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## Parental Involvement and Peer Relationships towards Primary School Students' Social Awareness

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### Abstract

The important of this study is to understanding the factors that shape a child's social awareness. By examining the impact of these factors, researchers and educators can develop strategies to promote positive social development and academic success for children. Social awareness is an aspect that emphasises a person's ability to be more empathetic, understanding and to recognize the perspectives and feelings of others in a social context. In order to strengthen social awareness among primary school students, parental involvement and peer relationships play an important role. A quantitative study using a survey research design was conducted to identify the relationship between parental involvement and peer relationships with the primary school students' social awareness. A total of 410 primary school students aged between 10-12 were selected as respondents for this study through a simple random sampling technique. Pearson's correlation analysis showed a positive and significant relationship between parental involvement and social awareness of primary school students ( $r=0.531$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Additionally, Pearson's correlation analysis also showed a positive and significant relationship between peer relationships and social awareness of primary school students ( $r=0.405$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). This study has implications for parents to realise the importance of their involvement in school activities and their children's daily activities in contributing towards students' level of social awareness. The findings of this study can serve as a guideline for parents and educators to take the initiative in helping students build healthy friendships with peers so that students' social awareness skills can be enhanced. Future researcher can expand their finding with pre-school children or focus on other locations and larger groups to gain a more comprehensive picture of this study.

**Keywords:** Parental Involvement, Peer Relationships, Social Awareness, Friendship, Primary School

### Introduction

Presently, the need to cultivate social awareness among members of the society is becoming increasingly relevant, particularly in the aspect of enhancing understanding, effective communication as well as building positive relationships with others. Social awareness skills enable better human relations, reduce conflicts and allow humans to have a positive impact

on the world. According to Denham et al (2011), social awareness is an interpersonal skill that is related to an individual's ability to feel empathy towards others, develop effective interaction in various social contexts, as well as respect the differences and similarities of an individual or group. Social awareness, in establishing a more harmonious and inclusive social environment through communication, cooperation, nurturing of empathy and understanding, needs to be cultivated beginning from the childhood stage in schools. This skill enables students to understand others and show feelings of empathy (Whitcomb & Elias, 2018). The developmental stage of a child is an important phase to educate and cultivate social awareness skills because children at this stage are developing social skills such as taking various perspectives, empathy and cooperation that are essential for building positive relationships and engaging in prosocial behaviour (Lemerise & Arsenio, 2021). Childhood is also a stage for children to form their identity and develop their beliefs and values about the world (Pekrun & Lichtenfeld, 2019). Therefore, exposure to the concept of social awareness during this period can help children develop a sense of social responsibility and promote positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusiveness. At the same time, social awareness skills are an important aspect that needs to be emphasised in students' learning in school as it can reduce cases of bullying and violence among children in school (Rizkiya et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the attitude of tolerance and understanding towards each other is the basis of a country's prosperity, especially in Malaysia which is composed of various races, ethnicities, religions and cultures. Thus, understanding of social awareness can help students in Malaysia adapt, and foster a culture of respect in the society. Matitaputty et al (2018) in their study remarked that students who master social awareness skills are not only able to adapt to society's norms but are also more open to accepting other people's views and capable of creating harmony in life. At the same time, social awareness learning plays an important role in improving students' academic performance and developing harmonious relationships with others, and has a positive impact on an individual's mental health (Matitaputty et al., 2018; Suryana et al., 2020).

Children's social development is greatly influenced by the relationship and interaction that occur with parents at home and friends in school. Hence, parental involvement and relationships with peers play an important role in fostering students' social awareness. A child's growth in a friendly, loving environment with parental support encourages them to learn skills related to social awareness more effectively (Castillo, 2020). In addition, children raised in an environment that emphasises problem solving skills are able to show empathy and use the problem solving skills without causing conflicts (Castillo, 2020). Meanwhile, good peer relationships help the development of healthy socio-emotional children and make a huge contribution in enhancing social awareness skills (Ambrosino, 2019).

Therefore, there is a need to examine this issue considering that a child's development stage is a crucial stage especially at the primary school level. Furthermore, studies that examine parental involvement and peers on the development of children's social awareness are still limited compared to the studies conducted abroad (Andrade, 2020; Kohler, 2006). Thus, a study on the extent to which parental involvement and peer relationships can influence the social awareness of primary school students in Malaysia need to be conducted to fill this knowledge gap. This study is also expected to be a guide for the Ministry of Education so that

it could plan relevant programmes in an effort to improve the development of social awareness learning among primary school students.

## Literature Review

### Social Awareness

Social awareness is defined as a person's ability to gain perspective, and show compassion towards the feelings, views, opinions and challenges of people from various backgrounds and cultures (Fubara, 2020; CASEL, 2015; Goleman, 2006). Ovidiu (2010) identified that a person's social awareness can be seen from their contribution to society and the country. Additionally, social awareness also refers to an individual's ability to understand and recognise the social dynamics and issues within a society (Harthill, 2018). It involves a person's concern and empathy towards the experiences and perspectives of others. In short, social awareness refers to a form of value that focuses on an individual's understanding and attention towards the social and emotional state of others as well as the surrounding environment. This includes a person's willingness to empathise, understand other people's perspectives, and work together with others to achieve a common goal. In the context of education, social awareness is one of the basic skills in social and emotional learning, and it is related to empathy (Nopembri et al., 2017). Among the elements associated with social awareness are perspective, respect, humility and empathy (Trujillo, 2020). Social awareness enables students to know the thoughts, emotions and feelings of others (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Social awareness is capable of inculcating critical thinking skills among students to enable them to solve problems through various appropriate solutions to reduce the occurrence of misunderstandings (Tsui, 2000). For Malaysia, which is a country that is composed of multiracial, multireligious and multi-ethnic society, students who have mastery of social awareness are not only capable of communicating courteously with others, but are also capable of instilling values of respect and tolerance among themselves. Therefore, the study on social awareness learning in the Malaysian context is important to help students adapt themselves in a society that consists of people of various backgrounds and cultures (Strahan & Poteat, 2020).

Additionally, in the context of learning in the classroom, mastery of social awareness skills enables students to interact with classmates, creating understanding and enabling them to adapt in the learning community (Heo, 2005). Students who possess social awareness skills are someone who is compassionate, able to accept different perspectives, and can develop close relationships with other individuals. This aspect is even more noticeable in an education system that is oriented towards a certain racial group, for example in vernacular schools. Thus, students who master social awareness skills are not only able to identify the uniqueness and peculiarities of the diverse cultures and races that appear around them, but are also capable of solving issues or problems in the community (Matitaputty et al., 2018), and willing to give commitment towards social issues such as providing help to those in need (Kenny, 2021). Overall, social awareness is important for students so that they learn to understand the Malaysian society. Social awareness skills can develop a helpful nature in the students and enhance the students' behaviour of ethical norms. Moreover, social awareness influences students' academic performance (LaRocca, 2017). Empathetic students are more cooperative in class and have strong interpersonal skills such as taking into consideration other people's perspectives and engage effectively with peers and teachers in the learning tasks (Spinrad & Eisenberg, 2009). This creates a suitable atmosphere for students to focus on learning. In

addition, in the academic context, students who have social awareness skills can understand the feelings of others and are empathetic towards their classmates (LaRocca, 2017).

According to Trujillo (2020), the concept of social awareness can be analysed in more detail based on four important components which are accepting the perspective of others, respectful attitude, culture of humility, and feelings of empathy. Individuals who can understand and respect the perspective of others and are flexible play an important role in solving social problems (Bailey & Im-Bolter, 2020). At the same time, individuals who are respectful of others not only treat people around them well but will also not be prejudiced towards others (Trujillo, 2020). Additionally, individuals with humility will be willing to give help to others and will not look down on weak individuals. Meanwhile, feelings of empathy enables a person to put themselves in the position of others so that they understand the experience and emotions of other people (Trujillo, 2020). The concept of social awareness in Greenspan's model (1979, 1981a) is divided into three main constructs, namely social sensitivity, social insight, and social communication. Social sensitivity in Greenspan's model refers to an individual's ability to understand the views and feelings of others and interpret a social situation correctly. Social insight refers to an individual's understanding of a social issue and ability to make judgement or evaluation about the event. Meanwhile, social communication refers to an individual's ability to use communication skills to develop healthy interpersonal relationships. Greenspan's model relates sensitivity as a component of perception, understanding as a component of interpretation, and communication as a component of action. The social aspect of sensitivity is a person's ability to be empathetic and get along well with others, while the social aspect of insight is self-awareness, understanding of a situation, and skills to solve problems (Fuadah et al., 2018). The social aspect of communication comprises effective communication and listening (Fuadah et al., 2018).

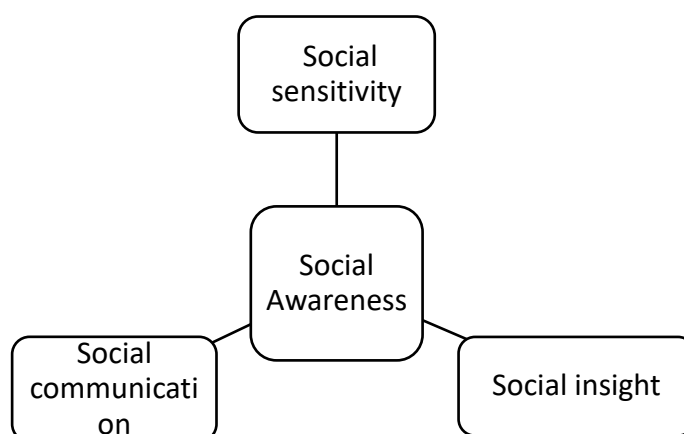


Figure 1. Social Awareness Model (Greenspan 1979).

In conclusion, social awareness can be summarised as a crucial skill that can help individuals develop healthy relationships, navigate complex social situations, and contribute towards creating a more just and equitable society. In the context of this study, the elements of social awareness that were focused upon are feelings of empathy, respectful attitude, culture of humility and accepting different views.

### **Parental Involvement**

Stevenson and Baker (1987) defined parental involvement as parents' participation in children's school activities. Parental involvement also refers to parents' participation outside of school (Nye et al., 2006). Parental involvement is the behaviour and effort made by parents in supporting their children's education (Ogg & Anthony, 2020; Garbacz et al., 2018). Parental involvement affects student behaviour, attitude and personality and has an impact on students' cognitive and social development (Roy & Giraldo-Garcia, 2018; Epstein et al., 2009; Weiss et al., 2006). Parental involvement can be understood from three aspects, namely home-school involvement, involvement at home and involvement at school (Manz et al., 2004). Home-school communication refers to the way parents and teachers communicate with each other regarding students' progress in academics as well as children's needs in order to provide a support system for the academic and socio-emotional needs of the students. Involvement at home is defined as parents' willingness to monitor and help students in school work and discuss with students about their learning plan (Manz et al., 2004). This aspect looks at the involvement of parents in helping to extend teaching outside the classroom, creating a more positive experience for the children and helping the children perform better when they are at school (Edek & Isha, 2020). Meanwhile, the dimension of involvement in school refers to the involvement of parents in school activities other than the child's learning alone (Manz et al., 2004). This involvement can be linked to the activities of Parent and Teacher Association (PTA) because it has an effect in improving the standard of children's education by creating a learning environment that not only emphasises the teaching of knowledge, but also skills and values for the children at school (Abd Raof et al., 2020).

Parental involvement can promote children's social awareness by setting an example for children through positive social behaviour. Parents who empathise and show respect for others can help instil these qualities in their children (Kim et al., 2021). Similarly, parents who encourage their children to engage in activities that promote social awareness, such as community service or volunteering, can help foster their children's empathy and concern for others (Belsky & Jaffee, 2019). Additionally, parental involvement can provide emotional support and guidance to children in developing social awareness skills. Parents who engage in open communication with their children, listen to their concerns and feelings, and provide guidance and feedback can help foster their children's emotional development and social awareness (Sheridan & Kim, 2020). Additionally, parents who provide children with positive reinforcement such as praise and recognition, can help promote the development of children's social awareness skills (Kim et al., 2021).

Studies conducted by Roy and Giraldo-García (2018) and Bridges (2012) highlighted that there is a positive relationship between parental involvement and the social-emotional health of students. Parents who involve themselves in their children's daily lives, not only have a positive effect on the children's cognitive and social development, but also influence the children to cultivate positive attitudes and behaviours as well as good personalities (Piang & Leksansern, 2021; Ogg & Anthony, 2020; Garbacz et al., 2018; Weiss et al., 2006). Children who receive support from their parents are more confident because they feel more loved and are more self-assured, and are brave in facing challenges in order to achieve their goals (Lagrange, 2022). Therefore, it can be concluded that parents who actively involve themselves in activities together with their children, at the same time also influence the development of their children's character, emotions, cognitive and prosocial behaviour.

### **Peer Relationships**

A peer group is defined as a social group that consists of individuals of the same age, education or social status (Lackovi–Grgin, 2006). Peers play the role of motivator in the cognitive, social and emotional development of students as peers are an important socialisation agent in peer relationships (Piaget, 1970). This is because these relationships play a significant role in influencing cognitive, social and emotional growth as well as identity development and psychological well-being (Stapa et al., 2012). Contrastingly, negative peer relationships can result in students adopting and developing negative behaviours such as truancy, substance abuse, and mental health problems (Shahrudin, 2018; McDougall et al., 2001; Woodward & Fergusson, 2000).

Peer relationships also refer to interpersonal relationships that describe peer interactions among individuals of the same age, which is characterised by communication that is fair and equitable among individuals who share the same values and cognition (Tu & Chu, 2020). Therefore, in this study, peer relationships referred to three aspects, namely peer acceptance, friendship, and friendship quality (Clark, 1994). Peer group acceptance refers to basic adjustment and acceptance among a group of peers (Clark, 1994). Friendship refers to relationships that occur between people who have intellectual and emotional similarities and provide an important source of companionship and emotional support (Clark, 1994). Friendship quality refers to high quality friendships that are able to influence students' prosocial behaviour (Clark, 1994). In the context of social awareness, peer relationships provide a unique context for children to learn a variety of critical social emotional skills such as empathy, cooperation and problem-solving strategies (Pepler & Bierman, 2018). Kupersmidt and Coie (1990) have proven that positive peer relationships in the early years of primary school can have a positive effect on the development of students' social awareness. Interaction between students and peers from various backgrounds can increase understanding and cultural knowledge and provide them the opportunity to cultivate social awareness skills (Suryana et al., 2020). Pepler and Bierman (2018) explained that positive relationships with peers are considered a factor that helps students in their social emotional development throughout life. Thus, students have the opportunity to learn and master various social emotional skills such as cooperation, empathy and problem-solving strategies when developing relationships with peers.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study was a quantitative study in the form of a survey. This research design was chosen because survey research can provide a quantitative or numerical overview and can be analysed by running statistical calculations (Creswell, 2014). In addition, quantitative design allows the researcher to gather extensive data and compare the relationships between variables (Fink, 2003). Quantitative design is considered more useful for gathering the necessary data from a large population. The quantitative data collected can also be generalised to the entire population. The quantitative approach adopted in this study would help the researcher gain an overview of parental involvement and peer relationships as well as social awareness among primary school students.

### **Population and Study Sample**

The study's population comprised a total of 7893 primary school students who were between the ages of 10-12, studying in Kota Kemuning, in the Klang district of Selangor. A total of 410 primary school students between the ages of 10-12 years old were selected as the study sample because they could follow instructions and are able to make decisions based on the instructions given. Simple random sampling was used in this study because each element in the population had an equal chance of being selected to represent a particular population. This method was also used to ensure that the students in Kota Kemuning had the same opportunity to be selected to represent the study population.

### **Data Collection**

For the purpose of data collection, the research instrument used was a questionnaire. The questionnaire in this study comprised four sections and contained 49 items which were adapted from other researchers. The items were adapted from the Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ) built by Manz et al (2004), the Qualities of Classroom Friends (QCF) designed by Clark (1994), and the Social Awareness Scale (SAS) developed by Gehlbach (2015), and the Social and Emotional Competencies Questionnaire (SEC-Q) built by (Zych et al., 2018).

Section A contained four items about the respondent's background which covered gender, age, race and type of school. The respondents were asked to choose the option that matched their own statement in this section.

Section B consisted of 15 items about parental involvement adapted from the Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ) developed by Manz et al (2004) to measure the level of parental involvement. The items in this instrument were divided into three dimensions, namely home-school communication (five items), involvement at home (five items) and involvement at school (five items).

Section C consisted of 15 items about peer relationships adapted from the Qualities of Classroom Friends (QCF) developed by Clark (1994) to measure the level of primary school students' relationships with peers. There were three dimensions in this instrument, namely peer group acceptance (six items), friendship (four items), and quality of friendship (five items).

Section D contained 15 items on level of social awareness skills. The items were adapted from the Social Awareness Scale (SAS) developed by Gehlbach (2015) and the Social and Emotional Competencies Questionnaire (SEC-Q) constructed by Zych et al (2018) to measure the primary school students' level of social awareness skills. The items in this instrument were based on four dimensions, namely empathy (four items), respectful attitude (four items), culture of humility (four items) and accepting different views (three items).

All items in Sections B, C and D were constructed in the form of a five-point likert scale measured in a score range that was scaled from 1 to 5 where "1" = Strongly Disagree, "2" = Disagree, "3" = Less Agree, "4" = Agree and "5" = Strongly Agree.



**Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument**

Validity aims to measure the accuracy of a measurement used in a study based on the study's constructs or variables (Hanna & Dettmer, 2004). In this study, two experts were consulted to review the questionnaire that was translated from English to Malay. The two experts also checked the sentence structure, usage of terms and grammar used in the questionnaire. Then, the researcher made improvements based on the experts' recommendations so that the study sample understood the questions presented in the questionnaire.

The data obtained from the pilot study was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 27.0 to measure the reliability of the study instrument. The researcher had to find the correlation value between the score for each item in the test with the total score for all items in the test (test index score). Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value was used to identify the reliability of the study instrument. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value that exceeds 0.61 is considered appropriate and acceptable (Konting et al., 2009).

A pilot study was conducted on 30 student respondents who were students attending primary schools in the Klang district of Selangor. The data obtained from the pilot study was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0 to test the reliability of the questionnaire instrument based on the Cronbach's Alpha value. Reliability analysis provided evidence that this questionnaire had achieved acceptable reliability as the Cronbach's Alpha value for each section of the instrument obtained a value of 0.61 and above.

Table 1

*Cronbach's alpha value for each section of the instrument.*

Section	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Section B (Parental Involvement)	15	0.761	Good and acceptable
Section C (Peer Relationships)	15	0.700	Acceptable
Section D (Students' Social Awareness)	15	0.808	Good and acceptable

**Data Analysis**

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 27.0. The SPSS software was used for descriptive analysis including the calculation of mean, frequency and percentage to achieve the first, second and third objectives of the study, namely to identify the level of parental involvement, the level of peer relationships, and the level of social awareness of the primary school students. The mean score interpretation table by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Mean score interpretation (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).*

Mean Score	Interpretation
1.00 – 2.00	Low
2.01 – 3.00	Moderately Low
3.01 – 4.00	Moderately High
4.01 – 5.00	High

In this study, Pearson's correlation test was used to identify the relationship between the variables, namely the relationship between parental involvement and peer relationships with the level of social awareness of the primary school students. The interpretation of the correlation strength in this study is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

*Correlational strength interpretation (Dancey & Reidy, 2004).*

Correlation Coefficient (r) Value	Coefficient Interpretation
0.00	None
±0.10 to ±0.39	Weak
±0.40 to ±0.69	Moderate
±0.70 to ±0.99	Strong
± 1.00	Perfect

## Results

### Respondents' Demographics

The respondents of this study consisted of 410 primary school students aged 10-12. Most of the respondents were female students at 214 students (52.2%) while the rest were male at 196 students (47.8%). In terms of age, the majority of the respondents in this study were primary school students of the age of 11 years old at 164 students (40%) while students of the age of 12 made the lowest number at 120 students (29.3%). Table 4 shows the details of the respondents' demographics.

Table 4

*Respondents' demographics.*

	Demographic Information	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	196	47.8
	Female	214	52.2
Age	10	126	30.7
	11	164	40.0
	12	120	29.3
Race	Malay	138	33.7
	Chinese	180	43.9
	Indian	86	20.9
	Others	6	1.5
Type of School	National School	130	31.7
	Chinese National School	206	50.2
	Tamil National School	66	16.1
	Private School	8	2.0

**Level of Parental Involvement**

Table 5 shows the results of the analysis on the level of parental involvement based on three dimensions, namely home-school communication, involvement at home and involvement at school. The results of the study showed that the mean score of parental involvement as a whole was moderately high (mean = 3.36). Among the three dimensions of parental involvement, the home-school communication dimension achieved the highest mean score of 3.48, followed by involvement at home (mean = 3.33), and involvement at school (mean = 3.27).

Table 5

*Level of parental involvement based on dimensions.*

Parental Involvement Dimension	Mean	Interpretation
Home-School Communication	3.48	Moderately High
Involvement at Home	3.33	Moderately High
Involvement at School	3.27	Moderately High
Overall Construct (Parental Involvement)	3.36	Moderately High

**Level of Peer Relationships**

Table 6 displays the distribution of mean scores on the level of peer relationships based on three dimensions consisting of peer group acceptance, friendship and friendship quality. The overall mean score for peer relationships was moderately high (mean = 3.65). Among the three dimensions, peer group acceptance obtained the highest mean score of 3.78, followed by friendship (mean = 3.64), and friendship quality (mean = 3.52).

Table 6

*Level of peer relationships based on dimensions.*

Peer Relationship Dimension	Mean	Interpretation
Acceptance of Peer Group	3.78	Moderately High
Friendship	3.64	Moderately High
Friendship Quality	3.52	Moderately High
Overall Construct (Peer Relationship)	3.65	Moderately High

### Students' Level of Social Awareness

Table 7 shows the distribution of mean scores on the level of social awareness of students based on four dimensions consisting of empathy, respectful attitude, culture of humility and accepting different views. Overall, the mean score of social awareness was moderately high (mean = 3.71). Among the four dimensions, empathy achieved the highest mean score of 3.72, followed by the other three dimensions, namely respect, culture of humility and accepting different views which all obtained the same mean score (mean = 3.70).

Table 7

*Level of social awareness based on dimensions.*

Social Awareness Dimension	Mean	Interpretation
Empathy	3.72	Moderately High
Respectful Attitude	3.70	Moderately High
Culture of Humility	3.70	Moderately High
Accepting Different Views	3.70	Moderately High
Overall Construct (Social Awareness)	3.71	Moderately High

### Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Peer Relationships with Students' Social Awareness

Table 8

*Correlation test of parental involvement and peer relationships with students' social awareness*

	Social Awareness	
	r	Sig. p
Parental Involvement	0.531**	<0.001
Peer Relationships	0.405**	<0.001

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

Based on Table 8, Pearson correlation analysis performed showed that there was a significant positive relationship between parental involvement and peer relationships with the primary school students' social awareness. The results of the Pearson's correlation test showed that the relationship between parental involvement ( $r=0.531$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and students' social awareness was positive and moderate. Additionally, the relationship between peer relationships ( $r=0.405$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and students' social awareness was also positive and moderate.

## Discussion

This study investigated the importance of parental involvement and peer relationships in relation to its influence on primary school students' social awareness. The need for social awareness is becoming highly significant in an increasingly diverse and complex global and local context. Therefore, this study was conducted to find out the level of parental involvement and peer relationships in relation to its influence on students' social awareness so that educators understand the factors that influence the development of students' social awareness. The findings of the study showed that the students' level of social awareness was at a moderately high level overall. This study found that the value of empathy in children of the primary school student phase (students aged between 10-12 years old) was high. This suggests that primary school students are able to understand the thoughts and feelings of others, as well as respond in a caring and supportive way to others (Dvash & Shamay-Tsoory, 2014). This proves the value of empathy can be developed so that the students become individuals who easily care and show concern for others (Lickona, 2008) and are also willing to offer help to others in need and will not do things that hurt others (Dharin, 2022).

Overall, the level of parental involvement was found to be moderately high. The finding indicates that parental involvement is still low which could be due to mothers and fathers being busy working to earn a living, resulting in them having no time and energy to engage in school activities (Yahaya et al., 2020). In addition, the modern lifestyle and high cost of living result in many mothers having to work to increase the family's monthly income, which results in both parents having to work hard to be able to provide a good life for their children (Sobri, Soh & Roziman, 2022). Furthermore, many parents have to be at work before school hours start and only finish work after school hours (Lagrange, 2022). Therefore, parents who are busy with work rarely involve themselves in their children's daily activities even though they are able to provide a good life for their children. Among all the dimensions, the home-school communication dimension achieved the highest mean score. This could be because primary school parents realise the importance of meeting with teachers so that they would have the opportunity to know their child's behaviour at school. This would enable the parents to control their children's behaviour to prevent them from getting involved in social problems.

Overall, the aspect of peer relationships was also found to be at a moderately high level. Among the three dimensions, the peer group acceptance dimension achieved the highest mean score. This indicates that the students can socialise comfortably with their peers. Students who can be accepted by their peers are not only able to communicate effectively, but also have an understanding of each other (Lu, 2020). Contrastingly, the friendship quality dimension obtained a low mean score. This could be due to the low social skills among the primary school students (Gasser-Haas et al., 2021) because the situation of the Covid-19 pandemic had limited the environment for the children to play, and made it impossible for them to go to school and interact with their friends (Sirem & Baş, 2020).

Peer relationships at children's level are more of a social relationship based on common interests, similar or shared activities and social experiences that result in primary school students imitating and learning from the learning behaviour of their peers (Pekrun et al., 2009; Guralnick, 2001). This is because they still do not have mature social ability to interact and communicate with their peers. The findings of this study which was conducted in the context of Malaysia differed from the studies conducted abroad where after the Covid-19

pandemic, changes could be seen in children's peer relationships. Due to the pandemic, children had to spend more time at home, and having limited interactions with peers has affected their social-emotional development (Çoban & Yazıcı, 2022).

In examining the relationship between parental involvement and peer relationships on students' social awareness, this study shows that parental involvement and peer relationships play an important role in fostering and developing social awareness among primary school students. Based on the results of this study, parental involvement and peer relationships contribute to primary school students' social awareness. This proves that parental involvement is essential as support and guidance to help children achieve these social awareness skills. This is in line with Kiley's (2021) study which states that parental involvement in children's social emotional learning can have a positive effect on students' social skills. Students will be more empathetic, respectful, humble and able to accept the views of others when parents get involved in school and home activities with them. Meanwhile, the role of peers is also important because they are in the same social circle which makes it easier for them to communicate and interact with peers and have a positive influence on each other. This finding is in line with Lin and Lien's (2021) study which provided evidence that peer relationships give children the opportunity to practice perspective taking which is an important component of social awareness. By interacting with peers who have different perspectives, children learn to understand and appreciate diverse points of view. Additionally, peer relationships can provide children with emotional support and a sense of belonging, which are important factors in promoting positive social development and social awareness (Rose-Krasnor, 2019).

At the same time, the school should try to plan interesting activities to increase the involvement of parents in the school if they wish to increase students' social awareness. For example, outside-of-classroom learning activities (outdoor learning) can help students to see, listen, touch and learn directly through experience and situations that are happening around them (Matitaputty et al., 2018). This is because in their study, Nugroho and Hanik (2016) found that learning outside the classroom is a learning process that allows students to see what is happening around them as well as provide opportunities for students to get close to their environment. It is believed that the young generation who has high social awareness can bring a positive impact on the development of the country.

### **Conclusion**

Children in Malaysia need to be nurtured with social awareness skills; however, this development is strongly driven by the socialisation process that involves interacting with people. In children's lives, there is no denying that parents and peers are agents of socialisation that greatly influence children's development. Therefore, parental involvement and peer relationships play an important role in shaping the social awareness skills of primary school students.

Parents need to have the self-awareness that they need to take the time to be actively involved in their children's education because parental involvement plays an important role in shaping the values, beliefs and social behaviour of their children. Parent-child communication, in particular, has been shown to have a positive effect on children's social development, including social awareness. Through regular conversations with children,

parents can instil social awareness by encouraging their children to consider other people's perspectives, understand different social norms, and appreciate diversity. Parents should also practice positive social behaviour, such as empathy and kindness, which can have a great impact on their children's social development. Additionally, parents can support their children's social awareness by providing opportunities for them to engage with diverse groups of people and participate in community service activities. By exposing their children to different cultures and social issues, parents can help children develop a broader understanding of the world and a deeper appreciation for others. Overall, parental involvement is important in supporting the development of children's social awareness, and parents can play an active role in promoting their children's social growth and in helping them become socially responsible and empathetic individuals.

In addition to parents, peer relationships are also important in supporting the development of children's social awareness because they provide opportunities for children to practice and develop social skills, perspective taking and empathy. Through interaction with peers, children can learn to communicate effectively, negotiate conflicts, and develop social problem-solving skills. They can also develop empathy by learning to recognise and respond to the feelings and needs of others, and appreciate differences among individuals and groups. At the same time, positive peer relationships can contribute to a child's sense of social belonging and overall well-being. Children who feel socially connected and supported by their peers are more likely to develop positive social attitudes and behaviours, including social awareness. By encouraging positive peer interactions and providing support to children who struggle with social relationships, adults can help children develop social awareness and become socially responsible and empathetic individuals.

The school needs to empower the role of parents and peers in instilling social awareness in primary school students. The school can provide learning resources to parents such as online learning materials so that parents realise the importance of their involvement in the children's education process to develop the students' social awareness. Other than that, the school can organise programmes that help foster students' social awareness such as volunteer activities, campaigns and sports.

This study can serve as a guideline for parents, in that parents' emotional support and guidance for children can have a positive effect in developing children's social skills so that children would have an open mind when listening to opinions and ideas of others. Furthermore, parents also need to realise that social awareness skills are not only important for positive interactions, but also help children deal with conflicts or disagreements. Similarly, positive peer relationships can help children develop important social skills, and can provide them with opportunities to have positive social experiences, which can further enhance their social awareness and understanding.

It is recommended that future research uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods such as interviews and questionnaires to obtain clearer and more detailed research results with the support of the respondents' income. The sample of this study comprised primary school students aged between 10-12 only; therefore, it is suggested that other researchers expand the scope of the study to conduct research with pre-school children. Other locations and larger groups should also be considered in future research to gain a more

comprehensive picture of the research topic. Finally, the results of this study are expected to increase public awareness on the importance of mastery of social awareness skills among students as well as help students improve their interactions with others to produce a more harmonious and civilised society.

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