EXAMINE THE POTENTIAL ASSOCIATION BETWEEN STUDENTS-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS WITH PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' STRESS IN KLANG VALLEY

A Study of Examine The Potential Association Between

Student-Teacher Relationships With

Preschool Teachers' Stress In Klang Valley

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Acknowledgement

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Declaration

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources be they printed, electronic or personal.

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Approval form

This research paper attached here to, entitled "Examine The Potential Association Between Student-Teacher Relationships With Preschool Teachers' Stress In Klang Valley" prepared and submitted by Jasmine Siow Jie Yin in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bacheor of Early Childhood Education (Hons) is hereby accepted.

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Abstract

Within the preschool context, student-teacher relationship (STR) assumes a critical role in supporting children's learning and development. STR not only have impact on children but also the teachers' stress level. However, the potential association between STR and preschool teachers' stress level is often overlooked especially in the local setting. Thus, this study is to find out the possible association between STR and the stress level of preschool teacher in Klang Valley area. Researcher hypothesizes that STR will have association with teachers' stress level such as conflict relationship will be associated with high stress level while closure relationship will be associated with low stress level for preschool teachers. This is a quantitative research study with the sample size of 66 preschool teachers who work in Klang Valley. The participants provided their responds by answering a survey that used Student-Teacher Relationship Scale-Short Form (STRS_SF) by Whitaker et al., (2015), and Teacher Stress Scale (TSS) by Chen et al. (2022). The analysis results of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient supported that conflict relationship is significantly associated with high stress level for preschool teachers (r = .260, p= .035). As for closure relationship, there is no association found with lower stress level for preschool teachers (r= -.205, p= .098). This study has significant implication for parties in the early childhood education industry. Recommendations were made to suggest ways to overcome the limitations by increasing sample size according to sample to item ratio and considering employing a different sampling method.

Keywords: student-teacher relationships, teachers' stress level, conflict relationship, closure relationship

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List of Abbreviations

DV   Dependent variable

ECE   Early childhood education

ICT   Information and communication technologies

IV   Independent variable

STR   Student-teacher relationship

STRS-SF   Students-Teacher Relationship Scale Short Form

TSS   Teacher Stress Scale

TTSC   Transactional theory of stress and coping

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Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This research is conducted to find out the possible relationship between students-teacher relationship toward the level of stress of preschool teacher in Klang Valley area. In this first chapter, researcher will elaborate more information on the background of the research, identify the problem statement, justify the research objective, then generate research questions and hypothesis accordingly. Significance of research and definition of term including conceptual and operational will be discussed in this chapter.

1.2 Background of research

Early childhood education (ECE) refers to the education and care services provided to children from the age of birth to six years old to support and enhance their development (Rahmatullah et al., 2021). The development happens during the early years can have a long-lasting impact to a person. Research has reported that 85% of brain development happens during the first five years of human growth (Windyarti et al., 2020). This caused the early years to be an importance stage of human and made the ECE most fundamental and essential component of education system (Vandenbroeck et al., 2018).

Overall, ECE plays a crucial role in supporting children's development and learning (Im et al., 2021). It involves providing care and education that is designed to suit to children's needs, age, ability, and to allow them to have a holistic development (Rahmatullah et al., 2021). Since ECE is essential for child growth, preschool teachers will play the crucial role in guiding young learners' development throughout their formative years (Wiltshire, 2023).

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STR is known as student-teacher relationship, a connection formed in a classroom (Vanner, 2022). Teachers are expected and required to develop a relationship with their students, therefore STR are formed. (Gagnon et al., 2019; Corbin et al., 2019). Within the preschool context, STR assumes a critical role in supporting children's learning and development (Corbin et al., 2019; McGrath & Bergen, 2015). The quality of STR provided various impact on preschool children, including the academic achievement, social skills, and behavior problems (Yoler, 2016; Mason et al., 2017). Research also shown that an early STR can influence the children in establishing a STR with their future teacher (Yoler, 2016) .

There are two important subscales in Pianta's STR framework, "conflict" and "closure". These two subscales help to understand and assess the level of teacher-student interactions (Whitaker et al., 2015; Mason et al., 2017). Conflict refers to the presence of negative interactions or unresolved issues within the teacher-student relationship (Corbin et al., 2019). It can arise from difficulties in managing student behavior, conflicting expectations, or miscommunication. Closure, on the other hand, reflects a high-quality relationships marked by high levels of warmth, low conflict, and reciprocal support (Wang, et al., 2021). A secure closure in STR involves effective conflict resolution and the building of trust and rapport (Mason et al., 2017).

STR not only have impact on children but also the teachers. The quality of the STR influences teachers' well-being, job satisfaction, and stress level. A closure relationship with students is associated with low levels of emotional weariness for teacher and they are less likely to prone to report stress (Cui, 2022). Studies shown that closure relationship reduced the teachers' stress level, and it is a source of motivation of teacher (Aldrup et al. 2018). On the other hand, tense and negative interactions between teachers and students contribute to high stress level to teachers (Whitaker et al., 2015; Varga, 2017). This has demonstrated that, conflict

relationship with students can cause emotional weariness for teachers which eventually can lower teachers' work satisfaction (Varga, 2017).

In conclusion, understanding the role of STR in early childhood education setting is essential not only for children's development but also for the well-being of preschool teachers. The relationship between teachers and students can significantly influence teachers' stress levels, which can have impact on teachers overall job satisfaction and work effectiveness in the classroom. By examine the association between STR and teachers' stress levels, it allows us to have a deeper understanding of the stressors that teachers face within their professional roles.

1.3 Problem statement

Preschool education plays a critical role in the early development of children, providing a foundation for their future academic success and social-emotional well-being (Gordon & Browne, 2016). The early childhood educator is a key role in promoting early childhood development through a meaningful interaction with young children during the children's formative years (Farewell et al., 2022). Educator guide children to grow in a safe setting. Within the preschool setting, the relationship between teachers and students have been widely recognized as a fundamental factor in facilitating children's learning and overall development (Yoler, 2016; Ansari et al. 2020). For this reason, STR is an essential part of early childhood education.

Despite the recognized importance of student-teacher relationships, preschool teaching can be an exceedingly demanding profession, often accompanied by high levels of stress and burnout (Agai-Demjaha et al., 2015; MacIntyre et al., 2019; Pedditzi et al., 2021). Potential association between STR and preschool teachers' stress level is often overlooked while research studies have identified that conflict relationship will increase teachers' stress level

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(Whitaker et al., 2015; Corbin et al., 2019). This raises a question for researcher whether the quality of student-teacher relationships influences the stress levels experienced by preschool teachers.

Preschool educator is a demanding job that requires teachers to navigate multiple responsibilities, such as managing a classroom discipline, addressing individual student needs, and delivering engaging and effective curriculum (Masnan, et al., 2019). All these preschool educators' duties acted as the stressors in the teaching environment. When teachers experience high levels of stress, it can compromise their emotional well-being, job satisfaction, and overall effectiveness in the classroom (Gao et al., 2013). Moreover, high stress levels in teachers can affect their ability in establishing positive and supportive relationships with their students (Gastaldi et al. 2014 ; Ansari et al., 2022). The stress level experienced by the preschool teacher is a critical concern as it directly influences their ability to provide high-quality instruction and support to young children. This can mean that STR is not only crucial for the preschool teachers but also for the overall quality of early childhood education. Therefore, understanding its potential association of STR on teachers' stress level becomes imperative.

While the importance of STR in early childhood education has been widely recognized, limited research has explored the potential association between STR and preschool teachers' stress levels (Hall-Kenyon et al. 2013; Gagnon et al., 2019; Plisková, 2021). A recent research article by Gagnon et al. (2019) heeds the call from a 2011 article to emphasize on doing additional research on students-teacher relationship towards teachers' stress level. Gagnon et al. (2019) did complete the mission by further study in STR to teaching stress. However, this study is conducted in North Carolina, the local study that examining these two factors remaining unknown to researcher knowledge. This contextual gap demands a comprehensive investigation regarding the potential relationship between STR and teachers' stress levels in the local setting. As a result, the researcher is driven to perform a research study on this topic

in Malaysia. By examining this relationship, this research can give us a valuable insight on the association between STR with preschool teachers' stress levels and develop strategies to support teacher well-being and promote better child-development in the early childhood education setting.

1.4 Research objectives

This research study is aimed to investigate the association between students-teacher relationship with teachers 'stress level.

1.5 Research questions

To obtain the answer from the research objective, some questions are developed below:

1. Is there any significance association between conflict relationship with high stress level among preschool teachers?
2. Is there any significance association between closeness relationship with low stress level among preschool teachers?

1.6 Research hypotheses

H_{a1}: This research study hypotheses that is a possible association between conflict relationship with high stress level among preschool teachers.

H_{a2}: This research study hypotheses that is a possible association between closeness relationship with low stress level among preschool teachers.

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1.7 Significance of research study

This research is expected to provide significantly beneficial contribution to different professional in ECE field. The first beneficial group will be the pre- and in-service educator in ECE field. From this research, the educators will be benefited with knowledge and higher awareness on how the relationship with the students can relate to their stress level (Gagnon et al., 2019). Studies showed and supported that stress affect preschool teachers 'work performance, such as be less involving in guiding children development, having conflict relationship with the children and others (Zinsser et al. 2013; Whitaker et al., 2015). Hence, it is important for preschool teacher to identify their stress, the factor to the stress, and plan for stress coping strategies to prevent the negative outcome mentioned.

Researcher expected that this research may raise awareness among the preschool principal and operator on the possibility of how STR can contribute to teachers' stress. With the awareness, preschool principal and operator can include some adjustment in the school such as organizing fun activities and projects in school to enhance the relationship between students-teacher for teacher to build a closure relationship with their students (Sandilos et al. 2018). Studies shown that a positive relationship shared by the teacher and student contributed to teacher's satisfaction and motivation (McGimpsey et al., 2013) thus eventually alleviate the issue of teacher stress.

Furthermore, this study may contribute to be part of the existing literature by discover whether STR is associate with teachers' stress level. As mentioned in the problem statement, the research on how students-teacher relationship contributes to teachers' stress level is insufficient (Gagnon et al., 2019), compared to other research topics such as preschool teachers' job satisfaction. Thus, is difficult for future researcher to do literature review due to lack of existing literature. For this reason, researcher expected that all the information used and

discovered in this study may be important for future researcher who planning to work on the similar research study. Finally, researcher hoping that one day there will be sufficient literature on how STR can contribute to teachers' stress.

1.8 Definition of terms

1.8.1: Conceptual definition

Stress: According to World Health Organization, stress is created during difficult events or situations that lead to mental tension (World Health Organization, 2023). It is like an emotional and physical tension that makes a person feel tense, worried, frustrated, and even angry (MedlinePlus, 2022). Or stress can be simply means as a great form of worries by the Cambridge dictionary (Press, n.d.).

Students-teacher relationship: By referring to an e-book named "Classroom Practice in 2022" from University of Windsor, it explained that students-teacher relationships meaning. Students-teacher relationship simply means "a relationship happens in a classroom setting". The relationship is shared among the teacher and students. Both parties must put in effort to gain trust and respect from each other to have a positive students-teacher relationship (Vanner, 2022).

1.8.2: Operational definition

Stress: In this study, stress is measure by the teacher stress scale (Chen et al., 2022) for one to examine the level of teachers' stress. It is a newly develop scale that built and extend from two assessment tools that measure teachers' stress. There are seven items in this TSS. All seven items are identified into two main risk factors to cause teacher to experience stress, which is insufficient support, and high job demand (Chen et al., 2022).

Students-teacher relationship: Students-teacher relationship is measured by student-teacher relationship scale short form (STRS-SF) for teacher to rate his or her relationship with their students in his or her own perspective (Pinata, 2001). The STRS-SF included two dimensions which are closeness and conflict (Whitaker et al., 2015). In this research, the conflict subscale represents the negative side of the relationship shared by teacher and student, such as teacher and student struggling with each other. In contrast, closeness indicates the positivity of the relationship where teacher obtained information from teacher even when he/she did not ask from the children, meaning the children shared their feelings to teacher (Ng & Yeo, 2020).

1.9 Conclusion

To sum up everything has been stated, this research study is aimed to examine the potential association between STR with teachers' stress level. To do this, researcher set her research objective and generated her research question, as well as research hypothesis. The result of this study is most likely to contribute to benefit pre and in-service early childhood educator, to help them identify their one of their stress factors (the relationship with their students). Additionally, definition of terms is done for the variables of this study in this chapter.

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Chapter II

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, researcher will provide in-depth information for the research background so that readers of this research may obtain more information and understanding on this research background. This chapter provides an overview of past studies related to student-teacher relationship (IV) and preschool teacher stress level (DV) which are divided into few subtopics followed by the theoretical framework, conceptual framework, and everything will be sum under 2.5 conclusion part.

2.2 Subtopics

2.2.1 Student-Teacher Relationships (STR)

The bond or connection between preschool teachers and students is known as the student-teacher relationship (STR) (Vanner, 2022). STR is naturally develop because most preschool teachers spend their time directly with the students, and as a result, it is unavoidable to develop relationship with the students and created STR (Gagnon et al., 2019; Corbin et al., 2019). STR has been recognized as a critical component of the educational experience, particularly in early childhood education setting (Whitaker et al., 2015; Gagnon et al., 2019; Walker & Graham, 2019). The relationship between teachers and students plays a fundamental role in shaping children's social, emotional, and academic development (Kunter, et al., 2013; Aldrup et al., 2018). Simply put, the interactions between teachers and students in the early years lay the foundation for future learning and success in school.

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According to Pianta (1999), there are two dimension of STR that contribute to student-teacher relaitonship, which are conflict and closure (Whitaker et al., 2015; Mason et al., 2017). According to Mason, et al. (2017), the closure relationship is an expression of the teachers' emotional warmth and support for their students, showing a safe and enduring attachment between them. According to Allen et al., (2021), the closure relationship promotes children's socioemotional growth, increases their drive to study, and improves their sense of belonging. Research has shown that children who experienced positive relationship with their teacher have better academic outcome and better behaviour (Yoler, 2016; Mason et al., 2017; Gagnon et al., 2019). All this research has reported that positive student-teacher relationships have been linked to improved academic outcomes, enhanced social skills, and reduced behavioral problems among preschool children.

The conflict relationship, on the other hand, is referred as the unfavorable interactions. Such as having conflicts or misunderstandings between the teachers and students (Corbin et al., 2019). Conflict relationship is the key base for children to become emotionally disengaged with others, have a more difficult time in learning, and some behavioral problem (Settanni et al., 2015). While children who experience conflict relationship with their teacher, they tend to have high chance to face difficulty in their academic, social-emotional development, and develop anxiety when interacting with other people (Saltali, 2013; McGrath & Bergen, 2015; Walker & Graham, 2019).

2.2.2 Stress

Teacher stress is a prevalent issue in the field of education, with preschool teachers facing various stressors that can impact their well-being. Research indicates that a substantial proportion of preschool teachers experience high levels of stress, which can lead to emotional

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instability, decreased job satisfaction, leave the profession, and report negative interaction in class (Gao et al., 2013; Gastaldi et al. 2014 ; Ansari et al., 2022). For instance, a study by MacIntyre et al. (2019) reported that teaching is recognized as one of the most stressful professions. Teachers are overworked and prone to experience stress (Jamian, et al., 2020).

Preschool teacher nowadays is experiencing stress (Masnan et al., 2017). Research has shown that 44% of teachers are currently experiencing stress and depress (Alzahari et al., 2022). According to Othman and Sivasubramaniam (2019), 32% of teachers in Klang Valley reported to experience high stress level and 7% of them is experiencing severe level of stress. Teachers nowadays are having more responsibility than before, especially preschool educator. Instead of the teaching job and managing students' behaviour problem, preschool teachers are required to navigate multiple responsibilities, such as managing a classroom discipline, addressing individual student needs, delivering engaging and effective curriculum, interact with the students' parents, and some teachers even asked to involve into the administration task (Roslan et al., 2015; Othman & Sivasubramaniam, 2019; Masnan et al., 2019). These extra jobs demand had increased preschool teachers' stress level.

There are many factors contributing to teacher stress, including having large number of children but in a limited classroom space, the students' behaviour, limited resources, heavy paper workloads such as marking book, communication with colleagues or parents, inadequate support from administrators and others (Clipa & Boghean, 2015). Stress can decrease in overall effectiveness in teaching, job satisfaction, and some even leaving job (Gao et al., 2013). Thus, understanding the stressor of preschool teacher is crucial, as it can have implications on teachers' overall job performance and the quality of interactions with students (Gagnon et al, 2019).

Furthermore, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers are even force to adapt themselves to the new way of teaching which is involving communication and information technologies (ICT) into their teaching. The awake of Covid-19 also leads the educator force to integrate ICT to continue to satisfy children's academic learning (Juliana et al., 2020). This means that teachers are forced to adapt and integrate ICT into their teaching to fulfil their duty as an educator which may contribute to higher teachers' stress level.

2.2.3 Association of STR with Teachers' Stress Levels

Previous research suggests that the quality of STR can impact teachers' stress levels and mental health (Gagnon et al., 2019; Corbin et al., 2019; Pedditizi et al., 2021). The relationship shared by students and teacher will contribute to teacher satisfaction and motivation (McGimpsey et al., 2013). A closure STR can cause an increment to teacher on their well-being (Aldrup et al. 2018). One's well-begin referring the on ability in coping and managing with stress (Davis, 2019).

Closure relationship has been associated with lower level of teacher stress, as it provides emotional support, reduces conflict, and enhances job satisfaction (Aldrup et al, 2018; Mason et al., 2017). A quantitative study conducted in Austria proved that closeness relationship with the students is the main key to teachers' happiness. That study was conducted by Milatz et al. (2015), which involved 83 teachers from differents schools. In the study, researchers have supported that teachers who formed positive, closure relationship with their student will feel less stress than those who developed a distant and conflict relationship with their student. Similarly, a recent study by Yee et al. (2022) has supported the previous study by proving that closure relationship between the teacher and students lower the stress level of

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teacher. Furthermore, a literature review by Cui (2022) also reported that teachers who experience closure relationship with their students are less likely to report stress.

Alternativly, negative or conflict STR can contribute to increased teacher stress (Whitaker et al. 2019). Teachers who experience conflict and unresolved issues in their relationships with students may be feel less effective and engage with the children (Gagnon et al., 2019). A quantitative study conducted in North Carolina used a similar instrument to assess the correlation between STR with preschool stress level. The study was conducted by Gagnon et al. (2019) that involved 44 preschool teachers from both urban and rural area. 44 of the preschool teacher provided their evaluation on 72 children. In the study, the researchers found out that conflict relationship was correlated with teaching stress. Meaning that if the teacher is having conflict relationship with a student, the teacher is more likely to experience stress when responding to the student's behaviour.

In sum, teacher stress is a significant concern in the field of education, with various stressors impacting preschool teachers. While the STR assumes a crucial role in supporting children's learning and development, the quality of STR can influence teachers' stress levels, with closure relationships mitigating stress and conflict relationships potentially contributing to increased stress. Thus, understanding the association between STR and teachers' stress levels is vital for promoting a positive teacher-student interactions and enhance teacher well-being.

2.3 Theoretical framework

Transactional theory of stress and coping (TTSC):

According to Lazarus' (1991) described that stress is an internal reaction of the external stimulus that might seem to be harmful for individuals. For example, one might feel spilling coffee is a small matter because one's internal reaction to this stimulus "spilling coffee" is

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ignorance. On the other hand, if one's internal reaction reacted "spilling coffee" as a harmful event, then he/she would increase the stress level due to the internal reaction. To simplify, it means that stress is unique to everyone, it is depending on how one evaluates or appraise the situation or event should be stressful or ignorance (Putwain, et al., 2021).

There are two main forms of appraisal in TTSC, the primary and secondary appraisal (refer to Figure 1). The primary appraisal refers to how one responds to the situation (Dillard, 2019). Meaning that first appraise is an individual determining the situation to be stress or ignorance. If individual appraisal the situation as harmful and stress, second appraisal will be required to figure what may be done to manage the stressor (Romas & Sharma, 2022). In second appraisal, it will involve cognitive process to figure out a strategy of coping with the stressor to prevent further harm. However, second appraisal only applies when first appraisal defines the situation as harmful and a factor to stress (Biggs et al., 2017).

Figure 1

Transactional theory of stress and coping in figure.

```
                        Situation/Event
                              ↓
                        First appraisal
                    ↙                   ↘
        Perceived threat                    No threat perceived
              ↓
        Second appraisal
          ↓           ↓
Perceived INABILITY   Perceived ABILITY
    to cope               to cope
          ↓               ↓                        ↓
  Negative stress    Positive stress           No stress
```
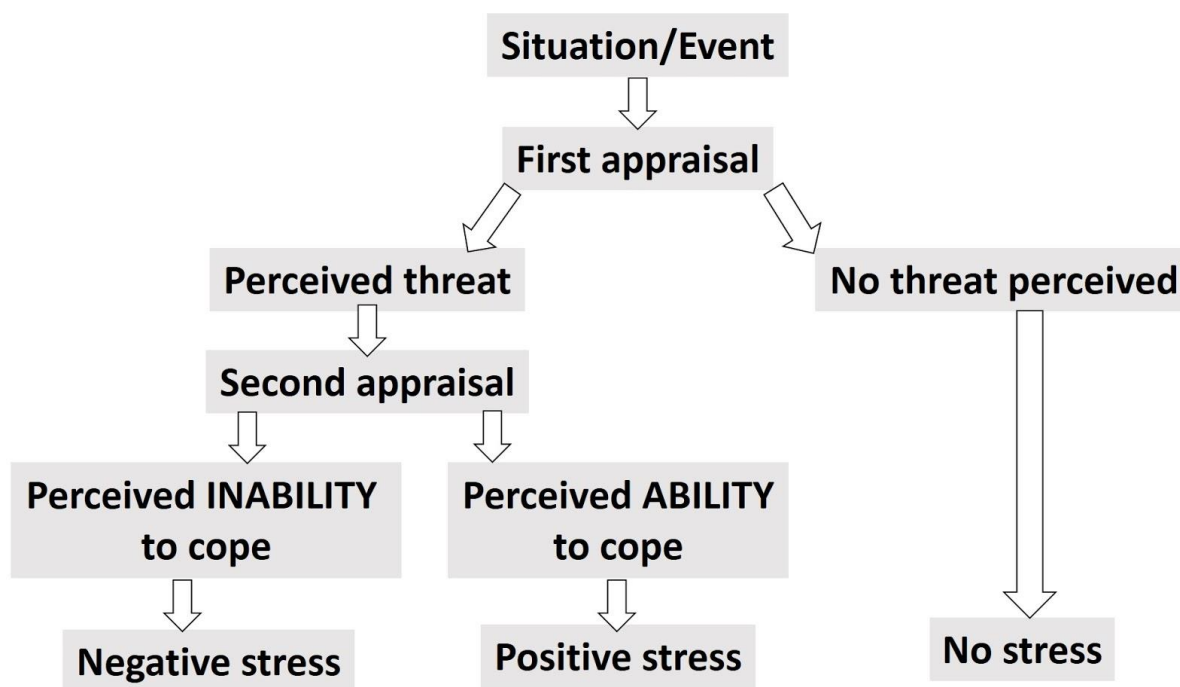
Note. Source from "Stress management and the novice nurseby," by Lawrency, P, 2018, Nursing Theses and Capstone Projects, 311, p.7 (https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/nursing_etd/311)

Application of TTSC into current study context: To summarize the TTSC, stress is determined by how one evaluate the situation. By putting this theory into the current study context, it will indicate that how teachers appraise their relationship with the students will determine the stress level of them. Hence, the hypothesis of this study is supported by this theory saying that if teachers evaluate the relationship with students as conflict, the stress level will increase. On the other hand, if the teachers evaluate the relationship with students as closeness, the stress level will decrease. Based on Figure 2 on below, the student-teacher interactions will be assess based on the teachers' perspective. For instance, how the teacher appraises the students' behaviour will affect the teachers' emotions. Therefore, the stress level is totally depending on how teacher evaluate their relationship with the students (Corbin et al., 2019).

Figure 2

TTSC in STR context. MR indicate mental representation.
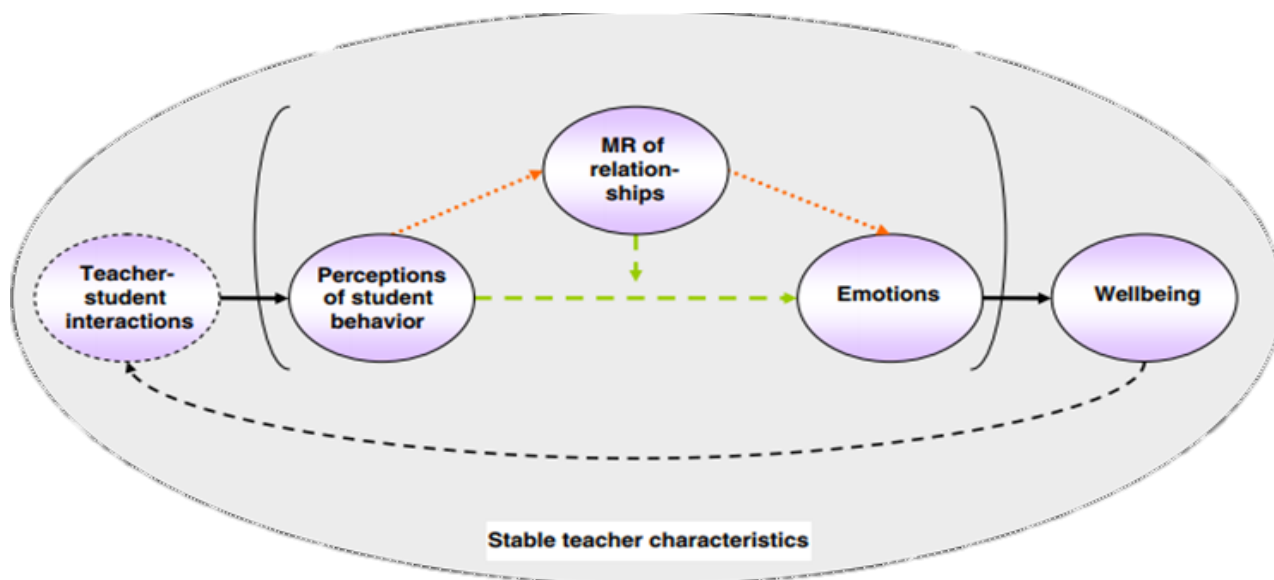
Note. Source from "Teacher wellbeing: the importance of teacher–student relationships," by Spilt, J.L., Koomen, H.M.Y. & Thijs, J.T, 2011, Educ Psychol Rev 23, p.460 (https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-011-9170-y)

2.4 Conceptual framework

Figure 3

Conceptual framework of this current study.

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Independent variable (IV)
Students-teacher relationship
- Conflict relationship
- Closeness relationship

Dependent variable (DV)
Teachers' stress level
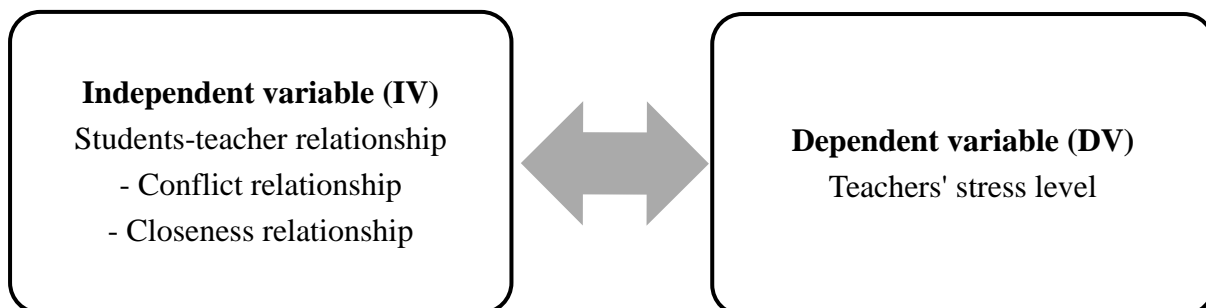
Based on Figure 3 above, this study is aimed to examine that the potential association between students-teacher relationship (IV) and teachers' stress level (DV). Researcher hypothesized that higher stress level may result in conflict relationship and lower stress level might result in closeness relationship. This hypothesises are make based on existing article. For example, "Workplace stress and the quality of teacher–children relationships in Head Start" by Whitaker et al. (2015), mentioned that conflict relationship will lead to higher stress level for teacher. This finding is similar and supported by Yee et al. (2022), Aldrup et al. (2018), and McGimpsey et al. (2013). In general, most of the STR and stress related articles agreed that STR were related to teachers' stress level. Corbin et al., (2019) also suggested in their study, mentioning that STR did contribute to teachers' stress level. Thus, researcher hypothesized there are associations between STRS and preschool stress level.

2.5 Conclusion

To conclude what have been mentioned in this chapter, researcher further the necessary information for the current study in subtopic. Researcher also review the association between STR and teachers's stress level and summarized them into a subtopic too. Theorical framework is discussed in this chapter along with the conceptual framework of the study.

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Chapter III

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The third chapter of this study will be the methodology. In this chapter, researcher will explain the research design used for this study, sampling method and number of respondents. Then, followed by the research instrument used for the survey, method for data analysing, and the procedure of research.

3.2 Research design

This research study is aimed to explore the association between students-teacher relationship with teachers 'stress level in Klang Valley area. Since the objective of this research study is to find out the relationship between two variables, STR with preschool teachers' stress. Thus, this research study is employing quantitative research design as it allows researcher to make inference that the two variables have connection with each other (Roberts-Holmes, 2018). This design is matched with the research objective, therefore quantitative research design is chosen for this research paper.

There are many different types of quantitative research, such as experimental where researcher will manipulate the variables for testing an idea. For this research, it will employ a design called correlational. Correlational research design allows researcher to relate two or more variables to see if they are associated (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This matched with the objective of this research study as this study is aimed to find out the potential relationship between STR with teachers' stress level. Correlational also help to predict an outcome such as there is either a relationship between the variables or no relationship between the variables

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(Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). If the variables have a relationship between each other, the score would be displays in a certain range to prove that the variable have a relationship with another variable.

Furthermore, survey method is utilized for data collecting by giving out the questionnaires to respondents. The researcher will select appropriate and reliable questionnaires to investigate both variables. The specifics of the chosen questionnaires will be addressed further in 3.4 research instrument. Reason of adapting survey method is because it can help to predict the relations between the variables which matched with the objective of this research study (Pandey & Pandey, 2015).

3.3 Sampling and respondents

Respondents for this research study must meet a certain criterion, such as respondent must be working as early childhood educator. Reason of this criteria is because this study is aimed to investigate the stress level of early childhood educator on their students-teacher relationship. Hence whoever is working as early childhood educator will be qualified to participate into this research study.

The area for the survey is set to be done in Klang Valley for a reason. As the researcher is a former early childhood teacher from Klang Valley. Thus, the location offers researcher an easy access to potential respondent as most of them are currently working in Klang Valley.

This study is aimed to collect 60 respondents as valid sample of the study. According to the sample-to-variable ratio, it mentioned that 1 independent variable would only need 5 respondents. Although 5:1 ratio is the bare minimum, but researcher is suggested to follow 20:1 ratio (Hair et al., 2018). Meaning that 20 respondents are needed for 1 independent variable.

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Since 20 respondents will be the minimum requirement, this study will increase the respondent to 60 to make the research work.

This research study will be employing convenience sampling, a type of non-random sampling design, meaning researcher will choose sample group that is readily available already (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). Therefore, researcher will find potential candidate through the social network and existing available contacts. Shanti and Shashi (2017) also mentioned that convenience sample is one of the most used sample types as it is time saving and affordable for most people. However, convenience sampling can be a risky method as it does not provide a good representation for early childhood educator population (Taherdoost, 2016). Although convenience sample may be risky, but it is still chosen for this study as due to the time constraints of the researcher, and also due to researcher is self-funded for this study.

3.4 Research instrument

For data collection, Teacher Information form, Student-teacher relationship scale-short form, and Teacher stress scale will be used in this research.

Teacher information form: This will be the first section of the survey and it was designed by the researcher to collect some demographics information of the respondents such as age, years of experience, number of children in a classroom, etc. However, considering the respondents 'privacy, respondents will remain anonymous meaning that no name will be recorded.

STRS-SF: To examine relationships between students and teachers' relationships, a scale called Student-Teacher Relationships Scale Short Form (STRS-SF) developed by Pinata in 2001 will be ideal for this assignment. STRS-SF is used to examine teachers relationships with a particular student of them (Pinata, 2001). STRS-SF is a reduced version of STRS that

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designed to reduce teachers' workload in filling up survey that has more than one questionnaire (Ng & Yeo, 2020). STRS-SF will be the second section of the survey.

Considering that original STRS-SF was designed to measure teachers' perceptions of their relationships with only one student, it was not ideal to request teachers to fill up the questionnaire for each of the students to rate the relationship. Thus, to measure the relationship between a teacher and a class of students, this research will employ a modified version of STRS-SF that changed the word "child" to "children". For example, the original question is "dealing with this child drains my energy", after applied the modification, it became "dealing with the children drains my energy.". This modified STRS-SF was adjusted by Pennsylvania Head Start Staff Wellness Survey, which was reviewed and approved by the original author of STRS-SF, Dr. Pinata (Whitaker et al., 2015). This modification allow teacher to provide one respond to represent the relationship between the teacher and the class of children at one time.

The modified STRS-SF consisted of 15 items, each of them was calculated to a five-point Likert scale for respondents to choose from 1=definitely does not apply; 2=not really; 3=neutral, not sure; 4=applies somewhat; 5=definitely applies. The items in STRS-SF are separated into two subscales, conflict and closeness. The reliability of the modified STRS-SF has a good score of Cronbach's alphas for conflict (.73) and closeness (.72). There are eight items in the conflict subscale to assess the negative and hostile aspects of relationship between teacher and students. While seven items in the closeness subscale that measure the positive and friendly aspects of the relationships shared by teacher and students. To calculate the score for each subscale is by summing the items. Higher conflict subscale scores suggest a higher negativity in the relationship, whereas higher closeness subscale scores indicate a high positivity in the relationship (Ng & Yeo, 2020). The scoring method of item is shown below.

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Item 2 + Item 4 + Item 8 + Item 10 + Item 11 + Item 12 + Item 13 + Item 14 = Total score of conflict.

Item 1 + Item 3 + Item 5 + Item 6 + Item 7+ Item 9 + Item 15 = Total score of closeness.

TSS: The third section of the survey is to examine teachers' stress level, researcher will be utilising Teacher stress scale (TSS) developed (Chen et al., 2022). TSS is developed in 2022 to examine teachers' stress. It was built and extended from two teachers stress instruments which is "Teacher Stress Inventory" by Fimian and Fastenau (1990) and "Index of Teaching Stress" by Greene et al. (1997).

TSS have two subscales, and each scale indicates a risk factor that contribute to teacher stress, which is "inadequate school-based support" and "teaching related demand" (Chen et al., 2022). The first risk factor of the subscale refers to teacher feeling stress because feeling they are lacking the support from school such as colleagues and administrators through question like "I felt stressed for not having support from the administrators at my school." The second risk factor is more on the job demand stress where teachers feeling stress due to the high job demand. Such as "I felt stressed for having too much teaching work to do" and "I felt stressed for not having enough time to complete my teaching work (e.g., preparing, teaching the curricular content)." TSS has achieved the internal reliability by scoring 0.84 in Cronbach's alphas score. The two factors in the subscale also have a good score of Cronbach's alphas score 0.75 for first risk factor, and 0.87 for second risk factor. If an instrument score 0.7 or above, it would mean that the instrument is acceptable for internal reliability (Taber, 2018). As TSS scored higher than 0.7 in overall, meaning that TSS is a reliable instrument to use for examining teachers' stress level.

TSS is calculated to a five-point Likert scale for respondents to choose from $1 = $ strongly disagree, $2 = $ disagree, $3 = $ neutral, $4 = $ agree, and $5 = $ strongly agree. The

calculation of TSS is to sum up the score of all seven items. The scoring of item method is shown below.

Item 1 + Item 2 + Item 3 + Item 4 + Item 5 + Item 6 + Item 7 = Total score of TSS.

3.5 Data analysis

The data analysis in this research study involves both descriptive and inferential analyses to examine the association between the STR and preschool teachers' stress levels. By employing descriptive and inferential analyses, including calculating descriptive statistics and using the Pearson correlation coefficient, this research aims to provide an analysis that help researcher to gain sight on the association between the STR and preschool teachers' stress levels.

Descriptive analysis helps to summarize the data collected and put them in order (Yellapu, 2018). In this study, descriptive statistics will be used to provide a comprehensive overview of the demographic information of the respondents. Demographic information may include variables such as gender, age, years of experience, and the number of students in their class. Furthermore, descriptive analysis also provides the total scores for both the independent variable (STR) and the dependent variable (teachers' stress levels). To do these, researcher will be using SPSS, a research software to find out the mean, standard deviation, table, frequency, percentage, and histogram. This is to summarize the characteristics of the sample and provide a clear picture of the distribution of scores for the variables of interest (Sharma, 2019).

Inferential analysis helps to conclude and make prediction from the collected data (Bhandari, 2020). Specifically, a Pearson correlation coefficient's r value will be employed to find out the linear relationship between the two variables. A linear relationship happens when both variables are related. Such as, if the X variable goes up, Y variables will surely increase in the same proportion (Johnson, n.d.). The Pearson's r value ranges from -1 to +1. If there is a

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strong positive correlation, the value will be close to +1. However, if the value is close to -1 will indicates a strong negative correlation. Lastly, if the r value is close to 0 will mean there is no correlation between the two variables (Schober et al., 2018). The value in between helps to determine the strength level of the variables into weak, moderate, and high level. 0 to .1 value indicate a negligible correlation, followed by a weak correlation if the value score from .1 to .39. A moderate strength of correlation will be from .4 to .69 while .7 to .89 is indicated as a strong correlation. If the r value score 0.9 to 1, it means that is a very strong correlation between the variables (Schober et al., 2018).

The p-value is known as the probability value that show the probability that how your data is happen by chance (Mcleod, 2023). P-value helps determine whether there is enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis (Bevans, 2020). The p-value range between 0 to 1. The smaller the p-value, is less likely that the data result is happened based on random chance. Therefore, researcher can reject the null hypothesis (Mcleod, 2023). If the p-value is equal or smaller than 0.05, the finding of the research is statistically significant, and it is strong evidence for researcher to reject the null hypothesis (Beers, 2023).

3.6 Research procedure

Researcher will create a survey form using Google form to collect the respondents view along with the consent letter. Inside the survey form, there will be four parts including the research questionnaires which mentioned in 3.4 research instrument. The four sections will start with the consent agreement where respondent must click "I agree" to proceed to the second section, the demographic information section. Next, the third section will be STRS-SF section to examine the students-teacher relationship followed by TSS as the final section to examine the teachers' stress level.

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Once the survey form is made, the link will be distributing to all the potential respondents. All the potential respondents are from researcher existing contact who currently working as a preschool teacher in Klang Valley. The survey link will be given out personally by researcher after researcher contacted them on social media such as Whatapps, Instagram, and Facebook. The survey link is expected to be opened for 7 days (27th July 2023 to 3rd August 2023) to collect 60 responses. A gentle reminder will be sent to all respondents by researcher to remind them on the deadline for submitting the survey. While the survey link is open for the respondents to fill up, researcher will monitor the number of responses collected. (Refer to Figure 4.)

Lastly, once all the 60 respondents' data has been collected, researcher will be screened through all the items in the survey form to ensure there are no missing or incomplete information. Then, researcher begins the data analysis by using a software named "IBM SPSS 22.0" with the guidance of the researcher's supervisor.

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┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Generating consent agreement and questionnaires through     │
│                    Google form.                               │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↓
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Obtain permission from participants for filling up the        │
│          research survey verbally and message.                │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↓
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│            Distributing the survey to participants.           │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↓
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│            Collect and monitor the number of responds.        │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ↓
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Analysis the collected data using research software,        │
│                    IMB SPSS 22.0.                             │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Figure 4: *Flow chart of research procedure.*

3.7 Conclusion

In the nutshell, this chapter discusses the research design for this research study. The sampling and respondents are also stated out with the necessary information about it. Moreover, researcher introduced the two research instruments used for this study, along with data analysis tool. The data analysis result will be show and interpret in the next chapter. Then, researcher listed out the procedure of the research as the last part of the chapter.

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Chapter IV
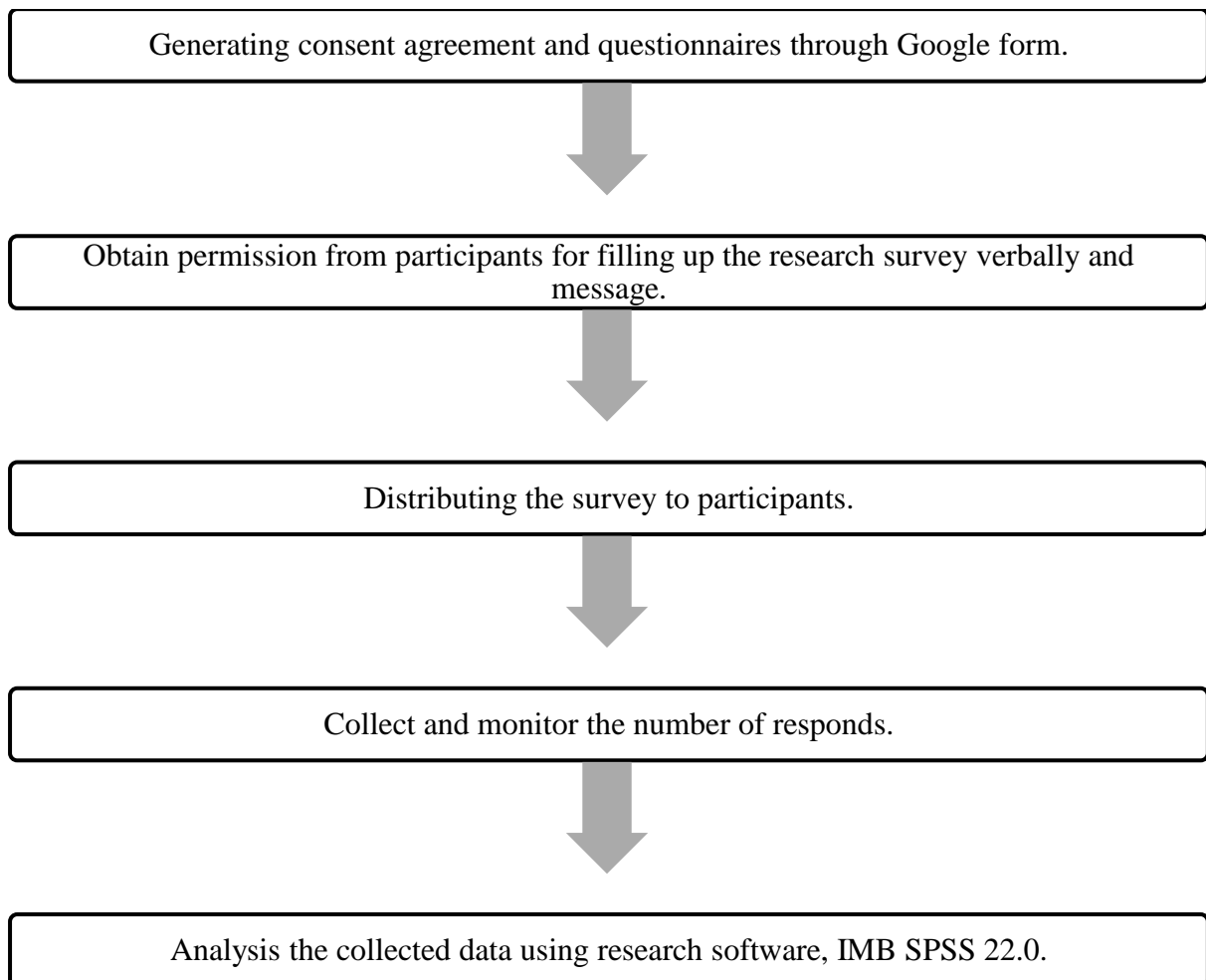
Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

Chapter four will be on data analysis. In this chapter, researcher will present the research data result in table form. The result data is collected from 27th July 2023 to 10th August 2023, total 14 days. In these 14 days, researcher managed to collect 66 respondents' data. Then, researcher browsed through all the 66 respondents' response to ensure all items were answered. After round of checking the data, IBM SPSS software is used in arranging and analysis the data collected. Result of hypothesis testing will be shown in this chapter to find out if the variables are correlated with each other.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Analysis

The tables below will be presenting the demographic information of all the respondents. There is a total of 66 respondents who work in Klang Valley participate in this research. The demographic information including their gender, age, salary range, years of experience working with children, and the number of children in their class.

Table 1

Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Female	62	93.9
Male	4	6.1
Total	66	100.0

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More than half the respondents who participate in the research are female. Based on Table 1, there is 93.9% of them are female, while there is 6.1% of them are male. Meaning that there 62 female respondents and 4 male respondents participate into this research study which make up a total of 66 respondents.

Table 2

Age of respondents

Age	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
<20 years old	2	3.0
21 to 29 years old	57	86.4
30 to 39 years old	3	4.5
>40 years old	4	6.1
Total	66	100.0

Table 2 present the age of the respondents. Based on Table 2, majority of the respondents are age from 21 to 29 years old, with the highest frequency of 57 (86.4%). Then, followed by 4 (6.1%) of respondents who age 40 years old and above. Among the 66 respondents, 3 (4.5%) of the respondents age from 30 to 39 years old, while there are only 2 (3%) respondents who age below 20 years old.

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Table 3

Salary Range

Salary range	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
1k to 1.5k	8	12.1
1.6k to 2k	11	16.7
2k to 2.5k	24	36.4
2.6k to 3k	14	21.2
3k to 3.5k	2	3.0
>3.5k	7	10.6
Total	66	100.0

Table 3 present the respondents' salary range in ECE industry. 24 (36.4%) of them earn RM2000 to RM2500. Then, 14 (21.2%) of them earn from RM2500 to RM3000, followed by 11 (16.7%) of them earn from RM1600 to RM2000. 8 (12.1) of the respondents earn RM1000 to RM1500 and 7 (10.6) of the respondents earn more than RM3500. There are only 2 respondents earn RM3000 to RM3500.

Table 4

Working Hour Duration

Working hours	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
<6 hours	7	10.6
7 to 10 hours	49	74.2
>10 hours	10	15.2
Total	66	100.0

In Table 4, it shows that more than half of the respondents that participate in the research work for 7 to 10 hours. 74.2% of them work for 7 to 10 hours, followed by 15.2% respondents who works more than 10 hours a day. Only 10.6% of them work less than 6 hours a day.

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Table 5

Years of Experience

Years of experience	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
<1 year	24	36.4
1 - 3 years	31	47.0
4 - 6 years	5	7.6
7 - 9 years	3	4.5
>10 years	3	4.5
Total	66	100.0

Majority of the respondents has less than 3 years' of working experience. 31 (47%) of the respondents have work in the ECE industry for 1 to 3 years and 24 (36.4%) of them have less than a year working experience. There are 5 (7.6%) of respondents have 4 to 6 years working experience. For "7 to 9 years" and "more than 10 years" experiences have the same frequency of respondents which is 3 (4.5%).

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Table 6

Number of Children in Class

Number of children	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
<10 children	13	19.7
10 to 14 children	26	39.4
15 to 19 children	18	27.3
>19 children	9	13.6
Total	66	100.0

Table 6 present the number of children in the respondents' class. Based on the table above, it shows that 39.4% of the respondents have 10 to 14 children in their class. Then, followed by 27.3% of respondents having 15 to 19 children in their class. 19.7% of the respondents have less than 10 children in the class while 13.6% of them has more than 19 children in their class.

Table 7

Mean and Standard Deviation of STRS-SF with its Subscales

Items		N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
STRS_SF subscale	Closure	66	30.3788	4.61024
	Conflict	66	17.2121	6.23764

Table 7 reported the mean and stand deviation IV (STR) in this study. N tells the sample size, which is 66 respondents. Based on Table 7, the closure relationship subscale reported M=30.3788 and SD= 4.61024. As for conflict relationship subscale, the result showed M=17.2121 and SD= 6.23764. Table 7 shows that closure relationship has a higher score than conflict relationship. From this result, it shows that majority of respondents showing higher mean in closure relationship with their students, which explain that the respondents is having a positive relationship with their students rather than having conflict relationship with their students.

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Table 8

Mean and Standard Deviation of TSS with its Subscales

Items		N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
TSS subscale	IS	66	9.2424	2.86120
	TRD	66	14.1970	3.76306

Table 8 reported the mean and stand deviation DV (preschool teachers' stress level) in this study. N tells the sample size, which is 66 respondents. IS stands for "inadequate school-based support" and TRD stands for "teaching related demand". Based on Table 8, the IS subscale reported M=9.2424 and SD= 2.86120. As for TRD subscale, the result showed M=14.1970 and SD= 3.76306. Table 8 shows that TRD subscale has a higher score than IS subscale. From this result, it shows that the stressor faced by Klang Valley teachers is more on teaching related demand side instead of feeling inadequate support from school.

Table 9

Mean and Standard Deviation of each item in TSS

Items		N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
TSS IS	IS_1	66	3.20	1.112
subscale	IS_2	66	2.95	1.246
	IS_3	66	3.09	1.119
TSS TRD	TRD_1	66	3.52	1.056
subscale	TRD_2	66	3.73	1.144
	TRD_3	66	3.52	1.113
	TRD_4	66	3.44	1.191

Table 9 reported the mean and stand deviation for all the items in TSS. Based on Table 9, item 2 from TRD subscale reported the highest mean (M= 3.73), which is feeling stress due to insufficient of time in completing teaching task. From here, it shows that most respondents feel stress for having not enough time in teaching.

As for the lowest item will be item 2 from the IS subscale with the M=2.95 and SD=1.246. Item 2 in IS subscale is "I felt stressed for not having support from colleagues at my school." Since this item scored the lowest in the whole TSS, it actively demonstrates that most respondents do not feel stress in lacking support from their colleagues.

4.3 Inferential Statistics and Analysis

For inferential analysis, it is performed using Pearson correlation coefficient to examine the potential association between the IV (STR) and DV (teachers' stress level) based on 66 preschool teachers who currently working around Klang Valley area.

Research hypothesis:

H_{a1}: This research study hypotheses that is a possible association between conflict relationship with high stress level among preschool teachers.

H_{a2}: This research study hypotheses that is a possible association between closeness relationship with low stress level among preschool teachers.

Table 10

Correlation between Closure and Conflict subscale with and Total TSS

Items	N	r	P
Closure	66	-.205	.098
Conflict	66	.260*	.035
TSS	66	1	

Beers (2023) mentioned that if the p-value is equal or smaller than .05, the finding of the research is statistically significant. It is strong evidence for researcher to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. Based on Table 10, the result shows no association between the closure relationship of preschool teachers with their student and the preschool teachers stress level (r= -.205, p= .098). As, the p-value for closure relationship (.098)

scored above .05. This result has showed that the finding is not significant. Therefore, the hypothesis of closure relationship with low preschool teachers' stress is not accepted.

While as for the result of conflict relationship of preschool teachers with their student shows there is a significant association with the high preschool teachers' stress level (r= .260*, p= .035). Based on Table 10, the p-value for conflict relationship scored .035 which is small than .05. This strongly demonstrated that the finding of conflict relationship with high stress level is significant. In brief, the hypothesis of conflict relationship with high stress level for preschool teachers is accepted.

As the p-vale result already shown there is a significant relationship between conflict relationship with higher preschool teachers' stress, the r value result showed that conflict relationship with high stress level for teachers is r=.206*, correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). The result of r- value is closer to +1 (.206). Thus, the r value result represented a weak association that conflict relationship is positive correlated with high stress level for preschool teacher in Klang Valley area.

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4.4 Summary

Table 11

Summary of Findings

Hypothesis assumption	Result	Decision
There is a possible association between conflict relationship with high stress level among preschool teachers.	r = .260, N = 66, p= .035	Accepted
There is a possible association between closeness relationship with low stress level among preschool teachers.	r = -.205, N = 66, p= .098	Rejected

The findings show that there is no association between closure relation with low stress level for teacher. On the other hand, the finding reveal that is a significant positive association between conflict relationship with high stress level among preschool teachers in Klang Valley. To conclude what have been displayed, H_{a1} is accepted while H_{a2} is rejected.

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Chapter V

Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, it involved a discussion that elaborate the finding reported at chapter 4. In discussion, researcher will be using related articles to support the finding of the research. The final chapter also involved implication, which tells the significant of this research. Limitations that face throughout the whole research process and some recommendations for future researchers will be including as well. Lastly, this research will end with a conclusion that summarize everything in this research study.

5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 Descriptive findings

This study aimed to examine the potential association between STR and preschool teachers' stress in Klang Valley. Data from 66 respondents is collected to analyse any potential relationships between these two variables. In terms of demographics, most respondents are female teachers who aged between 21-29 years, earning between RM2000-RM2500, working 7-10 hours daily, and having less than three years of experience (refer to Tables 1-5).

In detail, majority of the respondents are having less than one or one to three years' experience in the field and they have a generally positive relationship with their students. This study found that most respondents demonstrated a higher score in the closure relationship subscale (M=30.3788) as compared to the conflict subscale (M=17.2121) based on Table 7. By referring to the research by Mashburn et al. (2006) as cited in Gallagher et al. (2013) mentioning that less experience teachers will appraise their relationship with their student as closure relationship (Gallagher et al. 2013). It is in line with the demographic findings in this

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study. Thus, the current result has confirmed that teachers with less experience will tend to form a closure relationship with the students.

Interestingly, this study reported a higher stress levels related to teaching demands rather than feeling inadequate support from the school by referring to Table 8. In agreement with Ng et al. (2023), less experience teachers suffer stress in their teaching job and having a higher risk to burnout. As mentioned above that most respondents are teachers with fewer years of experience (less than 1 and 1 - 3 years). The stress related to teaching demand will be higher for these relatively inexperienced teachers, which possibly explaining a higher stress level score obtained in the teaching related demand subscale of TSS.

5.2.2 Inferential findings

The objective of this research is to find out the potential association between STR and preschool teachers' stress level. Earlier, two hypothesises are generated which are "conflict relationship is correlated with higher stress level" and "closure relationship is correlated with lower stress level". The result generated from previous chapter have shown that there is no significant association between closure relationship and low stress level for preschool teachers (r= -.205, p= .098). This indicated that closure relationship did not contribute to low stress level for preschool teacher because both variables are not correlated.

The fact that closure relationship did not have association with preschool teachers' low stress level is unexpected. Based on past studies by Aldrup et al. (2018), mention that a closure STR is a source of motivation for preschool teachers, and it ease the stress off from teachers. Similarly, a research study conducted by Yee et al. (2022) also supported this finding that teachers who have positive and closure relationship with their students reported a lower stress

level. Taken together, result from these past articles suggested that closure relationship is associate with teachers' low stress level.

However, based on the current finding of this study, there is no association between closure relationship with lower stress level for teachers. A possible explanation for this inconsistency might be that the stress faced by preschool teachers is not totally from the relationship with their students but from other stressor such as teaching stress. A local past study by Abdul et al. (2017) showed that preschool teachers experienced stress due to the teaching task in school. This finding is in line with the current research which also showing that the preschool teachers experience higher stress on teaching related demand side (M=14.1970) compared to feeling inadequate support from school (M=9.2424). This data revealed that preschool teachers reported having stress in teaching related demand, which mean that preschool teachers will feel stress even they are having a closure relationship with their students. Meaning that regardless of whether teachers are having a closure relationship with their students or not, they will feel still experience stress due to the teaching related demand.

Another explanation that could possibly contribute to closure relationship is not significant associate with low stress level may be specifically refers to teachers' experience. According to Mashburn et al. (2006) as cited in Gallagher et al. (2013) mentioning that less experience teachers will appraise their relationship with their student as closure relationship (Gallagher et al. 2013). This is because these less experience teachers have the high passion in teaching which causing them to remain engage with the students, regardless of the level of stress they experience. Furthermore, more educated teacher also tends to have a closure relationship with their students as they have a better understanding on the behaviour of the children from their previous education knowledge (Chen et al., 2018). Thus, these evidences had explained that preschool teachers' experience and education level could be more significant factor contribute to closure relationship instead of stress level.

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In this study, researcher have found a weak association between conflict relationship with high stress level for preschool teachers based on the analysis of Pearson correlation which $r = .260$, $p = .035$. This result suggested that if teachers are having a conflict relationship with their students, they are prone to a higher stress. This finding is consistent with previous articles mentioning that conflict relationship is correlated to higher stress. (Whitaker et al., 2015), (Gagnon et al., 2018), and (Corbin et al., 2019).

This finding on conflict relationship is correlated with high stress level is mirrored with what Whitaker et al. (2015) found that conflict relationship in STR is significant correlated with higher stress. Furthermore, a recent study conducted by Gagnon et al. (2019) also supported the finding that conflict relationship is more likely to lead the preschool teachers to experience stress in teaching. In this 2019 study, it pointed out that conflictual relationship with the students is associated to higher stress for preschool teacher which same as what the current study has found. Moreover, the findings by Corbin et al. (2019) who emphasized the role of STR in predicting teachers' emotional exhaustion, also suggesting that having a conflictual relationship with students would increase teachers' stress and contribute to their emotional weariness. In brief, result from these past articles demonstrated that conflict relationship is associated with higher stress level for teachers.

The finding that conflict relationship is correlated with higher stress level, which is based partly on the respondents' own experience when responding to the students' behaviour (Gagnon et al., 2019). If the teacher experiences difficulties in managing the students' behaviour, the teacher's emotion will be affected and might appraise this interaction as conflictual relationship based on his/her opinion which increases the stress level. Thus, this conflict relationship with the student will increase the stress level of the teacher. According to Abidin et al. (2004) as cited in Gagnon et al. (2019), the article argued that teachers' own perspective on the children' behaviour will affect their teaching stress. Therefore, conflict

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relationship is correlated with higher stress level is based on the respondents' own experience and perspective when they responding to the students' behaviour.

By following the theorical framework used in this study which is the "Transactional theory of stress and coping (TTSC)", it refers that stress is unique to everyone, it is depending on how one evaluates or appraise the situation or event should be stressful or ignorance (Putwain, et al., 2021). By applying this theory into the STR context, it would be that teachers will rate the STR based on their experience in managing the students' behaviour. Hence, if a preschool teacher evaluates the STR as conflict relationship based on the experience in managing students' behaviour, their stress level would increase. In short, the stress level is depending on how teacher evaluate their relationship with the students (Corbin et al., 2019). As a result, the finding that conflict relationship is correlated with higher stress relies on preschool teachers' perspective on their view of the relationship with the students.

Finally, while the result indicated that closure relationship has no significant association with lower stress level which incompatible with previous studies, another finding of this research is supported by previous studies. Which is conflict relationship in STR is associated with higher levels of teaching-related stress, which supports the previous articles by Whitaker et al. (2015), Gagnon et al. (2018), and Corbin et al. (2019).

5.3 Implication

The finding of this study holds significant implications to teachers, principals, operators, and future researchers in the early childhood education industry. This research study has statistically proven that there is a tendency for preschool teachers to feel stress when they are having a conflict relationship with their students. This finding helps preschool teachers to aware that having conflict relationship with their students might bring more stress to them when

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working in early childhood education field. This research result urges the preschool teachers to consider strategies to overcome the conflictual relationship with students if they are having it. For example, show empathy to students to understand the reason of their behaviour. Then, communicate with them in simple language so that the students can understand the teachers' perspective. Lastly, teacher can set a high expectation for the students and continue to motivate the students to reach for their goal. By doing these, it can significantly improve the STR (States et al., 2018). The finding result also serves as a reminder to preschool teachers be more careful on developing relationship with their students.

For the implication of preschool principals and operators, understanding the influence of conflict relationship with the students can provide them the valuable insights on how to create a supportive and nurturing learning environment for both teachers and students. This study identified that conflict relationship with students will contribute to higher stress levels. Thus, preschool principal and operator can work on designing targeted interventions and professional development programs for their teacher in their institution. This is to equip their teachers with the necessary skills and resources that help them to foster a positive relationship with their students. By doing this, this can help to prevent their teachers to feel stress due to the conflict relationships as this study finds there is a tendency for preschool teachers to feel stress if they are having a conflict relationship with their students. Furthermore, principal and operator may consider organizing fun activities and event such as "teacher-student day" where teachers and students will be doing some activities together. This is to a enhance the relationship among teachers and students. Studies have shown that doing fun activities together can foster a positive and closure relationship for teachers and students (Sandilos et al. 2018).

In this study, researcher has found that closure relationship (M=30.3788) between students and teachers is higher than a conflict relationship (M=17.2121). This indicate that most teachers in Klang Valley developed a closure relationship with their students. With this

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finding, it serve as a supporting data for future researchers to find out the underlying reason of closure relationship is higher in Klang Valley area if they interested in doing research on this topic. This finding also contributes benefits to preschool operators, principals, and teachers. As Klang Valley teachers able to form closure relationship with their students rather than coflict relationship, teachers from other area can learn from Klang Valley's preschool educator on the strategies of developing a closure relationship with their students. School operators and principals may consider collaborating with preschool in Klang Valley to host a training seminar for their teachers to equip the skills and knowledges on developing a closure relationship with students. By doing this, preschool teachers can form a closure relationship with their students, and this closure relationship will be decrease their stress level because past studies have mentioned that teachers who have closure relationship are less likely to report stress (Cui, 2022).

Additionally, the findings of this study have provided a statistically result to support that conflict relationship is correlated with higher stress level (r= .260*, p= .035), while closure relationship did not associate with low stress level (r= -.205, p= .098). This valid result is generated based on 66 preschool teachers who work in area of Klang Valley. The result of the current study will be valuable for future researcher. Future researchers can use the current findings to further investigate the association between STR and preschool teacher stress levels.

Furthermore, this study also finds out that preschool teachers experience higher levels of stress in teaching related demands (M=14.1970) rather than feeling inadequate support from school (M=9.2424). In general term, this means that preschool teachers' stress is mostly come from their teaching job such as having too much teaching work, insufficient time in preparing worksheet or activities for teaching, and others (Chen et al., 2022). With this understanding that preschool teachers experiencing more stress in their teaching related demands, the preschool teachers can now be aware about it and identify ways to release their teaching related demands stress. Such as seeking help from other teachers, asking extra time in teaching

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preparation, and other. This finding may also suggest preschool operator and principal on considering employing extra helper for their teachers and allocating more preparation time for teachers in preparing for lesson teaching.

5.4 Limitation

There are a few limitations in this research study. The most obvious limitation is that the research sample used in this study is unable to represent the actual population of preschool teachers. This is happened due to a few reasons, such as a small sample size and similarity of respondents. The sample size of the research is small as it only involves 66 respondents. The sample size should be as large as possible to get the reliable and accurate data that able to represent the actual population of preschool teachers in Klang Valley (Andrade, 2020). Thus, the finding of this result cannot be generalized and representing the association between STR and preschool teachers' stress level in the whole area of Klang Valley.

Researcher has employed convenience sampling method in data collection. This has led to the result that majority of the respondents involve had a similar background which contributed the result to be highly bias (Etikan et al., 2016). The diversity of respondents is very limited, meaning that respondents of this research shared the similar background. Most of the respondents are 21 to 29 years old and having less than 1 or 1 to 3 years' experience in working as preschool teachers. This may cause the research result to be very particular that only applicable to a small group of the population. These similarities decreased the generalizability of the finding that hard to represent the actual population (Bhandari, 2020).

Lastly, the limitation faced in this research study also including difficulties in getting respondents. Although researcher has existing contact to in-service preschool teachers who working in Klang Valley area, yet most of them rejected the researcher 's request in filling up

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the survey link. Researcher is expected to collect at least 60 within a week. However, researcher is unable to collect the required responses and it caused researcher to extend the data collection time length. This data collection is conducted around end of July where all preschool teachers are busy with their parents-teacher meetings, and some are also busy with their school sport days too. Thus, most of the potential respondents rejected the researcher's request. This has caused a difficulty for researcher during data collection and researcher have to approach to more preschool teachers to reach the requirement for respondent.

5.5 Recommendation for future research

A few recommendations are suggested for future researcher based on the current research. The first recommendation is to collect more responses. The sample size should be as large as possible to get the reliable and accurate data (Andrade, 2020). According to the sample to item ratio, 5:1 is the minimum ratio to determine the sample size (Memon, et al., 2020). The minimum number for sample size should base the number of items in the survey questionnaire. One item must have at least five samples as the minimum. For example, STRS_SF consists of 15 items, it would be 5 x15 items, that is 75. Meaning that for STRS_SF, it will require at least 75 samples as the minimum sample size. Thus, to determine the sample size for this research topic on examining the association between STR and preschool teachers' stress level. This research used STRS_SF with 15 items and TSS with 7 items, total of 22 items. Hence, 110 respondents will be the minimum sample size based on the sample to item ratio.

To overcome the limited diversity of respondents, future research may consider using a probability sampling method. To get a generalizability sample data, is better to use probability sampling where everyone in the preschool teacher population can get the equal change to be involve (Bhandari, 2020). For instance, using a stratified sampling would be ideal to get

respondents with vary background. Stratified sampling is where researcher will first divide the population into a few groups, then pick a few participants from each group as the sample of the study (Nguyen et al. 2019). Future researcher can use simple random sampling to pick one or two preschool in each district of Klang Valley, then contact the preschool's principals for their consent to involve the teachers as the sample of the research study. By doing this, it will increase the chance for other respondents with different background to participate into this study.

To ensure that future researcher able to collect sufficient data from respodents, researcher suggest that future researcher should consider giving more time for data collection instead of targetting only one week time for data collection. Researcher also would recommend that it would be more convenient for future researcher to collect respodents if they have a list of available preschool teachers who are willing to fill up research survey even they are busy. By doing this, it provides future researcher a backup plan whenever they facing the difficulty of getting respodents.

5.6 Conclusion

In the nutshell, this final chapter has reported that conflict relationship is associated with high stress level for preschool teachers and closure relationship is not significant associated with low stress level. These finding have implication for parties in early childhood education industry. Limitations faced throughout the research process has been mentioned in this chapter, then recommendations are also suggested by researcher to overcome the limitations.

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Conclusion

This research begins in July 2023 and ends in September 2023. The objective of the research is to find out the possible association between STR with preschool teachers' stress level. To do this, an online survey is conducted via Google form that involves 66 in-service preschool teachers as respondents. The data collected from the survey is analysed and report in chapter four. All the results are report after a careful analysis by using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

There are two hypotheses in this research. One is accepted where conflict relationship in STR is correlated with high stress level for preschool teacher. Meaning that teachers who having a conflictual and negative relationship with their students contribute to a higher stress level for preschool teachers. Meanwhile, another one hypothesis is rejected because closure relationship is not related with low stress level for preschool teachers. This indicated that closure relationship has nothing to do with low stress level for preschool teachers.

To sum up everything that have been stated so far, this research is consider successful. The result of the research has achieved the goal of this research. Which is finding out that conflict relationship is correlated with higher preschool teachers' stress while closure relationship is not correlated with low stress level for preschool teachers. The result of the research is significant for preschool teacher, school operator, and future researcher.

Despite its contributions, this research has limitations. The study was confined to Klang Valley, thereby restricting the generalizability of findings. Moreover, the reliance on self-reported data might have introduced a degree of bias. Although some limitations happened but researcher has suggested some strategies for future researcher and hoping that the recommendations stated will help future researcher to overcome the difficulties in conducting

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their result. Nevertheless, this research study still hold value for understanding the association

between STR and preschool teachers' stress within the ECE industry.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Examine the potential association between students-teacher relationships with preschool teachers' stress in Klang Valley

Purpose of the study

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by the researcher: Jasmine Siow Jie Yin (2102048), student from University Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR). Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. There is no particular harm or risk involves in this study.

Procedure

This is a self-reported questionnaire. It will take 10 minutes of your time. You are required to answer a series of questions, which cover to examining your relationship with your class of students, and the stress level you experiencing as a teacher. **Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to find out the potential association of student-teacher relationship with preschool teachers' stress level.

Confidentiality

Your responses to this survey will be anonymous. All the information you have given will be kept private and confidential. Your information will be stored only by code, with personal details kept secured in files and computer with access only by the immediate research team. The results of this study will be presented at conferences and written up in journals. In this event of publication, no personal identification will be disclosed.

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study will be presented at conferences and written up in journals. In this event of publication, no personal identification will be disclosed.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher.

jsjy0331@gmail.com Switch account

Not shared

* Indicates required question

Consent   *

I have read and understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

○ I agree

○ I disagree

Next   Clear form

EXAMINE THE POTENTIAL ASSOCIATION BETWEEN STUDENTS-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS WITH PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' STRESS IN KLANG VALLEY

Demographic information

Gender *

○ Male

○ Female

Age *

○ <20 years old

○ 21 to 29 years old

○ 30 to 39 years old

○ >40 years old

Salary range *

○ 1k to 1.5k

○ 1.6k to 2k

○ 2k to 2.5k

○ 2.6k to 3k

○ 3k to 3.5k

○ 3.5k and above

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Working hour duration *

○ 6 hours and below

○ 7hours to 10 hours

○ 10 hours and above

Years of experience in working with children. *

○ Less than 1 year

○ 1 to 3 years

○ 4 to 6 years

○ 7 to 9 years

○ 9 years and above

Number of children in your class. *

○ Less than 10 children

○ 10 to 14 children

○ 15 to 19 children

○ 19 children and above

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Modified student-teacher relationship scale-short form by (Whitaker et at., 2015).

This scale will examine the relationship of student and teacher based on the teacher's perspective.

Closeness subscale *

Please choose the best answer based on the rating below.

Definitely does not apply 1	Does not apply 2	Neutral, not sure 3	Applies somewhat 4	Definitely applies 5

	Definitely does not apply =1	Not really = 2	Neutral, not sure =3	Applies somewhat =4	5: Definitely applies =5
1. I share an affectionate, warm relationship with the children.	○	○	○	○	○
3. If upset, the children will seek comfort from me.	○	○	○	○	○
5. The children value their relationship with me.	○	○	○	○	○

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6. When I praise the children, they beam with pride.	○	○	○	○	○
7. The children share information with me about themselves even if I don't ask.	○	○	○	○	○
9. It is easy to be in tune with what the children are feeling.	○	○	○	○	○
15. The children openly share their feelings and experiences with me.	○	○	○	○	○

Conflict subscale *

Please choose the best answer based on the rating below.

Definitely does not apply 1	Does not apply 2	Neutral, not sure 3	Applies somewhat 4	Definitely applies 5

	Definitely does not apply	Not really = 2	Neutral, not	Applies	Definitely

EXAMINE THE POTENTIAL ASSOCIATION BETWEEN STUDENTS-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS WITH PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' STRESS IN KLANG VALLEY

Conflict subscale *

Please choose the best answer based on the rating below:

Definitely does not apply 1	Does not apply 2	Neutral, not sure 3	Applies somewhat 4	Definitely applies 5

	Definitely does not apply = 1	Not really = 2	Neutral, not sure = 3	Applies somewhat = 4	Definitely applies = 5
2. The children and I always seem to be struggling with each other.	○	○	○	○	○
4. The children are uncomfortable with physical affection or touch from me	○	○	○	○	○
8. The children easily become angry with me.	○	○	○	○	○
10. The children remain angry or are resistant after being disciplined.	○	○	○	○	○

EXAMINE THE POTENTIAL ASSOCIATION BETWEEN STUDENTS-TEACHER
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11. Dealing with the children drains my energy	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
12. When the children are in a bad mood, I know we're in for a long and difficult day.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
13. The children's feelings toward me can be hard to predict or can change suddenly.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
14. The children are sneaky or manipulative with me.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Back   Next   Clear form

EXAMINE THE POTENTIAL ASSOCIATION BETWEEN STUDENTS-TEACHER
RELATIONSHIPS WITH PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' STRESS IN KLANG VALLEY

Teacher stress scale by Chen et al., 2022)

This scale will examine the level of teacher's stress level. By total up the score from all 7 questions.
Scores on this scale can range from 0 to 20 with higher scores indicating high level of stress.

Inadequate School-based Support (3 items) *

Please choose the best answer based on the rating below.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I felt stressed for not having support from the administrators at my school.	○	○	○	○	○
2. I felt stressed for not having support from colleagues at my school.	○	○	○	○	○
3. I felt stressed for having to manage student behaviors.	○	○	○	○	○

EXAMINE THE POTENTIAL ASSOCIATION BETWEEN STUDENTS-TEACHER
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Teaching-related Demands (4 items) *

Please choose the best answer based on the rating below.

Strongly disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly agree 5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I felt stressed for having too much teaching work to do.	○	○	○	○	○
2. I felt stressed for not having enough time to complete my teaching work (e.g., preparing,teaching the curricular content).	○	○	○	○	○
3. I felt stressed for not being able to meet the diverse learning needs of my students.	○	○	○	○	○
4. I felt stressed about not doing a good job with my teaching.	○	○	○	○	○

EXAMINE THE POTENTIAL ASSOCIATION BETWEEN STUDENTS-TEACHER
RELATIONSHIPS WITH PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' STRESS IN KLANG VALLEY

Appendix B: Original SPSS data

Table A1

SPSS output of descriptive statistics – Respondents' Gender

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	62	93.9	93.9	93.9
	Male	4	6.1	6.1	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

Table A2

SPSS output of descriptive statistics – Respondents' age

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<20 years old	2	3.0	3.0	3.0
	21 to 29 years old	57	86.4	86.4	89.4
	30 to 39 years old	3	4.5	4.5	93.9
	>40 years old	4	6.1	6.1	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

Table A3

SPSS output of descriptive statistics – Respondents' salary range

Salary range

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1k to 1.5k	8	12.1	12.1	12.1
	1.6k to 2k	11	16.7	16.7	28.8
	2k to 2.5k	24	36.4	36.4	65.2
	2.6k to 3k	14	21.2	21.2	86.4
	3k to 3.5k	2	3.0	3.0	89.4
	>3.5k	7	10.6	10.6	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

EXAMINE THE POTENTIAL ASSOCIATION BETWEEN STUDENTS-TEACHER
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Table A4

SPSS output of descriptive statistics – Respondents' working hours duration

Working hour duration

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<6 hours	7	10.6	10.6	10.6
	7 to 10 hours	49	74.2	74.2	84.8
	>10 hours	10	15.2	15.2	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

Table A5

SPSS output of descriptive statistics – Respondents' years of working experience

Years of experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<1 year	24	36.4	36.4	36.4
	1 - 3 years	31	47.0	47.0	83.3
	4 - 6 years	5	7.6	7.6	90.9
	7 - 9 years	3	4.5	4.5	95.5
	>10 years	3	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

Table A6

SPSS output of descriptive statistics – Number of children in respondents' classroom

No of children

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<10 children	13	19.7	19.7	19.7
	10 to 14 children	26	39.4	39.4	59.1
	15 to 19 children	18	27.3	27.3	86.4
	>19 children	9	13.6	13.6	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

EXAMINE THE POTENTIAL ASSOCIATION BETWEEN STUDENTS-TEACHER
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Table A7

SPSS output – Mean for Student Teachers Relationship Scale_Short Form (STRS_SF)

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Closure	66	9.00	35.00	30.3788	4.61024
Conflict	66	8.00	35.00	17.2121	6.23764
Valid N (listwise)	66				

Table A8

SPSS output – Mean for Teacher Stress Scale (TSS)

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TSS_IS	66	3.00	15.00	9.2424	2.86120
TSS_TRD	66	4.00	20.00	14.1970	3.76306
Valid N (listwise)	66				

Table A9

SPSS output – Mean for each item in TSS

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TSS_IS1	66	1	5	3.20	1.112
TSS_IS2	66	1	5	2.95	1.246
TSS_IS3	66	1	5	3.09	1.119
TSS_TRD1	66	1	5	3.52	1.056
TSS_TRD2	66	1	5	3.73	1.144
TSS_TRD3	66	1	5	3.52	1.113
TSS_TRD4	66	1	5	3.44	1.191
Valid N (listwise)	66				

EXAMINE THE POTENTIAL ASSOCIATION BETWEEN STUDENTS-TEACHER
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Table A10

Pearson correlation result for preschool teachers' STR with their stress level

Correlations

		Closeness	Conflict	Teacher_stress
Closeness	Pearson Correlation	1	-.336**	-.205
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006	.098
	N	66	66	66
Conflict	Pearson Correlation	-.336**	1	.260*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006		.035
	N	66	66	66
Teacher_stress	Pearson Correlation	-.205	.260*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.098	.035	
	N	66	66	66

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).