Whole School Approach on Social and Emotional Guidance among Rural Elementary Schools: Regular Teachers' Involvement

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This study explored the implementation of the whole school approach (WSA) on social and emotional guidance (SEG) in rural primary schools in Sarawak, Malaysia. Regular teachers (N = 2,532) in Sarawak responded to an electronic survey. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) and the socio-emotional guidance model were employed to explore the level of implementing the WSA on SEG among the respondents. Factors affecting the intention to be involved in SEG were also explored. This paper provides insights for policymakers and educational administrators to promote the social and emotional well-being of rural students in a developing country.

Keywords: social and emotional guidance, whole school approach, teacher engagement, rural education, elementary education

INTRODUCTION

The concept of the whole school approach (WSA) on the social and emotional guidance (SEG) among students has been the philosophy of education policy around the world (Dudu, 2019; Goldberg et al., 2019; Hearne et al., 2017; International Bureau of

Education-United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [IBE-UNESCO], n.d.; Jacobs & Struyf, 2013; Jamtsho, 2015; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Lam & Hui, 2010; Meyers et al., 2019; Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2018; Yue, 1995). A common saying illustrates the importance of the WSA on promoting the social and emotional development (SED) of children: "It takes a whole village to raise a child." The WSA implies a "collective and collaborative action in and by a school community" (IBE-UNESCO, n.d.). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2003) has been advocating for the creation of a conducive school environment that promotes the social and emotional well-being (SEW) of students. Among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, Hong Kong and China actively promote the SEW of students in schools (Hui & Lo, 1997). The National Education Philosophy in Malaysia also emphasizes the balanced and harmonious development of students, which includes addressing their intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical needs (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2018). Notably, studies have proven that the WSA has a substantial impact on the SED of students (Goldberg et al., 2019). Consequently, a healthy SED will have a positive influence on the development of their physical, mental, and learning outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011; WHO, 2003).

Regular Teachers' Involvement in SEG

The regular teachers, who comprise the majority of school personnel, play a key role in the implementation of the WSA on SEG (Hearne & Galvin, 2015; Hearne et al., 2017; Hui, 2002; Lam & Hui, 2010). However, studies have revealed that regular teachers face difficulties in providing SEG to their students (Jacobs & Struyf, 2013; Nichols et al., 2017; Yuen et al., 2007). For example, Nichols and colleagues (2017) mentioned that the confusion of roles between educators, school counselors, and school psychologists undermines the WSA on SEG in the United States. Yuen and colleagues (2007) suggested that one of the reasons Hong Kong primary school teachers were less involved in SEG tasks was the time constraints they faced. Likewise, Malaysian teachers have also reported similar challenges, with the additional burden of perceived redundant clerical work ("Teachers: Teaching No Longer A Passion," 2018). In addition to the burdensome clerical work, teachers' enthusiasm for ensuring their students' well-being is weakened when they are assigned to rural schools, which often lack basic infrastructure and resources, particularly in the often hard-to-reach outskirts of Sarawak, Malaysia ("Manyin: Education Ecosystem," 2018). According to the Minister of Education, Science, and Technological Research, Sarawak has 428 rural schools without a treated water supply and 721 rural schools without proper road access, let alone Internet connectivity ("Manyin: Education Ecosystem," 2018). These constraints are attributed to the large geographic area of the state, the fragmented rural population, and the lack of funds. As a result, the state government faces difficulty in placing a sufficient number of qualified teachers in rural schools because most prefer to teach in urban schools with sufficient resources ("Teachers' Woes in Rural Sarawak," 2010). Teachers in rural Sarawak have been struggling with transportation and communication barriers that separate them from their families; these struggles indirectly cause them to lose focus

and affect their morale over time. The decrease in the teacher-to-student ratio further impedes the ability of rural teachers to address the social and emotional needs of their students through personalized interactions ("STU Welcomes," 2018). Many scholars have also emphasized that the magnitude of social and emotional problems is often greater among rural students than their urban counterparts due to their lower socioeconomic status (Ahmad et al., 2015; Kasmini et al., 1993).

Problem Statements and Study Objectives

There have been few studies related to the implementation of the WSA on SEG in Malaysia. In two studies, researchers explored the implementation of the WSA on SEG among regular teachers by investigating their perceptions of their role and involvement in SEG (Jacobs & Struyf, 2013; Lam & Hui, 2010; Tiernan, McDonagh, & Casserly, 2020). However, these studies were conducted in Belgium (Jacobs & Struyf, 2013), Hong Kong (Lam & Hui, 2010) and Ireland (Tiernan, McDonagh, & Casserly, 2020), thus providing limited generalization to other countries with different education systems and different sociodemographic characteristics in their populations. In our study, we sought to understand the implementation of the WSA on SEG among the rural primary schools in Sarawak from the perspective of the regular teachers. We achieved this objective through questioning the regular teachers of rural primary schools about their (a) level of intention to be involved in SEG; and (b) factors affecting their intention to be involved in SEG. Notably, this study is the continuation of a previous study in which the researchers investigated the facilitators and barriers to regular teachers' engagement in the development of the social and emotional well-being of students among rural primary school teachers in Sarawak (Tnay et al., 2020). The previous study revealed the themes about factors affecting regular teachers' involvement in SEG through face-to-face in-depth interviews. Our current study produced findings that could be generalized to the regular teachers in rural primary schools of Sarawak. This approach will provide valuable insights to policymakers and other stakeholders regarding the strategies to promote regular teachers' involvement in SEG as WSA.

Literature Review

Education Policy on the WSA Toward SEG in Malaysia

As mentioned previously, the Malaysian National Education Philosophy emphasizes that the ultimate goal of the education system is to facilitate a balanced and harmonious development of students, which includes addressing their intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical needs (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2018). Notably, such a national education philosophy regarding SEG has been implemented through the establishment of the Guidance and Counseling Services Section in the Education Planning and Research Division back in 1963. Prior to this, regular school teachers, particularly the class teachers and the discipline teachers, handled the social and emotional problems of their students. Following the establishment of the counseling services section, the Malaysian Ministry of Education planned to assign teachers who are trained in guidance and counseling to every school. However, the plan faced obstacles during its early stage when there was a lack of funding for producing and

mobilizing the trained school counselors (Awang & Mirasa, 1984). Moreover, the goal of promoting SEG through school counselors was further undermined when neither the implementation of the WSA on SEG nor the implementation of strategies to promote SEG among students by the teachers or school counselors was clearly stipulated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). The blueprint merely discussed the SEG provided by trained teachers and specialists among students with special education needs. Hence, there has been a lack of clear policy framework on implementing the WSA on SEG in the schools.

Implementation of SEG Through School Counselors in Malaysia

Researchers in Malaysia have found that students are reluctant to seek help from school counselors due to stigmatization of counseling services (Chai, 2000; Low et al., 2013). They prefer to seek help from their peers or family members over school counselors (Chai, 2000). Those who require counseling by school counselors are regarded as problematic, leading to peer rejection (Othman & Awang, 1993). It was found that only 16% of Malaysian students who had social and emotional problems sought help from the school counselors (Chai, 2000). Furthermore, there has been difficulty in ensuring every school has a school counselor due to scarcity of trained school counselors and inadequate human resource optimization (Zandi et al., 2019).

Amidst the challenges of implementing SEG in schools, school counselors in Malaysia have been advocating for the WSA toward SEG (Kok & Low, 2017; Low et al., 2013). Low and colleagues (2013) interviewed 12 secondary school counselors on their experiences of working in the existing counseling services system. They revealed that the collaboration between the regular teachers and school counselors is important to promote efficiently the SED of the students. One respondent mentioned that "teachers have the advantage of identifying students' problems since they have to manage students' inappropriate behaviors in the classroom" (Low et al., 2013, p. 194). Such a claim is deemed logical because students spend significantly more time with regular teachers compared with school counselors. In addition, the authors also mentioned the importance of collaborations with students' parents, school administrators, and community members in promoting SEG in schools (Low et al., 2013).

Studies on Evaluating the Implementation of WSA on SEG

To the best of our knowledge, few or none of the past studies have explored the implementation of the WSA on SEG in a holistic manner. A holistic approach requires the investigation of all stakeholders' intentions and actual implementation of SEG using qualitative and quantitative study approaches. The stakeholders implementing SEG are policymakers, non-governmental organizations, educators, school administrators, regular teachers, school counselors, the parents of students, community leaders and members, and others. Notably, in most of the past studies, researchers merely involved a single stakeholder to explore the implementation of SEG. For example, in two studies the authors explored regular teachers' perceptions of their role and involvement in SEG

(Jacobs & Struyf, 2013; Lam & Hui, 2010). Meanwhile, both studies on the implementation of WSA on SEG in Malaysia only involved school counselors (Low et al., 2013; Kok & Low, 2017).

Theories Employed to Study the Implementation of the WSA on SEG

Our study employed the theory of planned behavior (TPB) by Ajzen (1991), the socio-emotional guidance model (Jacobs & Struyf, 2013), and the sense of community (SOC) theory (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) to study the implementation of the WSA on SEG among regular teachers.

The TPB posits that behavior is the outcome of an individual's behavioral beliefs (beliefs about the likely consequences of the behavior), normative beliefs (beliefs about the normative expectations of others), and control beliefs (beliefs about the presence of facilitating or hindering factors to perform the behavior). The aggregates of behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs produce an attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control toward the behavior, respectively. Subsequently, the combination of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control form behavioral intention, which in turn leads to actual behavior. In addition, perceived behavioral control directly predicts actual behavior, especially when such behaviors "pose difficulties of execution that may limit volitional control" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 1). In our study, we posited that the level of intention to be involved in SEG reflects the degree of implementation of the WSA on SEG. We also hypothesized that the behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, control beliefs, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control influence the intention to be involved in SEG.

Jacobs and Struyf (2013) proposed and empirically tested a socio-emotional guidance model that aimed to explain what facilitates regular teachers to integrate SEG in their classrooms. In other words, the model reflects the implementation of the WSA on SEG from the perspective of regular teachers. Furthermore, Jacobs and colleagues (2013) also developed a scale to measure the degree of implementing SEG in schools among regular teachers: the Socio-Emotional Guidance Questionnaire (SEG-Q). The SEG-Q consists of 10 dimensions: school climate, school vision, principal's support, structures and procedures, professionalization, communication among teachers, communication with parents, broad task perception, narrow task perception, and guiding competence. We posited that all these dimensions, except the narrow task perception, have a positive influence on the implementation of the WSA on SEG among regular teachers.

Lastly, we employed the SOC theory to study the implementation of WSA on SEG among regular teachers. According to McMillan and Chavis (1986), SOC has four components: membership, influence, reinforcement of needs, and shared emotional connection. The "membership" is "the feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). The "influence" is "the feeling that members matter to one another and to the group" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). The "reinforcement of needs" is a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The "shared emotional connection" is about the bonding established through quality interactions among the

community members (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Furthermore, Chavis and colleagues (2008) developed the Sense of Community Index (SCI) to quantify SOC. This enabled us to test empirically the SOC theory. We hypothesized that the SOC toward the community surrounding the schools influences the involvement of regular teachers in SEG. The greater SOC that regular teachers have, the greater their willingness to collaborate with the community members to address the social and emotional problems of their students. Such collaboration is particularly important because the behaviors of students from rural indigenous communities are often influenced by the community members who stay close to them throughout their lives. In addition, as most of the regular teachers in rural primary schools of Sarawak are not from the local community, we hypothesized that having a SOC influences their willingness to engage in SEG.

METHOD

Study Design

This was a cross-sectional survey study conducted from February 1, 2021 to May 27, 2021. Prior to the actual study, a pilot study was conducted from January 1, 2021 to January 31, 2021 (Figure 1). We planned to include 50 respondents for the pilot study; these respondents were excluded from the actual study. The purposes of the pilot study were (a) to explore the reliability of the scales and (b) to obtain the standard deviation (SD) on the intention of regular teachers to be involved in SEG to calculate the minimum sample size for the actual study. An electronic questionnaire in Google Forms was distributed to the regular teachers of rural primary schools in Sarawak through emails sent to the official emails of all rural primary schools in Sarawak. Prior permission to conduct this study was obtained from the Ministry of Education Malaysia and the Sarawak State Education Department. The list of rural primary schools in Sarawak and their official emails was officially obtained from the Sarawak State Education Department.
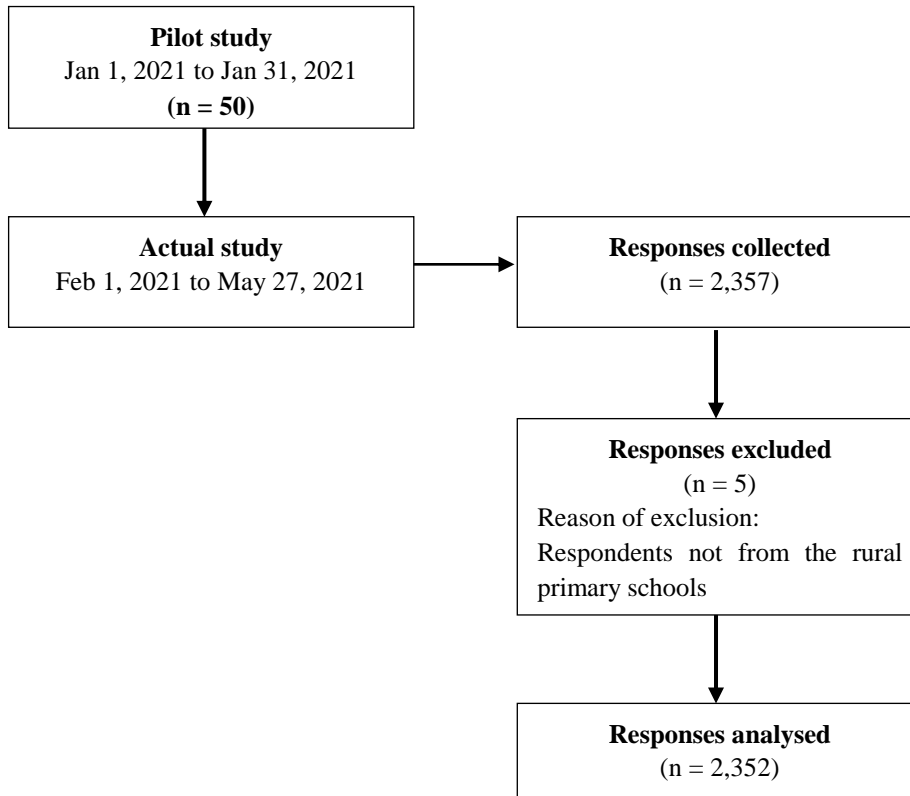
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┌─────────────────────────┐
│      Pilot study        │
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│       (n = 50)          │
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│     Actual study        │────────▶│   Responses collected   │
│ Feb 1, 2021 to May 27, 2021 │     │      (n = 2,357)        │
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                                    │   Responses excluded    │
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                                    │ Reason of exclusion:    │
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                                    │ primary schools         │
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                                    │   Responses analysed    │
                                    │      (n = 2,352)        │
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Figure 1
Steps of research methods

Study Sites

Sarawak State, one of the 13 states in Malaysia, includes the largest amount of territory in Malaysia and has a population of approximately 3 million that is spread out (Sarawak State Government, 2021). It has the most rural schools in Malaysia (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). The Ministry of Education Malaysia (2015) has defined three categories of rural schools in Malaysia: P1, P2, and P3. The "P" is the abbreviation of the Malay word Pedalaman, which means rurality. The categorization of P1 to P3 is based on the ease of accessing the school and the availability of basic infrastructure; these diminish from P1 to P3, with P3 having the worst. Notably, all these rural schools cannot be directly accessed by land transport alone. These rural schools require multiple means of transportation to access, including flight, longboat, land

vehicles, and trekking through the jungle. In addition, these schools often lack basic infrastructure such as electricity, clean water, mobile phone connections, and Internet access (Aubrey, 2020; "Here's the Reason Why," 2019; Marwan et al., 2012; Thomas, 2021). In our study, we also included the primary schools located in the outskirts or suburbs as part of the rural primary schools. This is because schools located in the outskirts of a remote area, while accessible by land transportation, still face the problems of bad road conditions and a lack of basic infrastructure ("PSB Questions Why," 2020).

Samples

Based on the definitions of rural schools in this study, there are a total of 1,095 rural primary schools in Sarawak. All regular teachers teaching in these rural primary schools were invited to participate in the study. Notably, "regular teacher" in this study solely refers to the classroom teachers, who are not school administrators, school counselors, school psychologists, administrative personnel from a district education office, or other school personnel.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \sigma^2}{d^2}$$

The sample size formula for estimating a mean, , was used to calculate the minimum sample size. Based on the findings of the pilot study, the SD on the level of intention to be involved in SEG was 0.93. By assuming a 95% confidence interval and a significance level of $p < .05$, the minimum sample size required is 1,329.

Instruments

As mentioned in the literature review, the TPB, the socio-emotional guidance model, and the SOC theory were employed to explore the WSA on SEG from the perspective of regular teachers. The themes elicited from the interviews (Tnay et al., 2020) were used to construct the TPB questionnaire, following the guidance by Ajzen (1991). The SEG-Q (Jacobs et al., 2013) and the SCI version 2 (Chavis et al., 2008) were adopted. The reliabilities of the scales were examined during the pilot study. Cronbach's alphas of the TPB scale for the behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, control beliefs, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control and intention were .982, .847, .807, .907, .941, .823, and .953, respectively. Cronbach's alphas of the SEG-Q for school climate, school vision, principal's support, structures and procedures, professionalization, communication among teachers, communication with parents, broad task perception, narrow task perception, and guiding competence were .883, .884, .937, .944, .868, .903, .912, .715, .834, and .910, respectively. Cronbach's alphas for the SCI-2 membership, reinforcement of needs, influence, and emotional connection were .880, .848, .857, and .878, respectively. These values indicated that the scales adopted were highly reliable.

There were 10 background characteristics of the respondents captured: (1) age, (2) gender, (3) zoning of school, (4) category of school rurality (P1–P3), (5) years of working experience as a teacher, (6) years of working at the current school, (7) type of teacher (class and/or subject teacher), (8) availability of a counselor at the school, (9) attended any training on SEG, and (10) type of social and emotional problems among the students encountered by respondents in the past.

Data Analyses

All the responses in Google Forms were exported to a Microsoft Excel sheet. Subsequently, the Microsoft Excel sheet was exported to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 software (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). The data cleaning was conducted through exploratory analyses by using the "Frequency" and "Explore" functions of the SPSS. Notably, no missing data was found because the questions were preset as mandatory in the Google Forms. The normality of the numerical variables was checked with a histogram and a Q-Q plot. The variables of the TPB, the SEG-Q, and the SCI-2 are all numerical and thus the mean and SD were used to report the centrality of the responses.

Multiple linear regression (the enter method) was use to analyze the factors affecting the intention to be involved in SEG. Prior to that, a bivariate correlation test using Pearson's correlation test was used to examine the association between each variable of the TPB, the SEG-Q, and the SCI-2 with the intention to be involved in SEG. One-way analysis of variance and independent t tests were used to examine the associations between background characteristics, which are categorical variables, and the intention to be involved in SEG. All the statistical tests were two tailed and $p < .05$ indicates statistical significance.

FINDINGS

Respondents' characteristics

A total of 2,357 responses were collected. Out of these responses, five were invalid because the respondents were not from the rural primary schools. As such, only 2,352 responses were included for analysis; the details are presented in Table 1. Most of the respondents were male (67.7%), had an average age of 40.9 years old (SD = 8.88), were class teachers and subject teachers (62.5%), worked as a teacher for an average of 15.7 years, worked at their current primary school for an average of 13.7 years, had no counselor at their schools (72.0%), taught in a rural school located in the outskirts (86.9%) and central zone of Sarawak (54.0), and had not been trained in SEG (79.2%).

The most common type of social and emotional problems encountered in the past was absence from school (68.6%), followed by unstable family structures (62.6%), neglected by parents (58.9%), assaulted by peers (58.5%), rejected by peers (57.3%), aggressive behaviors (55.7%), mental and emotional problems (48.6%), unhealthy behaviors (44.6%), problematic parents (40.5%), and abused by family members (40.0%) (Table 1).

Table 1

Background characteristics of respondents and the associations with their intention to be involved in social and emotional guidance (N = 2,352)

Characteristics of respondents (N = 2352)	Intention to involve in SEG (Score range = 1 – 7)			
	n (%)	Mean (SD)	P value	Post-hoc P value / (Mean difference)
Gender			0.423[a]	n/a
Female	760 (32.3)	4.9 (1.15)		
Male	1592 (67.7)	4.9 (1.09)		
Type of teacher			0.882[a]	n/a
Being class teacher and subject teacher	1470 (62.5)	4.9 (1.11)		
Being subject teacher only	882 (37.5)	4.9 (1.11)		
Availability of counselling teacher at school			0.169[a]	n/a
Have counselling teacher at school	658 (28.0)	4.9 (1.12)		
No counselling teacher at school	1694 (72.0)	4.9 (1.11)		
Category of school's rurality			0.035[b]	0.035[c]
Rural P1	49 (2.1)	4.9 (1.12)		
Rural P2	114 (4.8)	5.0 (1.05)		
Rural P3 (I)	144 (6.1)	5.1 (1.22)		
Outskirt (J)	2045 (86.9)	4.9 (1.10)		
Zoning of the primary school			0.612[b]	n/a
Northern zone (I)	402 (17.1)	4.9 (1.11)		
Central Zone (J)	1270 (54.0)	4.9 (1.12)		
Sounthern Zone	680 (28.9)	4.8 (1.08)		
Past training in SEG			<0.001[a]	n/a
Trained	490 (20.8)	5.1 (1.08)		
Not trained	1862 (79.2)	4.8 (1.11)		
Age (mean = 40.9; SD = 8.88)	n/a	n/a	0.003[d†]	n/a
Years of working experience as teacher (mean = 15.7; SD = 9.17)	n/a	n/a	0.007[d‡]	n/a
Years of service at current primary school (mean = 13.7; SD = 9.13)	n/a	n/a	0.058[d]	n/a
Social and emotional problems encountered in the past (may choose more than 1)				
Unstable family structure	1472 (62.6)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Neglected by parents	1385 (58.9)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Abused by family members	940 (40.0)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Problematic parents	953 (40.5)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Rejected by peers	1347 (57.3)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Assaulted by peers	1376 (58.5)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Absent from school	1614 (68.6)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Aggressive behaviours	1311 (55.7)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mental and emotional problems	1142 (48.6)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Unhealthy behaviours	1050 (44.6)	n/a	n/a	n/a

[a]Independent t test

[b]One-way ANOVA; Levent statistic > 0.05

[c]Tukey HSD post-hoc test

[d]Pearson's correlation test (2-tailed).

[†]The correlation coefficient is -0.06

[‡]The correlation coefficient is -0.06

Level of Intention to Be Involved in SEG and Other Variables of the TPB, the SEG-Q, and the SCI-2

Overall, the mean level of intention to be involved in SEG (scored from 1 to 7) among the respondents was moderately high (M = 4.9, SD = 1.11) (Table 2). Among the variables of the TPB (scored from 1 to 7), the normative beliefs had the highest mean value of 5.45 (SD = 0.93), followed by behavioral beliefs (M = 5.26, SD = 1.09), attitude (M = 5.00, SD = 1.02), perceived behavioral control (M = 4.77, SD = 1.03), control beliefs (M = 4.73, SD = 0.98), and finally subjective norms (M = 4.64, SD = 1.12).

Among the variables of the SEG-Q (scored from 1 to 5), the variable with the highest mean was broad task perception (M = 4.34, SD = 0.54), followed by school vision (M = 4.33, SD = 0.59), communication among teachers (M = 3.73, SD = 0.78), principal's support (M = 3.65, SD = 0.80), guiding competence (M = 3.64, SD = 0.62), professionalization (M = 3.52, SD = 0.75), school climate (M = 3.45, SD = 0.64), communication with parents (M = 3.44, SD = 0.79), and finally structures and procedures (M = 3.24, SD = 0.89). Notably, the narrow task perceptions, which contain negative statements, yielded a mean value of 3.44 (SD = 0.86).

Among the variables of the SCI-2 (scored from 0 to 3), the variable with the highest mean value was reinforcement of needs (M = 1.84, SD = 0.54), followed by shared emotional connection (M = 1.79, SD = 0.57), influence (M = 1.65, SD = 0.54), and finally membership (M = 1.63, SD = 0.55).

Background Factors Associated With the Intention to Be Involved in SEG

The level of intention to be involved in SEG (scored from 1 to 7) was significantly associated with age (p = .003), years of working experience as teacher (p = .007), school rurality (p = .035), and past training in SEG (p < .001) (Table 1). Specifically, regular teachers from the most rural schools had a significantly greater intention to be involved in SEG (M = 5.1, SD = 1.22) compared with those from schools in the outskirts (M = 4.9, SD = 1.10). Besides, regular teachers who had been trained in SEG had a significantly greater intention to be involved in SEG (M = 5.1, SD = 1.08) compared with those who had not been trained (M = 4.8, SD = 1.11). The age (r = -.06) and years of working experience as teacher (r = -.06) were both negatively associated with the intention to be involved in SEG (Table 1).

Table 2
Descriptive statistics of the variables of the theory of planned behavior, the socio-emotional guidance model, and the sense of community theory

Variables	Scoring range	Number of items	Mean (SD)
Variables of Theory of Planned Behaviour			
Behavioural beliefs	1-7	9	5.26 (1.09)
Normative beliefs	1-7	4	5.45 (0.93)
Control beliefs	1-7	6	4.73 (0.98)
Attitude	1-7	4	5.00 (1.02)
Subjective norms	1-7	6	4.64 (1.12)
Perceived behavioural Control	1-7	4	4.77 (1.03)
Intention to involve in SEG	1-7	3	4.90 (1.11)
Variables of Socio-emotional Guidance Model			
Narrow task perception	1-5	2	3.44 (0.86)
Broad task perception	1-5	2	4.34 (0.54)
School climate	1-5	4	3.45 (0.64)
School vision	1-5	2	4.33 (0.59)
Guiding competence	1-5	6	3.64 (0.62)
Professionalization	1-5	3	3.52 (0.75)
Communication among teachers	1-5	2	3.73 (0.78)
Communication with parents	1-5	3	3.44 (0.79)
Principal support	1-5	3	3.65 (0.80)
Structures & procedures	1-5	6	3.24 (0.89)
Variables of Sense of Community			
Reinforcement of needs	0-3	6	1.84 (0.54)
Membership	0-3	6	1.63 (0.55)
Influence	0-3	6	1.65 (0.54)
Shared emotional connection	0-3	6	1.79 (0.57)

Variables of the TPB, SEG-Q, and SCI-2 That Influence the Intention to Be Involved in SEG

When entering all variables of the TPB, the SEG-Q, and the SCI-2 as predictors toward the intention to be involved in SEG in the regression model, the variable with the highest standardized coefficient ($\overline{\beta}$) was perceived behavioral control ($\overline{\beta}$ = .35, p < .001), followed by subjective norms ($\overline{\beta}$ = .25, p < .001), attitude ($\overline{\beta}$ = .21, p < .001), communication with parents ($\overline{\beta}$ = .08, p < .001), principal's support ($\overline{\beta}$ = .07, p < .001), shared emotional connection ($\overline{\beta}$ = .04, p = .039), and finally normative beliefs ($\overline{\beta}$ = .04, p = .049). The model was found to predict 72.8% of the variance toward the intention to be involved in SEG (R^2 = .728, standard error = .58) (Table 3).

Table 3
Multiple linear regression for variables related to the intention to be involved in social and emotional guidance (N = 2,352)

Factors of intention to involve in SEG	Multiple Linear Regression[b,c]		
	Std. coeff.	95% CI	P value
TPB variables			
Attitude towards SEG**	0.21	0.18 – 0.26	<0.001
Subjective norms towards SEG**	0.25	0.21 – 0.29	<0.001
Perceived behavioural control towards SEG**	0.35	0.34 – 0.43	<0.001
Behavioural beliefs	0.03	-0.00 - 0.06	0.056
Normative beliefs*	0.037	0.00 – 0.09	0.049
Control beliefs	0.002	-0.02 – 0.03	0.888
Socio-emotional guidance model variables			
School climate	-0.02	-0.07 – 0.01	0.164
School vision	0.004	-0.04 – 0.05	0.746
Principal's support**	0.07	0.04 – 0.14	<0.001
Structures & procedures	-0.01	-0.06 – 0.02	0.395
Professionalization	0.004	-0.04 – 0.06	0.808
Teacher communication	-0.02	-0.08 – 0.01	0.143
Communication with parents**	0.08	0.06 – 0.15	<0.001
Guiding competences	0.02	- 0.03 – 0.09	0.338
Narrow task perception	-0.01	-0.04 – 0.02	0.397
Broad task perception	0.16	-0.03 – 0.09	0.265
Sense of Community[d]			
Reinforcement of needs	-0.02	-0.11 – 0.04	0.394
Membership	-0.02	-0.11 – 0.05	0.455
Shared emotional connection*	0.04	0.00 – 0.16	0.039

SEG: Social and emotional guidance; TPB: Theory of planned behaviour; * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.001$
[a] Variables with p value less than 0.200 in univariate analysis were included into the multivariate model using enter method.
[b] Multicollinearity was checked and not found (variance inflation factor < 5, tolerance > 0.2); normality of residuals was checked (using histogram and normal P-P plot of regression standardized residual) and found fulfilled.
[c] R square equals to 0.728 (standard error = 0.58); Durbin Watson test statistic = 0.202
[d] The sense of community subscale influence is excluded from the regression because of multicollinearity (Tolerance =0.180; Variance inflaction factor = 5.563). According to Hair and colleagues (2010), variable with tolerance < 0.2 and variance inflaction factor > 5 in multivariate regression should be excluded due to multicollinearity.

DISCUSSION

Along with the previous qualitative study conducted by Malaysian researchers (Tnay et al., 2020), the current quantitative study further extends the understanding of the degree of implementation of the WSA on SEG from the perspectives of regular teachers in rural primary schools in Sarawak. The employment of the TPB, the SEG-Q, and the SCI-2 further enabled us to understand the implementation of the WSA on SEG from different perspectives (perceptions, beliefs, attitude, sense of community, etc.) and the factors that may influence the intention to be involved in SEG. Most of the subsequent discussion is related to information from newspaper articles and a teacher's personal journal due to the paucity of similar studies.

Intention to be involved in SEG

Based on the level of intention reported, the degree of implementation of the WSA on SEG among regular teachers is moderately high. This outcome is consistent with findings from other countries that regular teachers treat SEG as part of their responsibility (Hearne et al., 2017; Jacobs & Struyf, 2013; Lam & Hui, 2010; Malak et al., 2018). The previous qualitative study conducted in Malaysia also supported the current quantitative findings when one of the teachers interviewed said, "I do not feel annoyed when dealing with problem students because it is my responsibility. Moreover, my intervention might influence the students' passing rate and also the learning" (Tnay et al., 2020, p. 834). The respondents of this study had high broad task perception, which shows they did not perceive that the SEG should be handled by school counselors. This was supported by the finding that there was an intention to be involved in SEG regardless of the availability of school counselors. Furthermore, their normative beliefs, attitude, and subjective norms toward SEG positively affected their intention. Moreover, most of the schools' principals were supportive in their involvement in SEG. Khun-inkeeree et al. (2021) found that principal who were supportive creates a positive school climate that foster collaborations between the teachers.

In the context of this study, it is imperative to provide training on social and emotional guidance among teachers who serve in rural schools in Sarawak. Much needs to be done to address the development of resources, especially in rural schools. The fact that all students in Sarawak should have equal access to resources, including well-trained and professional teachers, makes it even more important for policymakers to reconsider and reform teacher education. To achieve a developed status, states and countries must initiate education reform and indeed the development of SEW in students immediately. These novel and simple changes can potentially revolutionize Malaysia's educational system, and schools must look into rigorous teacher programmes that train teachers to deal with the development of students' SEW. School systems must also be improved to make school environments more equitable. With this, teachers must have the opportunity to focus on the basics, such as individualized counselling and guidance. Benchmarking with the best education systems in the world is necessary for such changes to be made.

Factors affecting regular teachers' involvement in SEG

One should not underestimate the barriers that would undermine the intention of regular teachers to be involved in SEG. We found that the regular teachers who were not trained in SEG had a significantly lower intention to be involved in SEG than those who had been trained. Besides, post hoc independent t tests revealed that those who had not been trained had significantly weaker perceived behavioral control towards SEG ($p < .001$), which in turn led to a lower intention to be involved in SEG than those who had been trained. This finding is in line with a study conducted in Hong Kong (Lam & Hui, 2010) where regular teachers were less likely to address complicated social and emotional problems (e.g., domestic violence, single parents, etc.) due to a lack of skills. Such complicated social and emotional problems were nevertheless encountered by the

respondents of this study. Moreover, many rural schools did not have school counselors and the students often lacked access to or could not afford professional assistance outside the schools. Hence, we urge the policymakers and education administrators to provide training to regular teachers, especially for those who teach in rural primary schools. The training may provide knowledge of the SED of children, the importance of the WSA, the SEG resources provided by the government and non-governmental organizations, how to communicate effectively with parents and community members, and some first-hand experiences on SEG shared by the trainers to reinforce what has been taught. Such training, although not as holistic and in-depth as the professional training that school counselors have, serves as a more feasible approach to train more teachers with key knowledge on SEG amidst the shortage of school counselors.

Interestingly, the age and years of experience as a teacher inversely influenced the intention to be involved in SEG. Specifically, age ($r = -.074$, $p < .001$) and years of working experience as a teacher ($r = -.062$, $p < .001$) were both inversely associated with the control beliefs, which in turn inversely affected their intention to be involved in SEG. Notably, the control beliefs of this study were about the time constraints faced by the regular teachers due to unanticipated events, burdensome clerical work, family obligations, and rushing the syllabus. Subsequent post hoc Pearson's correlation tests between the control beliefs and age and working experience as a teacher revealed that rushing the syllabus correlated the most with age ($r = -.104$, $p < .001$) and working experience as a teacher ($r = -.096$, $p < .001$), followed by burdening clerical work (age: $r = -.061$, $p < .001$; working experience: $r = -.045$, $p < .001$) and unanticipated events (age: $r = .060$, $p < .001$; working experience: $r = -.043$, $p < .001$). The family obligations did not significantly correlate with age and working experience. Heavy workload due to a high student-to-teacher ratio and clerical work leads to exhaustion among regular teachers in Hong Kong and Malaysia. This in turn affects the effectiveness of their SEG (Lam & Hui, 2010; Tnay et al., 2020).

In addition, regular teachers who taught at the P3 rural schools (schools with the greatest rurality in this study) had a greater intention to be involved in SEG compared with those who taught at schools in the outskirts (schools with the least rurality in this study). A regular teacher who was posted to a P3 rural primary school mentioned that teachers in rural schools often "play the role of parent, carer, well-wisher and mentor" to their students (Bernama, 2020, para. 1). According to a teacher named Austin (Bernama, 2020), he had to travel the entire day first by land transport on dusty, steep, and hilly terrain, followed by express boat and longboat to get to the school. As the students also live far away from their home, they live together with the teachers at school hostels and quarters. This lifestyle inevitably establishes a parent-like teacher–student relationship. Austin further elaborated that "we served as their teacher, as well as their parents. Their own parents had placed their trust in us to educate their children" (Bernama, 2020, Noble profession section, para. 7). These real-life experiences of rural teachers support our finding that teachers of P3 rural schools had greater intention to be involved in SEG compared with those who teach at the schools with the least rurality. Notably, the shared emotional connection was the only component of the SCI-2 that predicted the intention to be involved in SEG. This finding can be explained by the fact that rural teachers

spend more time with their students and stay among their students' communities, thus establishing strong bonding with the parents and community members (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Such bonding between teacher, parents, and community members establishes a strong partnership in developing the social and emotional well-being of students as part of the WSA (Bryan & Henry, 2008; Deng et al., 2018).

Theoretical contributions

The three theories employed to deduce the factors affecting the intention to get involved in SEG have proven to be useful as they were able to predict 72.7% of the variance in the intention to get involved in SEG. This is the first in the literature, that proposed a combination of three theories in explaining the intention of regular teachers to be involved in SEG. Notably, both Jacobs and Struyf were the first that proposed a model specifically to explain regular teachers' involvement in the SEG. Hence, this study contributes to the extant body of knowledge through expanding the socio-emotional guidance model. Besides, the instrument that had been pretested and pilot-tested in Sarawak can be used in future studies that aim to explore the SEG in Malaysia.

In the model of this study, the TPB variables were found to have the strongest coefficient towards the intention, followed by SEG-Q and SCI-2. This is expected because the TPB has been the gold standard theory in studies related to behavioral intentions (Lautenbach & Heyder, 2019; Nisson & Earl, 2020; Opoku et al., 2020). For an instance, Opoku and colleagues (2020) conducted a scoping review and concluded that the TPB can predict teachers' intentions towards practicing inclusive education.

On the other hand, this is the first study that operationally defined the community as the community surrounding the schools, instead of the community within the schools. To the best of our knowledge, most previous studies on SOC operational defined the community as the personnel within an organization (Lenzi et al., 2017; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Hence, current study provides a new perspective where the community outside but close to an organization, could have potential influence on the behavioural intention of personnel within the organization. This is particularly relevant when the external community has close relationship with the personnel of internal community.

Practical and Societal Implications

First, as perceived behavioural control and training in SEG both greatly influenced the intention to get involved in SEG, it was proposed that training on SEG should be included as a compulsory subject in teacher training syllabuses, regardless of their subject expertise. Second, as subjective norms and broad task perception influence the intention to get involved in SEG, policymakers should continue to promote the societal norm about the importance of a teacher nurturing pupils in all aspects, rather than just emphasizing academic performance. Third, as attitude influences the intention to get involved in SEG, policymakers should understand that promoting teachers' involvement in SEG is as important as promoting teachers' commitment to helping their students achieve academic excellence. This is because having social and emotional problems inevitably affects students' academic performance.

Fourth, as active communication with students' parents predicts their intention to get involved in SEG, policymakers should provide clear guidance to students' parents about their responsibility in working closely with teachers to nurture their children. Furthermore, there should also be guidance for regular teachers on social and emotional problems that may require communication with students' parents over the solutions. Such guidance to students' parents and teachers would prove useful in facilitating a WSA to SEG through strengthening teacher-parent collaboration. Fifth, principal's support was a predictor of regular teachers' intention to get involved in SEG. Hence, policymakers should provide clear guidance to principals on their role in promoting a WSA to SEG. Furthermore, policymakers should also include the promoting of a WSA to SEG in schools as one of the performance appraisal indicators of principals. For example, school principals should have clear vision statements on a WSA to SEG for regular teachers, school counsellors (if any), school administrative staff, students' parents and community leaders. They may also have clear structures and procedures for all parties to work collaboratively to promote the social and emotional well-being of students. For instance, they may call for regular meetings for all stakeholders to discuss any social and emotional problems that require a team approach to address them effectively. Sixth, the shared emotional connection with surrounding community members was a predictor of regular teachers' intention to get involved in SEG. Hence, policymakers should consider minimizing unnecessary clerical work to ensure teachers have sufficient time to build relationships with community members through participation in community events. Based on the findings of this study, a framework for promoting a WSA to SEG is proposed (Figure 2). This framework is deemed useful for policymakers to have a quick overview of the elements that influence the implementation of a WSA to SEG as well as the stakeholders involved.
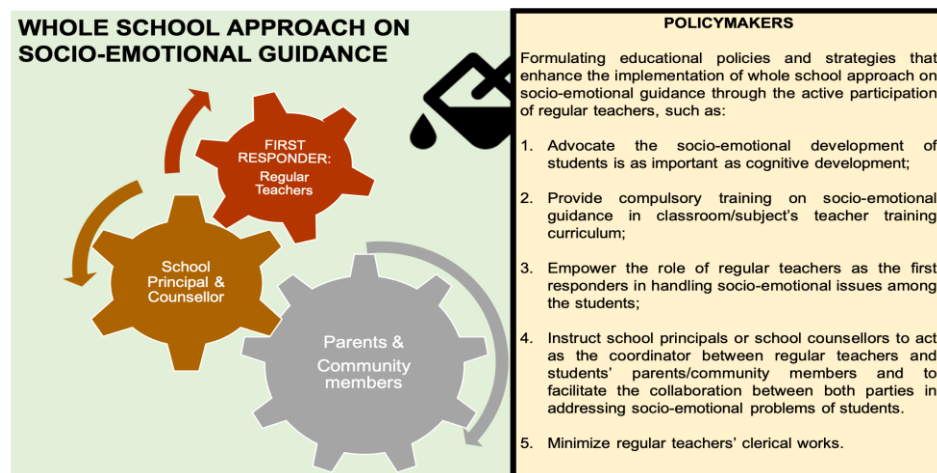

Figure 2
Proposed framework on strengthening the implementation of a whole-school approach to socio-emotional guidance based on the findings of this study

LIMITATIONS

This study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and outbreak in the country, but the respondents were asked to answer the questions based on their experience before the pandemic. Hence, the accuracy of the findings might be affected by recall bias. In addition, the applicability of the findings of this study might be limited due to the new norms during the pandemic, where teacher–student–parent–community interactions have been fundamentally changed. Specifically, the previous bonding between teachers and their students has been greatly challenged, and teachers have been struggling to maintain such bonding. Besides, it is harder for teachers to detect students' social and emotional problems through virtual classrooms. Most of the teachers who had their own children during the school lockdown were exhausted from having to prepare teaching material for virtual classrooms and taking care of their children at home during the day. All these factors have imposed immense challenge for regular teachers to continue to be involved in SEG. Hence, we urge the school administrators, educationists, educators, school counselors, parents, community leaders, and other stakeholder to come together to think about how to implement the WSA on SEG amidst the new norms of the COVID-19 pandemic and potential future health crises.

CONCLUSION

Our study is the first that has been conducted in Malaysia to explore the implementation of the WSA on SEG in rural primary schools from the perspectives of regular teachers. Overall, the intention to be involved in SEG among regular teachers was moderately high. The characteristics of respondents that were found to significantly influence their intentions were age, years of working experience as teacher, school rurality, and past training in SEG. In the multiple regression model, the perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, attitude, communication with parents, principal's support, shared emotional connection, and normative beliefs predicted 72.8% of behavioural intentions. Future studies may explore the WSA on SEG by including the responses from the school administrators, community members, and parents.

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