



Title: Children's Well-Being: A report of a Three-year Follow Through Study in Singapore

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The following study was presented by our colleagues Emeritus Prof Marjory Ebbeck, Dr. Minushree Sharma and Dr. Sheela Warriar at the 22nd PECERA Conference in July, 2022

Summary

Decades of research in early childhood have established that the initial years of life are crucial for children's development. Positive experiences and close relationships with caregivers play a significant role in shaping children's brain development, which in turn has long-term implications. Therefore, it is vital to carefully plan and implement a well-designed curriculum for young children in childcare settings. In line with this, Ebbeck et al. (2022) introduced a relationship-based curriculum (RBC) grounded on five key principles: children's well-being, attachment, involvement, the primary caregiving model, and fostering a sense of agency for the child. This study examines the effects of the RBC on children aged 0-3 years who were followed for three years across childcare centres in Singapore.

To investigate the main research question regarding the impact of the RBC on the well-being of infants, toddlers, and young children, a mixed methods longitudinal approach was employed. Over the span of three years, the well-being progress of the children was assessed using the Laever's well-being scale, which encompasses three domains: happiness and satisfaction, social functioning, and disposition. The final sample comprised 101 children (initial sample = 153) from 20 childcare centres in Singapore, selected through cluster sampling to ensure representation across all geographical regions. Additionally, to account for socioeconomic diversity, 15% of the children were from low-income families. Trained observers conducted four observations throughout the day, rating the children's well-being scores on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest well-being level.



The findings indicate a significant increase in the children's well-being over the course of three years through the implementation of the RBC. The mean well-being scores rose from 2.85 in 2019 to 4.20 in 2020 and further to 4.80 in 2021. These results highlight the effectiveness and benefits of the RBC in promoting children's well-being, which in turn plays a crucial role in their physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development. The positive interactions and secure relationships between educators and children fostered trust, confidence, and a sense of well-being. Furthermore, it can be inferred that the primary caregiving system facilitated the development of strong attachment bonds between the children and educators. Given these encouraging findings, the researchers strongly endorse the continued development and adoption of the RBC in early childhood contexts.

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