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VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN CHILDCARE PROVIDERS AND CHILDREN IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

This research was aimed to identify the verbal and non-verbal interactions between childcare providers and children in learning activities. Verbal interactions encompass praises, persuasions, instructions, prompting, pampering, and advice. Non-verbal interactions encompass language, touch, and social expressions.

This study relied on quantitative data. A total of sixty-nine childcare providers in Sarawak were selected to complete the questionnaire on verbal and non-verbal interactions during learning activities. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were used

to describe the quantitative data. In the questionnaire, there were six constructs for the items that were related to verbal interactions.

Based on the results, the highest means (3.88) were accounted for by praises and advice. On the other hand, the lowest mean among all the items was 3.68, which was accounted for by persuasion. As for the results of the non-verbal-interaction items, language had the highest mean of 3.90. Conversely, touch had the lowest mean of 3.83.

This study found that non-verbal interactions between childcare providers and children were more prevalent than verbal interactions during learning activities. In learning, both types of interactions play an important role in enlivening the learning processes, apart from enhancing the children's experience, skills, and knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

During learning activities, interactions occur spontaneously between childcare providers and children. Interactions between childcare providers and children during class and outdoor activities include verbal and non-verbal interactions. Conversations between the childcare providers and children are examples of verbal interactions, while silence is a non-verbal interaction. Interactions throughout the processes of care and education encourage children to engage in learning processes, apart from enhancing their experiences, skills, and knowledge. Interactions help childcare providers achieve the objectives of the learning outcomes effectively. Through play pedagogy, children have the opportunity to interact during learning activities. Interactions between childcare providers and children during learning activities can be divided into verbal interactions and non-verbal interactions (Buckley, 2003; Loy, Aminah & Nordin, 2015; Hruska, 2017). The aim of this study was to identify the verbal and non-verbal interactions between childcare providers and children during learning activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Siti Noor Fauzah and Nik Suryani (2013) as well as Norsita and Zainal (2014) have found that non-verbal and verbal interactions between childcare providers and children during learning activities began with preparations of lesson plans, teaching materials, strategies, and processes. In learning activities, interactions are a key process by which childcare providers can deliver skills and knowledge to the children. Indoor and outdoor learning activities encourage interactions. Through interactions, childcare providers can plan the activities based on the learning outcomes. Most conversations between childcare providers and children are in the form of lectures in learning activities. There are only one-way interactions between childcare providers and children. Two-way interactions happen when childcare providers interact with focus on indirect effects such as conversations, questioning, as well as acceptance of the children's feelings and opinions. Interactions play an important role in the learning processes, apart from enhancing the children's experiences, skills, and knowledge.

Interactions help enhance children's interest and attention in play and learning activities. To create effective interactions during education activities, childcare providers need to practise democratic leaderships and group activities, ask questions, use appropriate words and responses, practise child-centred strategies, choose and use appropriate teaching aids, create a conducive environment for interactions in the classroom, as well as guide and encourage

disabled children to interact with other children or adults (Loy, Aminah & Nordin, 2015; Hruska; Remsperger-Kehm, 2017).

Children can express their feelings, ideas, and opinions thoughts through verbal interactions in a clear and easy manner (Skinner, 2014). In this study, examples of verbal interactions were childcare providers praising the children when the latter completed an activity; consoling the children who were sulking, angry, or sad; encouraging the children to perform daily routines such as arranging shoes and keeping bags; encouraging the children to ask questions; providing continuous responses to the children; as well as cultivating discipline (e.g. by asking the children to line up when taking food, and demonstrate courtesy when eating).

Non-verbal interactions refer to interactions which involve body movements like sign language, facial expressions, and eye contact. Meanwhile, touch encompasses pats on the shoulder, kissing, and hand-shaking, while sounds comprise intonations (high or low) and volumes (loud or soft) (White & Gardner, 2012; Morency & Krauss, 2013; Shennum & Bugental, 2013; O'Kane & Goldbart, 2016; Neill, 2017; Mehrabian, 2017). In this study, non-verbal interactions occurred when the childcare providers used appropriate language on the children; touched the children appropriately, and used the appropriate social expressions during interactions with the children.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilised quantitative data. Quantitative data was collected via questionnaires administered on the childcare providers who have been purposive sampled in Sarawak. A total of sixty-nine childcare providers were selected to complete the questionnaire which contained items on verbal and non-verbal interactions during learning activities. This research instrument was partly derived from the research Development of a Comprehensive and Integrated Model of Quality Malaysian Early Childhood Care and Education-Project 3/TLA: Determining Contributing Factors of Quality ECCE. The instrument was divided into two sections, namely Section A which concerned verbal interactions and Section B which concerned non-verbal interactions between childcare providers and children. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0 software was used to calculate the frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations of the quantitative data. .

FINDINGS

Verbal Interactions between childcare providers and children during learning activities.

Table 1 VERBAL INTERACTIONS					
CONSTRUCT	ITEM	N	MEAN	PERCENTAGE (%)	STD. DEVIATION
PRAISE	Praise the children when they had done an activity.	69	3.88	97.00	0.32
PERSUASION	Console the children who are sulking, angry or sad.	69	3.68	92.00	0.70
INSTRUCTION	Encourage the children to	69	3.78	94.50	0.51

	practice the daily routines such as arranging shoes and keeping bag.				
PROMPTING	Encourage the children to ask questions.	69	3.80	95.00	0.41
PAMPERING	Give continuous responses to the children.	69	3.80	95.00	0.44
ADVISE	Cultivate the children's discipline by line up while taking food and follow the courtesy when eating.	69	3.88	97.00	0.32

Table 1 shows the results with respect to the verbal interactions between childcare providers and children during learning activities. The verbal interaction items comprised six constructs, which were praise, persuasion, instruction, prompting, pampering, and advice. A total of 69 childcare providers were selected to answer the questionnaire. Based on the results, the highest mean was 3.88, which was accounted for by both praise and advice. On the other hand, the lowest mean among all items was 3.68, which was accounted for by item 82 in the persuasion construct. Meanwhile, the other items in the instruction, prompting, and pampering constructs had means of 3.78, 3.80, and 3.80 respectively. Overall, the average mean of the items was 3.80.

The items in the praise and advice constructs had the highest score of 97%, with the standard deviations being 0.32 and 0.323 respectively. This was followed by the items in the prompting and pampering constructs which had a score of 95%, with the standard deviations being 0.41 and 0.44 respectively. Subsequently, the items in the instruction construct had a score of 94.50% with a standard deviation of 0.51. Lastly, the items in the persuasion construct had the lowest score of 92% with a standard deviation of 0.70.

Non-verbal Interactions between Childcare Providers and Children during Learning Activities

Table 2 NON-VERBAL INTERACTIONS					
CONSTRUCT	ITEM	N	MEAN	PERCENTAGE (%)	STD. DEVIATION
SIGN LANGUAGE	Used the sign language appropriate with the children.	69	3.90	97.50	0.30
TOUCHING	Use the appropriate touch on children according to the situations.	69	3.83	95.75	0.38
FACIAL EXPRESSION	Use the appropriate social expression during interactions with the children	69	3.86	96.50	0.36

Table 2 shows the results with respect to the non-verbal interactions between childcare providers and children during learning activities. The non-verbal interaction items comprised three constructs, which were sign language, touch, and facial expressions. A total of 69 childcare providers were selected to answer the questionnaire. Based on the results, the items in the sign language construct had the highest mean of 3.90, with a score of 97.50% and a standard deviation of 0.30. This was followed by items in the facial expression construct which had a mean of 3.86, with a score of 96.50% and a standard deviation of 0.36. Lastly, the items in the touch construct had the lowest mean of 3.83, with a score of 95.75% and a standard deviation of 0.38.

DISCUSSION

In terms of verbal interactions during learning activities, the most frequently-employed types of interactions were praise and advice while the least frequently-employed types of interactions was persuasion. The six constructs of verbal interactions during learning activities were praise, persuasion, instruction, prompting, pampering, and advice.

In terms of non-verbal interactions during learning activities, the most frequently-employed type of interaction was sign language while the least frequently-employed type of interactions was touch. The three constructs of verbal interactions during learning activities were sign language, touch, and facial expressions.

CONCLUSION

All in all, this study has shown that during learning activities, non-verbal interactions between childcare providers and children were more frequently used than verbal interactions. Both types of interactions played an important role in the learning processes, apart from enhancing the children's experiences, skills, and knowledge. The findings were consistent with those of Siti Noor Fauzah and Nik Suryani (2013) as well as Norsita and Zainal (2014), whereby interaction play an important role in the learning activities.

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