted of 30 kindergarten teachers from the Sa'adah Foundation in Martapura, selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected through a rating-scale questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics, categorized into low, medium, high, and very high levels. The findings indicate that the role of kindergarten teachers has not been optimized in most indicators. Teachers' understanding and knowledge (mean score 8.65), intervention skills (12.94), and collaboration with parents and evaluation (10.2) were categorized as low. Meanwhile, teachers' attitudes and concern for children (21.28) were categorized as high. This reveals a gap between teachers' emotional concern and their conceptual as well as technical competence in carrying out interventions. Therefore, optimizing the role of kindergarten teachers requires capacity strengthening through training, mentoring, and continuous collaboration with parents and professionals. This study is expected to contribute to the development of socio-emotional intervention studies in early childhood and provide practical benefits for teachers, schools, parents, and policymakers in designing effective, responsive, and inclusive educational strategies.*

**Keywords:** *Kindergarten teachers, Socio-emotional intervention, Emotional and behavioral disorders, Early childhood.*

**INTRODUCTION**

The development of emotions and behavior in early childhood serves as a crucial foundation for character building, social skills, and academic readiness. Children who are able to regulate their emotions and behave in accordance with social norms tend to achieve greater success in both learning and social interactions, whereas emotional and behavioral disorders may create obstacles in adaptation as well as academic achievement<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, socio-emotional skills, such as empathy, self-regulation, and the ability to interact with the environment, need to be nurtured from an early age through structured interventions<sup>2</sup>. Thus, early

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<sup>1</sup> Santrock, J. W. *Life-span development (16th ed.)*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education. 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Denham, S. A., & Burton, R. *Social and emotional prevention and intervention programming for preschoolers*. New York: Springer Science & Business Media. 2020.

childhood education should not only focus on cognitive aspects but also place great emphasis on socio-emotional development.

Emotional and behavioral disorders in early childhood can be characterized by behaviors that deviate from social norms, such as aggression, excessive anxiety, or withdrawal, which often cause concern within the community<sup>3</sup>. Research findings show that emotion regulation is significantly related to the quality of peer relationships, meaning that children with good emotion regulation are more accepted by their peers, while those who struggle to control their emotions are more vulnerable to social rejection<sup>4</sup>. This underscores that emotional skills are not merely an individual issue but also a critical factor in children's social dynamics.

Unfortunately, although the importance of socio-emotional development has been widely recognized, in practice, early childhood teachers still face various challenges in the field. Many teachers tend to focus more on achieving basic academic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, while aspects of emotional nurturing and behavior management are often neglected. A lack of teacher training on strategies for managing children's emotions, limited time for instructional activities, and the pressure to meet cognitive curriculum targets result in suboptimal attention to children's socio-emotional development. Research indicates that although teachers are aware of the importance of socio-emotional learning, they encounter limitations in its implementation, such as insufficient resources and inadequate training<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, children's social and emotional development is not solely derived from maturation processes but also from learning opportunities and responses from their environment, highlighting the crucial role of active teacher and parental involvement in supporting this development<sup>6</sup>. Unfortunately, despite its importance, early childhood education often remains fragmented, with cognitive aspects prioritized over socio-emotional development.

Kindergarten teachers, as figures who interact directly with children in daily school activities, play a strategic role in detecting problems at an early stage, providing appropriate interventions, and fostering collaboration with parents to support children's development. This perspective is in line with Kauffman and

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<sup>3</sup> Sujarwanto, & Rofidah. Gangguan Emosi dan Perilaku pada Anak: Karakteristik dan Penanganannya. *Jurnal Pendidikan Khusus*, 12(2), (2020). 101–110.

<sup>4</sup> Qashmer, A. F. Emotion regulation among 4–6 year-old children and its association with their peer relationships in Jordan. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, (2023). 1180223. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1180223>

<sup>5</sup> Selian, S. N., & Amalia, H. Persepsi Pendidik tentang Pembelajaran Sosial Emosional Anak Usia Dini. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 8(2), (2024). 303–312. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v8i2.5192>

<sup>6</sup> Fuadia, N. N. Perkembangan Sosial dan Emosi Anak Usia Dini. *Wawasan: Jurnal Kediklatan Balai Diklat Keagamaan Jakarta*, 3(1), (2022). 31–47. <https://doi.org/10.53800/wawasan.v3i1.131>

Landrum, who emphasize that teachers are the primary agents in guiding and intervening in children's socio-emotional problems<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, the role of teachers is not limited to that of instructors, but also as facilitators who support children's development by being responsible for conducting early detection and providing appropriate interventions for developmental disorders experienced by children<sup>8</sup>.

Permendikbud RI Nomor 137 Tahun 2014<sup>9</sup>The National Standards for Early Childhood Education require teachers to master competencies in the areas of pedagogy, personality, social, and professional skills, including the ability to support children's emotional and social development. This means that teacher competence is not only related to delivering instructional content but also to guiding children in facing emotional and behavioral challenges. Unfortunately, practices in the field reveal a considerable gap. Many teachers demonstrate strong concern for children's well-being, yet they often lack sufficient knowledge and technical skills to effectively carry out socio-emotional interventions. This condition is reinforced by findings indicating that early childhood teachers are vulnerable to stress due to high job demands without adequate intervention capacity<sup>10</sup>. As a result, the potential of early interventions, which should be able to reduce long-term problems, becomes less than optimal.

Therefore, this study specifically aims to analyze the optimization of kindergarten teachers' roles in addressing emotional and behavioral disorders in early childhood through four main indicators: teachers' understanding and knowledge of children's emotional-behavioral development, teachers' skills in implementing interventions, their attitude of concern toward children's conditions, and collaboration with parents along with evaluation of interventions. This topic is important because the success of socio-emotional interventions depends not only on curriculum approaches but also on the quality of teacher-child interactions, teachers' technical skills, and collaborative support from parents. This study seeks to fill the gaps identified in classroom practices, where, although teachers demonstrate high concern for children's socio-emotional conditions, they often lack

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<sup>7</sup> Kauffman, J. M., & Landrum, T. J. *Characteristics of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders of Children and Youth (11th ed.)*. Pearson Education. 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Maryatun. *Peran guru dalam pembelajaran anak usia dini*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar. 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Permendikbud Republik Indonesia Tentang Standar Nasional Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini. Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia Nomor 137 Tahun 2014. Jakarta: Kemdikbud.

<sup>10</sup> Stormont, M., & Young-Walker, L. Supporting professional development needs for early childhood teachers: An exploratory analysis of teacher perceptions of stress and challenging behavior. *International Journal on Disability and Human Development*, 16(1), (2017). 99-104. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijdhhd-2016-0037>

the technical skills and knowledge to carry out effective interventions. By analyzing the extent to which kindergarten teachers' roles have been optimized in socio-emotional interventions, this study is expected to identify areas that still need improvement. Consequently, it is anticipated that the study will produce practical recommendations for enhancing teacher capacity through training programs, professional mentoring, and strengthening school–parent collaboration. Additionally, this research aims to contribute theoretically to the development of early childhood education studies, particularly in the field of socio-emotional interventions, and to provide practical benefits for teachers, schools, parents, and policymakers in designing more effective, responsive, and inclusive educational strategies.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach as it focuses on the measurement of numerical data and statistical analysis to objectively describe phenomena<sup>11</sup>. This approach was chosen to enable the research results to provide a measurable and generalizable depiction of the level of optimization of kindergarten teachers' roles in the intervention of emotional and behavioral disorders among early childhood learners. The type of research used in this study is a survey research, which involves collecting data from respondents through questionnaires to obtain information about attitudes, opinions, or specific population characteristics.<sup>12</sup> The survey design was selected because it is considered the most appropriate method to comprehensively illustrate how kindergarten teachers' roles are implemented in conducting socio-emotional interventions for young children.

The main variable of this study is the optimization of teachers' roles in the intervention of emotional and behavioral disorders in early childhood. This variable is operationalized into four indicators: (1) teachers' understanding and knowledge of children's emotional–behavioral development, (2) teachers' skills in implementing socio-emotional interventions, (3) teachers' attitudes of care toward children's conditions, and (4) teachers' collaboration with parents and intervention evaluation.

The data collection instrument was a questionnaire in the form of a rating scale consisting of 25 items, which were developed based on four indicators. Each statement uses a 5-point Likert scale, namely: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. This scale was chosen to allow

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<sup>11</sup> Sugiyono. *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta. 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Creswell, J. W. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (4th ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014

respondents to easily assess the extent to which each statement aligns with their actual conditions, while also enabling the researcher to quantitatively measure each indicator.

The instrument was tested for validity and reliability with the assistance of SPSS version 30. The validity test was carried out using product moment correlation, with an r-table value of 0.361 as the significance threshold (N=30). The results showed that 20 items were valid with r-calculated > 0.361, while 5 items were found to be invalid. The results of the validity test are presented in Table 1. The reliability test, conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha method, yielded a value of 0.934, indicating that the instrument possesses a very high level of reliability and is suitable for use as a data collection tool. The results of the reliability test are presented in Table 2.

**Table 1.**  
**Results of the Questionnaire Validation Test**

Item	r- count	r-table	Information	Item	r- count	r-table	Information
1	0,725	0,361	Valid	14	0,597	0,361	Valid
2	0,232	0,361	Invalid	15	0,570	0,361	Valid
3	0,709	0,361	Valid	16	0,313	0,361	Invalid
4	0,738	0,361	Valid	17	0,512	0,361	Valid
5	0,738	0,361	Valid	18	0,597	0,361	Valid
6	0,738	0,361	Valid	19	0,536	0,361	Valid
7	0,705	0,361	Valid	20	0,722	0,361	Valid
8	0,602	0,361	Valid	21	0,138	0,361	Invalid
9	0,738	0,361	Valid	22	0,506	0,361	Valid
10	0,231	0,361	Invalid	23	0,678	0,361	Valid
11	0,400	0,361	Valid	24	0,007	0,361	Invalid
12	0,602	0,361	Valid	25	0,722	0,361	Valid
13	0,798	0,361	Valid				

**Table 2.**  
**Reliability Test Results**

Questionnaire	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Optimizing the Role of Kindergarten Teachers	0,934	20

Data were collected by distributing questionnaires directly to the respondents. The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaires independently based on their experiences in supporting early childhood development. Once collected, the data were checked for completeness and consistency before analysis. The data were analyzed using quantitative descriptive statistics to obtain an overview of the level of optimization of kindergarten teachers' roles for each indicator.

The analytical steps included assigning scores to each response item, calculating the total and mean scores for each indicator, and determining categories based on predetermined score intervals: low, moderate, high, and very high. Furthermore, the analysis was followed by interpreting the results to explain how teachers' levels of understanding, skills, empathy, and collaboration in social-emotional interventions reflect the overall optimization of their roles. In this way, the analysis not only presents the average values but also describes the relationships among components and provides an empirical interpretation of the findings.

This study was conducted in accordance with research ethics principles. The researcher first obtained official permission from the Sa'adah Foundation in Martapura before collecting the data. All respondents' identities were kept confidential, and the data were used solely for academic purposes. Participation was entirely voluntary and without coercion, and the researcher ensured that no actions were taken that could cause any physical or psychological harm to the participants.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

From the distribution of questionnaires on optimizing the role of kindergarten teachers in intervening with emotional and behavioral disorders in early childhood, research data were obtained and then analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. This analysis aimed to classify the scores of each indicator into four categories—low, moderate, high, and very high—based on predetermined score intervals. The categorization was determined using the following formula:

$$\text{Interval} = \frac{\text{Maximum Score} - \text{Minimum Score}}{\text{Number of Criteria}}$$

Each indicator contained a different number of questionnaire items; therefore, the maximum and minimum scores were calculated specifically for each. Based on the interval calculation for the understanding and knowledge indicator, the score ranges were classified as follows: 4–8 (low), 9–12 (moderate), 13–16 (high), and 17–20 (very high). The average total score obtained was 8.66, which falls into the low category. For the intervention skills indicator, the score ranges were 6–12 (low), 13–18 (moderate), 19–24 (high), and 25–30 (very high), with an average total score of 12.94, also categorized as low. Next, for the attitude and concern indicator,

the classification was 5–10 (low), 11–15 (moderate), 16–20 (high), and 21–25 (very high). The average total score of 21.29 indicates that this indicator falls into the very high category. Finally, for the collaboration and evaluation indicator, the score classification was 5–10 (low), 11–15 (moderate), 16–20 (high), and 21–25 (very high). The average total score of 10.2 places it in the low category. The detailed results of the analysis for each indicator are presented in Table 3.

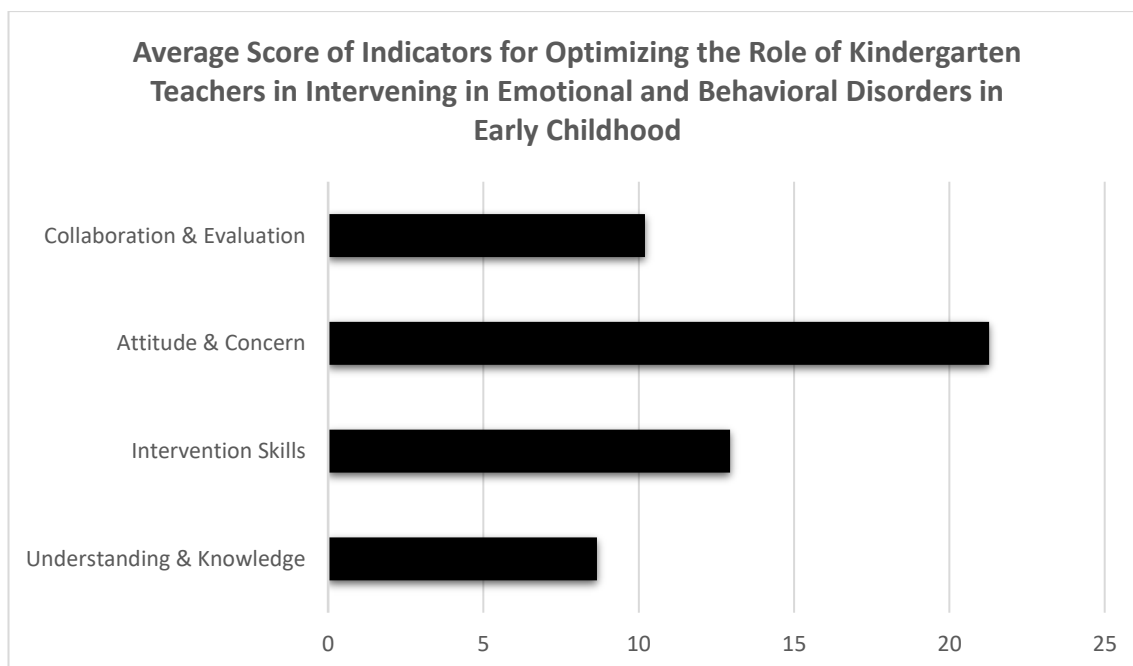
**Table. 3****Analysis Results of Each Indicator**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Average Score</b>	<b>Kategori</b>
Understanding and Knowledge	8,65	Low
Intervention Skills	12,94	Low
Attitude and Concern	21,28	Very high
Collaboration & Evaluation	10,2	Low

Thus, the results of the analysis indicate that although kindergarten teachers demonstrate a very high level of attitude and concern toward children's socio-emotional conditions, the aspects of understanding, intervention skills, as well as collaboration and evaluation remain in the low category. This finding suggests the need to enhance teachers' capacity in terms of knowledge, technical skills, and collaborative abilities in addressing children's problems so that their role in intervening with emotional and behavioral disorders in early childhood can be further optimized. The graph illustrating the average scores for each indicator is presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.**  
**Average score graph**



The findings of this study reveal that the optimization of kindergarten teachers' roles in the intervention of emotional and behavioral disorders in early childhood is not evenly distributed across all indicators. Although teachers demonstrate very high levels of attitude and care, the aspects of understanding, intervention skills, as well as collaboration and evaluation remain in the low category. This condition reflects a gap between teachers' affective potential and the cognitive and practical capacities required in the intervention process.

The Attitude and Concern indicator obtained an average score of 21.28, which falls into the very high category. This indicates that teachers possess a strong sense of sensitivity, empathy, and responsibility in supporting children with emotional and behavioral disorders. This aspect serves as an essential foundation for teachers to carry out effective interventions, as without emotional concern, the intervention process would be difficult to implement consistently. This finding is consistent with a recent study showing that teachers' empathy and willingness to personally support children's emotional needs are strongly correlated with their self-efficacy in helping children regulate emotions<sup>13</sup>. However, such attitudes need

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<sup>13</sup> Ye, X., Ahmad, N. A., Burhanuddin, N. A. N., Na, M., & Li, D. Preschool teachers' emotional competence and teacher self-efficacy towards preschool performance in Zhejiang Province of China. *Behavioral Sciences*, 14(4), (2024). 280. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14040280>

to be complemented with knowledge-based skills, so that interventions do not merely remain at the level of intention but can produce a real impact on children's developmental outcomes.

Conversely, the Understanding and Knowledge indicator obtained an average score of 8.65, which falls into the low category. This low score indicates that most teachers do not yet fully understand the concept of emotional and behavioral disorders, including their types, causes, and impacts on children's development. Such limitations affect teachers' ability to design appropriate strategies to support children's needs. This finding aligns with a meta-analysis indicating that the effectiveness of interventions largely depends on teachers' initial understanding of the types of behaviors, their causes, and the specific needs of each child<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, it is essential to enhance teachers' knowledge capacity through training, workshops, and academic mentoring, so that a solid understanding can serve as the foundation for implementing appropriate and effective interventions.

For the Intervention Skills indicator, the study also showed a low score of 12.94. This finding emphasizes that although teachers demonstrate a high level of concern, their practical skills in implementing interventions remain insufficient. This limitation is evident in teachers' difficulties in applying behavioral strategies, employing empathetic communication techniques, and utilizing emotional regulation methods that should support children's guidance and mentoring processes. This result is consistent with research findings showing that classrooms led by teachers who apply emotion-focused teaching practices—such as modeling emotions, responding to children's emotions, and providing direct instruction about emotions—exhibit better social-emotional development among children compared to classrooms with less of such practices<sup>15</sup>.

Furthermore, the Collaboration and Evaluation indicator obtained a score of 10.2, which also falls into the low category. This condition illustrates that teachers still have limited ability to establish effective cooperation with parents, psychologists, or other relevant stakeholders. In addition, evaluation of the progress of children who have received interventions has not been conducted in a structured manner, making it difficult to objectively assess the effectiveness of intervention programs. In fact, teacher-parent collaboration greatly influences preschool

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<sup>14</sup> Dong, X., Burke, M. D., Ramirez, G., Xu, Z., & Bowman-Perrott, L. A meta analysis of social skills interventions for preschoolers with or at risk of early emotional and behavioral problems. *Behavioral Sciences*, 13(11), (2023). 940. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13110940>

<sup>15</sup> Curby, T. W., Zinsser, K. M., Gordon, R. A., Casey, E. G., et al. Emotion-focused teaching differs across preschool activity settings. *AERA Open*, 10(1), (2024). 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584241287469>

students' achievement; conversely, without proper evaluation mechanisms, it becomes challenging to measure the effectiveness of the implemented strategies<sup>16</sup>.

The root of this condition does not lie solely within individual teachers but also within the education system and work environment, which have not yet fully supported the strengthening of teachers' competencies in social-emotional intervention. In teacher education programs, there is often an emphasis on general theories of emotional education without sufficient practical training or real-case simulations. As a result, teachers are less accustomed to translating their attitudes into concrete actions in classroom situations. In fact, the literature on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) highlights that effective teacher interventions must be accompanied by continuous professional training and collective reflection<sup>17</sup>.

Furthermore, the heavy workload of kindergarten teachers, particularly in administrative tasks and managing large numbers of students, makes it difficult for them to allocate dedicated time for individual observation and intervention. The OECD (2020) TALIS 2018<sup>18</sup> Results report also indicates that teachers in many countries, including Indonesia, spend a significant portion of their time on administrative and non-teaching tasks, thereby limiting opportunities for professional development and reflective practice. In other words, although teachers already demonstrate strong empathy and concern, the system that governs them has not provided sufficient support in the form of practical training and adequate time allocation. As a result, these positive attitudes have not yet been fully translated into effective and sustainable intervention skills within the school environment.

Overall, these findings indicate a discrepancy between the affective aspects (attitude and concern), which are already strong, and the cognitive, skill-based, and collaborative aspects, which remain weak. Therefore, teacher capacity development needs to be implemented comprehensively, encompassing the individual level, the institutional or school level, and the national education policy level. Through such multilevel efforts, it is expected that teachers' caring attitudes can be transformed into practical skills and meaningful collaboration, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of social-emotional interventions for early childhood development.

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<sup>16</sup> Ashfaq, O., Sami, A., & Yousaf, H. Parent-Teacher Collaboration and its Effect on Student's Achievement at Pre-School Level. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 8(2), (2024). 386-399. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2024\(8-II\)32](https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2024(8-II)32)

<sup>17</sup> Schonert-Reichl, K. A. and emotional learning and teachers. *The Future of Children*, 27(1), (2017). Social 137–155. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1145076.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> OECD TALIS 2018 Results (Vol. I): Teachers and school leaders as lifelong learners. *OECD Publishing*.(2020) <https://doi.org/10.1787/19cf08df-en>

**CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that the role of kindergarten teachers in intervening in emotional and behavioral disorders among early childhood learners is not yet optimal, particularly in the aspects of knowledge, intervention skills, collaboration, and evaluation, even though teachers' attitudes and empathy levels are very high. This condition indicates a gap between emotional concern and conceptual as well as technical competence in implementing interventions. The findings enrich the literature on early childhood education by emphasizing that teacher empathy alone is insufficient to bring about behavioral change in children without being supported by scientific knowledge and practical skills grounded in social-emotional development theory. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen teachers' capacity through practice-based training, continuous mentoring, and active collaboration with parents and professionals, so that teachers' empathy can be translated into effective and sustainable intervention skills. This study is limited by its descriptive approach, which only illustrates the empirical condition without examining the extent to which one variable directly influences another. Hence, future research is recommended to examine the effectiveness of collaborative intervention models to enhance children's social-emotional development more comprehensively.

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