

**ICONSPADU 2021****International Conference on Sustainable Practices, Development and Urbanisation****V.U.C.A. AND SUSTAINABLE WELL-BEING: IMPACT ON B40  
CHILDREN'S SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**Abstract**

Emotions trigger cognitive, behavioural, and psychological responses tendencies that reciprocally affect children's reactions when they perceive challenges and opportunities. Emotion Regulation (ER) abilities develop throughout infancy and childhood and constantly grow until they develop entirely at adolescence. The emotion regulation abilities are pivotal to individuals' psychological well-being, academic success, and healthy social relationships. In the situation of children from low income (B40) group today, their learning development and future challenge are the key dimensions of the sustainability agenda. In the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) world, no other performance is relevant due to the high speed of change. This paper explores B40 children's socio-emotional well-being in the VUCA era that impacts their development and understanding of their well-being change. The findings of this research are expected to attempt to understand B40 children's emotion regulation, concentrating on functional and dysfunctional emotion regulation strategies. In conjunction with the protective factors, it could aid individuals to develop resilience and enable a more constructive method of investigating the impact caused by sudden changes in the surrounding. A set of questionnaires was administered to the children in order to determine the children's socio-emotional well-being during the VUCA environment. Findings indicate that children express positive socio-emotional well-being regardless of their vulnerable and uncertain environment.

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## 1. Introduction

Well-being does not solely depend on the positive emotions and eliminating the negative emotions but, it reflects how we deal with those emotions. Besides, well-being is not restricted to only adults, but also children. Children's well-being is significant in someone's life as well-developed well-being helps the children lead a meaningful life and, most importantly, aids them in adapting themselves to different situations. Regarding the vulnerable environment, children's social and emotional well-being becomes more crucial as it influences the children's way of living their lives. Social and emotional well-being is clearly defined as effective interactions and the capability to act conforming to our own emotions. Moreover, it is a fundamental aspect of a child's development. The urge to associate with others (social) and to understand and control oneself and experiences (emotional) are the main attributes of a person's quality of life (Montie, 2011).

The development of children's social and emotional well-being is pivotal as it started during infancy and through the age of 5 (Ashdown & Bernard, 2011). Important to note that the closest individuals to the children help to develop their social and emotional well-being. As O'Shaughnessy (2016) mentioned, children's social and emotional well-being has been affected by individuals and surrounding factors, i.e., the essence of parent-child relationships, family circumstances, school, and broader family. Therefore, it is significant for parents and closest individuals to give persistent attention and love towards the children as they are not in the position to choose their environment and have to cater to the settings provided to them. Notably, an assured parent-child relationship can support children's social and emotional well-being development (Lewis-Morrarty et al., 2015).

However, the volatile environment has challenged the children's relationship with their closest individual. In this time where pandemic as VUCA world, it is indirectly but significantly affecting children's social and emotional well-being development as a result of parenting stress (Brown, 2010). The parenting stress arises as a consequence of job retrenchment as well as income instability during the VUCA era. Concentrating job retrenchment in Malaysia, B40 families experienced prominent effects in early 2020, 12.58% of them lost their jobs, and 37.73% experienced income instability (Ahmad Zubir Ibrahim & Zaheruddin Othman, 2020). Remarkably, the B40 families are vulnerable in this uncertain environment of VUCA. Most B40 comes from lower educational qualifications, is employed in lower skills jobs, and has lesser earning potential (Hamid et al., 2019).

It is noteworthy to mention that Emotion Regulation (ER) is vital in helping children maintain positive social and emotional well-being despite the challenges in the VUCA era, which they are now trying to adapt. The strategies that individuals indirectly utilised to regulate emotions have crucial implications towards well-being (Webb et al., 2012). According to Dunsmore et al. (2013) and Rogers et al. (2016), emotion regulations are defined as children's control of their emotional experiences and expressions, helping them act adequately towards the situations. Therefore, functional emotion regulation aids the children in maintaining positive well-being and overcoming challenges in uncertain conditions. Additionally, positive social and emotional well-being resulted in children's capability to maximize their learning ability and unconsciously bring positive outcomes towards their academic achievement. Considering the SDG 2030, this study aims to determine the impact of VUCA on B40 children's social

and emotional well-being in terms of emotional regulation strategies. It parallels Goal 3 of Sustainable Development Goals- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages (United Nations, 2015).

## 2. Research Methods

This study was survey research, and data collection was done through a quantitative research design using a set of questionnaires. Quantitative research was used to interpret any circumstances by collecting numerical data and analysed using a mathematically based method, particularly statistics (Mujis, 2004). Thus, to evaluate the children's social and emotional well-being, this study adopted a set of questionnaires from Catholic Relief Services (2018). The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). In relation with the focus towards B40 children's social and emotional well-being in Malaysia, the population of this study concentrated on Petaling Jaya, Selangor due to the Petaling district having the highest number of B40 households (Mayan & Nor, 2020).

In addition, cluster sampling was applied in sample selection. The sampling was clustered by zone in which this study focused on Zone 4 and Zone 18 in Petaling Jaya. Based on the two zones, the total number of participants for this study was 108, comprising children of B40 families aged 7 to 12 years old. Following the determination of sampling and population, data collection was conducted through an online platform, namely Google Form. The online questionnaire link was distributed using the Snowball technique as Malaysia is still under Movement Control Order due to the breakout of pandemic Covid-19. Therefore, the link was distributed to the teachers from the selected zone and forwarded to the parents of B40 families. Then, the parents were responsible for monitoring and assisting the children in answering the questionnaire. Subsequently, data obtained were analysed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) and interpreted in the frequency table.

## 3. Findings

A total of 108 children aged between 7- 12 years old were involved in this research. There were notably more boys ( $n = 64, 59.3\%$ ) than girls ( $n = 44, 40.7\%$ ). However, this value is accepted as there were no major differences in the percentages. Data collected were under-representation for B40 children who live in Petaling Jaya. The outcome measures were interpreted in the table of frequency.

### 3.1. Table of Frequency

**Table 1.** I understand my mood and feelings

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	3	2.8	2.8
	2.00	3	2.8	5.6
	3.00	13	12.0	17.6
	4.00	33	30.6	48.1
	5.00	56	51.9	100.0
	Total	108	100.0	100.0

Table 1 shows the frequency for the first question, reflecting the children’s social and emotional well-being. Based on the table above, most of the children chose *Strongly Agree*, equivalent to 51.9%. However, the disagreement of the statement (2.8%) did not influence the result. Pertaining to percentages of agreement, it shows that children positively view their social and emotional well-being.

**Table 2.** When I need help, I find someone to talk to

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1.00	8	7.4	7.4
	2.00	10	9.3	16.7
Valid	3.00	23	21.3	38.0
	4.00	30	27.8	65.7
	5.00	37	34.3	100.0
Total	108	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows that 34.3% of the children strongly agreed with the statement above, while 7.4% strongly disagreed. However, a slightly higher number of children chose *Neutral*, which is 21.3%. Nevertheless, the percentage of agreement aids to prove that children have positive insight into their social and emotional well-being.

**Table 3.** I stand up for myself without putting others down

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1.00	5	4.6	4.6
	2.00	3	2.8	7.4
Valid	3.00	23	21.3	28.7
	4.00	30	27.8	56.5
	5.00	47	43.5	100.0
Total	108	100.0	100.0	

Despite the positive answers from the children, a significant 4.6% of them showed disagreement. Table 3 indicates that nearly half of the children strongly agreed to the statement above, equivalent to 43.5%. Adding to the agreement, 27.8% of the children agreed that they can stand up for themselves without putting others down. Nonetheless, it did not affect the majority of the children that understand their well-being better.

**Table 4.** I know how to behave in different social situations

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1.00	4	3.7	3.7
	2.00	6	5.6	9.3
Valid	3.00	30	27.8	37.0
	4.00	32	29.6	66.7
	5.00	36	33.3	100.0
Total	108	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 demonstrates that 33.3% of the children strongly agreed to the statement above. 3.7% and 5.6%, respectively, showed disagreement with the statement. In addition, 27.8% of the children chose to

answer *Neutral*. Based on the percentages portrayed, children appear to be understanding towards themselves.

**Table 5.** I try to understand what other people go through

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1.00	4	3.7	3.7
	2.00	8	7.4	11.1
Valid	3.00	36	33.3	44.4
	4.00	31	28.7	73.1
	5.00	29	26.9	100.0
Total	108	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 shows children answered *Agree* and *Strongly Disagree* with 28.7% and 26.9%, respectively. However, 33.3% of the children chose *Neutral* as the answer. As for the disagreement, only 11.1% in total answered *Strongly Disagree* and *Disagree*. Nonetheless, the added percentages of agreement showed that children are willing to learn about other people, showing positive social and emotional well-being.

**Table 6.** I try to understand how other people feel and think

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1.00	3	2.8	2.8
	2.00	7	6.5	9.3
Valid	3.00	32	29.6	38.9
	4.00	35	32.4	71.3
	5.00	31	28.7	100.0
Total	108	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 shows that more than half of the children strongly agreed and agreed to the statement with 28.7% and 32.4%, respectively. 29.6% of the children answered *Neutral*, while the least percentage are strongly disagreed and agreed, particularly with 2.8% and 6.5%. Therefore, a significant number of children appeared to agree with the statement showing the children's effort to be more understanding towards other people.

**Table 7.** I am happy with the way I am

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1.00	4	3.7	3.7
	2.00	7	6.5	10.2
Valid	3.00	27	25.0	35.2
	4.00	33	30.6	65.7
	5.00	37	34.3	100.0
Total	108	100.0	100.0	

Table 7 shows that 34.3% of the children strongly agreed with the statement above, while 3.7% strongly disagreed. Following the disagreement, 25% of the children chose *Neutral*. Adding up the

number of agreements from the children, it can be said that the majority of them are happy with themselves, which encourages positive well-being development.

**Table 8.** My belief in myself gets me through hard times

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1.00	5	4.6	4.6
	2.00	6	5.6	10.2
Valid	3.00	22	20.4	30.6
	4.00	39	36.1	66.7
	5.00	36	33.3	100.0
Total	108	100.0	100.0	

Table 8 shows that children are strongly agreed and agreed with the statement with 33.3% and 36.1%, respectively. Strongly disagreed and disagreed obtained low percentages compared to the rest with 4.6% and 5.6% individually. Contradict with the disagreement, 20.4% of the children answered *Neutral*. As the agreement retrieved the highest percentage, it indicates the ability of the children to trust themselves, which leads to positive social and emotional well-being.

#### 4. Discussion

The present study explores the effects of VUCA on children's social and emotional well-being. The results depict positive social and emotional well-being considering the vulnerable and uncertain environment in line with the research aim. On an important note, the results are fixated into three significant themes regarding their social and emotional well-being, namely personal skills, social skills, and resilience. According to National Centre for Children and Families, the skills that support resilience development in children are important as it helps them cope and find their ways of overcoming challenges. Analysis of the data shows that the majority of the children acknowledge their emotions are able to analyse and act to the situations rationally. It is aligned with their personal skills in which that it helps the children to understand their conditions and efficiently regulate their emotions. Hence, children are able to act according to their environment without being affected negatively by it.

As being illustrated in the results, questions four until six indicate the social skills of their social and emotional well-being. Similarly, most of the children express positive social skills. However, a relatively small number of children are clueless about understanding and socializing with people. Regardless of the small portion of the disagreement, the ability of a child to understand other people's feelings and emotions is considered to be socially and emotionally competent. Besides, children's social and emotional competencies motivate and assist the children in overcoming stressful situations and intercepting behaviour faults later on (Mihaela, 2015).

Resilience also correlated to the results of this study where it shows that a large number of children came to a consensus of adapting and coping with new situations. The resilience built within the children helps them be aware of their feelings and others and their ability to face challenges, specifically in this complex and ambiguous environment. Moreover, resilience acts as a foundation of social and emotional well-being. Mihaela (2015) stated that a well-built social and emotional foundation during childhood acts

as a stepping stone for the children to be successful and contented owing to the fact that children are well-equipped to handle the possible presence of stress during adulthood.

## 5. Conclusions

Ultimately, the present work contributes to our understanding of how the current VUCA world impacts children's social and emotional well-being. Based on the analysed data and supported discussion, the researcher concludes that children's social and emotional well-being can be influenced negatively or positively. The discussion explains that the sample for this study has positive well-being regardless of the volatile environment that challenged their closest individuals. It also illustrates that parents are able to remain composed even the undesirable intercepts their lives, hence capable of maintaining a stable relationship with their children. It is important to note that emotion regulation is proven to function as the children can be rationalised in making decisions and expressing their emotions suitably. On a side note, an in-depth study on the emotion regulation strategies through a systematic literature review will be conducted for future research.

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