

Has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected children's emotional literacy and are we doing enough to support them?

**Sophie Penfold
University of Chichester**



Has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected children's emotional literacy and are we doing enough to support them?

Sophie Penfold – University of Chichester

Introduction

Children's emotional well-being is widely recognised; however, there are conflicting perceptions as to whether professionals currently working in an early years (EY) settings understand the term emotional literacy / emotional intelligence, and whether there is enough training for staff to address the importance of emotional well-being of children. This work investigates children emotional well-being under the extreme circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. To find out how professionals in the EY develop their Emotional Literacy (EL) this project adopted a mixed methods approach to research. After gaining ethical clearance, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were adopted for data collection purposes. Data suggests that the pandemic have had a massive impact on children development.

Short literature review addressing EQ and IQ

In order to fully understand the importance of emotional literacy (EL) it is crucial to explore the terms literacy and intelligence and their role in child development. The term literacy is commonly used in education settings, often promoted as a means of measuring children's development and intelligence and ensuring they are developing at the expected stage for their age. However, literacy is far wider than just the ability to read and write. EQ is the term used when referring to emotional intelligence. Like the term literacy, there is a difference between the measurements of EQ and IQ. Emotional intelligence is often left behind whilst intellectual abilities often remain in the foreground. According to Uzsalyiné Pécsi (cited in Paavola, 2010) there are some theories as to why this could be, such as the fact that today's world is more focused on the technical world and the need for higher standards of intelligence to fulfil job roles. As a result of this belief, cognitive skills remain a higher priority (Uzsalyiné Pécsi, 2010 cited in Paavola, 2017). However, Goleman (1995) states that, like reading and mathematics, emotional life requires its own set of competencies (Figueroa-Sánchez, 2008). In order to have a successful life, Goleman states that it is important for EQ and IQ to work together (Paavola, 2017). In an interview Goleman advised both forms of intelligence are as important as each other. However, IQ makes up 20% of the factors that contribute to life success, with other factors making up the remaining 80% with skills making up emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996). According to Raver, Garner, & Smith-Donald (2007), children with higher emotional intelligence are better able to concentrate, have positive relationships and be more empathetic (Tominey et al., 2017). In addition to this the EYFS (2017) describes school readiness as 'gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life' (EYFS, 2014 cited in Unknown, n.d.: 22). Children are deemed to be ready for school if they are able to reach the 12 early learning goals which focus on the prime areas of development, these are: C&L; physical development and PSE development. Some key things taken into account are whether the child is toilet trained, can eat by themselves, communicate to others and be able to take part in adult led activities such as listening to a story (McTavish, 2019).

What is EL?

EL, according to Sharp (2001), is the ability to recognise, understand, handle and express emotions. It can be nurtured despite being in a process or journey without a final end-point. Goleman (1996) defines EL as knowing what your feelings are and how to use them to make good decisions in life whilst working towards empathy and remaining motivated and managing your own emotions. Emotional literacy is crucial to help children find positive ways to express feelings such as fear and sadness as it enables children to feel relieved that they have a safe and enabling environment to express their emotions.

Nurturing Emotional Literacy in the Early Years

Steiner (1979) was one of the first theorists to put forward the idea of emotional literacy. He identified five essential elements; knowing your feelings, empathy, managing your emotions,

Has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected children's emotional literacy and are we doing enough to support them?

Sophie Penfold – University of Chichester

learning to repair emotional problems and developing emotional interactivity (Steiner, 1979). Steiner's model prioritises understanding one's own emotions as well as being sensitive to others' feelings. These skills help to build healthy relationships where children can be encouraged to 'read' social signs and use their developing self-control to manage social interactions.

Children experience a large range of emotions and developing their emotional literacy is a key skill to enable them to express how they feel. In order to help children develop their emotional literacy practitioners need to create an emotionally literate environment. This allows the child to feel a sense of belonging in their setting and creates an inclusive environment (Mukadam, 2012). It is stated in the EYFS (DfE, 2017) that 'babies and young children experience emotional well-being when their needs are met and accepted' (DfE, 2012). There are many strategies to use in order to create an emotionally literate environment, including, using the EYFS to plan experiences and activities that are age and stage appropriate. These activities can be set out around the room to enable children to access them whenever they wish, allowing the children to grow in confidence and independence. Other ways of supporting EL in children is by being a good listener, giving the children time to discuss their interests and ask any questions they may have. This can be done during Circle Time, asking open ended questions and inviting them to take part in discussions. When a child feels as if they are being listened to it makes them more inclined to feel comfortable to express their emotions and feelings. There are other activities that support emotional literacy, such as puppets, storytelling and singing songs and rhymes (see Appendix) (Mukadam, 2012). Whilst creating activities and having access to different resources, the physical environment holds a huge amount of importance. Ensuring there is natural light, pleasant smells, familiar resources and sometimes gentle music helps create strong emotional connections to children's experiences in the setting. Ensuring all resources are readily available to the children at all times (Bruce, 2010).

How emotional literacy has been affected as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Whilst there has been evidence that children are one of the least affected physically by COVID-19 pandemic (Khan and Mikuska, 2021) what are the effects of their mental well-being as a result?

Throughout the pandemic, many children and their families have had to self-isolate, as well as adhering to the national lockdowns and social distancing laws. These social changes come with detrimental impacts to children and families, such as loneliness, depression and anxiety. The lack of structure to some children's school and nursery days as a result of closures could be challenging for many (Unicef, 2020).

Daily structure is important for children. The extent of this challenge depends on the support the children receive from their family and their structure at home whilst the children are not attending the setting. According to Bandura (1977), children learn through observations and modelling behaviours. Social Learning Theory explains behaviour in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural and environmental factors (Bandura, 1977). With children spending more time at home with their parents due to the national lockdown (Khan and Mikuska, 2021) they will not only be observing how their parents act but also how they deal with and show their emotions. This then makes it important to ensure consistency throughout the day and ensure clear structure and a welcoming environment when the children return to nursery and school (Gramigna, 2020).

In these unprecedented times, support is greatly needed to ensure the safety and well-being of parents, practitioners and children. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, there have been resources online to help support home educating and practitioners still working throughout the pandemic. The Under 5 Magazine (Under 5, 2020) was made available to anyone to read for free with multiple double spread articles on Coronavirus and the support that has been available. However, these are talking about the support available to practitioners and parents, not the

Has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected children's emotional literacy and are we doing enough to support them?

Sophie Penfold – University of Chichester

children. The article titled '6 months since lockdown, how we have supported you' talks about the conferences and online seminars that have been running for the adults to keep them updated and to outline and answer any common questions. However, where is the support for the children and their mental-well-being and strategies to best support them?

Transitions are an integral part of an educational (Trodd, 2013) and getting these right helps to make the child feel safe and secure in their environment. In nurseries a common technique is settling in sessions. This allows the child to gain confidence in their new environment. However, these, like other aspects of early years settings, have been affected by the Coronavirus Pandemic. Another article in the magazine mentioned these sessions had to be updated to ensure children are still getting the important transition process whilst still ensuring the safety of everyone around. The use of outside space was talked about as an option as the visiting space, as well as on the doorstep visits to the new starter's homes. In addition to this, it was suggested that more of an emphasis be placed on getting to know the new starters by other means, for example 'all about me' forms and recording and sending virtual tours of the nursery/settings.

One study that did highlight children's emotional well-being showed there has been a rise from 10.8% in 2017 to 16% in July 2020 in reports of poor emotional well-being (Newlove-Delgado et al., 2021). Despite there being resources mentioned above there is still little research into the impacts of COVID on young children.

Methodological approach

Context of the study

This research followed a mixed methodological approach using both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. According to Wisdom and Creswell (2013) the combination of qualitative and quantitative data in the form of mixed methods has the potential to strengthen the analysis of the study. The advantage of this style is that it allows for a more complete utilisation of data and it increases the complexity of evaluations. In addition to this, it requires increased resources and time. Therefore, this paradigm best suited my study to address the research aims. These are:

The benefits of developing emotional literacy,

- The impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on this,
- Whether emotional literacy has an impact on an inclusive environment
- Exploring practitioners' views on training with a focus on EL

Whilst initially I was using questionnaires as my data collection method, looking at the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on emotional literacy required a slight shift to the paradigm, as gathering qualitative data would give a more informed understanding about the research aims. Ethical clearance for the study was approved before data collection started by the university. Certificate for ethical approval was provided showing my understanding about the projects and that ethics was considered as it was highlighted by BERA (2020)

Background variables

Before I began analysing my data, I looked at the background variables for the participants in my research- which can be seen in table 1. From looking at these I could see that whilst ethnicity and gender did not seem to have an impact on the data collected, qualification was key and had a crucial impact on the responses given. 100% of the participants were female, this meant that I could not analyse the data looking at possible contrasts between gender and their views. The age of participants was between 18-49 therefore, there is a range of views based on generation. It can be seen by looking at chart 1, there is an equal range for the age group participants work

Has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected children's emotional literacy and are we doing enough to support them?

Sophie Penfold – University of Chichester

with. This allows for more in depth analysis reflecting younger and older children's EL and whether practice is dependent on age group.

Table-1 Background variables

Participant	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Qualification
P1	25-29	British	Female	Level 3 Childcare
P2	18-24	British	Female	Level 3 Childcare
P3	18-24	British	Female	X
P4	25-29	British	Female	X
P5	X	British	Female	BA Hons Degree
P6	X	British	Female	BA Hons Degree
P7	18-24	British	Female	Level 2 Childcare (Apprentice)
P8	30-39	British	Female	Level 3 Childcare
P9	40-49	British	Female	BA Degree
P10	30-39	British	Female	Level 3 Childcare
P11	X	British	Female	BA Hons Degree
P12	X	British	Female	Level 3
P13	X			Level 3
P14	18-24	British	Female	BA Hons Degree
P15	X	British	Female	BA Degree
P16	X	British	Female	Level 3
P17	X	British	Female	Level 3
P18	40-49	British	Female	Level 3
P19	30-39	British	Female	Level 3
P20	40-49	British	Female	Level 3
P21	40-49	British	Female	Level 3
P22	25-29	British	Female	Level 3
P23	40-49	British	Female	BA Degree

Has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected children's emotional literacy and are we doing enough to support them?

Sophie Penfold – University of Chichester

Data analysis

Method of analysis

When analysing the data collected through questionnaires, and by using thematic analysis (Riesman, 2008), I coded the data. I identified 4 key themes which linked to the literature review. These are outlined below. A more in depth explanation of how I analysed my data can be found in section 3.6 of chapter 3. The key themes identified were: Understanding of EL; How COVID-19 has affected emotional literacy; Inclusion and Emotional literacy strategies used within settings.

Questionnaire analysis:

Theme 1- Understanding of emotional literacy

According to Sharp (2001) an emotionally literate child is one that is able to recognise, understand and express their emotions. Whilst emotional literacy is a common topic in today's climate, only 13 of the respondents were able to define what it meant. 100% of these respondents defined emotional literacy as the child's ability to understand their own emotions. This supports the definition above stated by Sharp (2001). Some definitions of emotional literacy given by the participants include:

P7- 'how children manage and understand their feelings and emotions'

A similar response was given by participant 8 saying- 'someone that understand their emotions and is able to talk about them'. Another definition was provided by P3, stating that 'the children's ability to recognise their emotions and control them'

Looking at the data, and the above quotations, I can see that there is a lack of mention that EL also refers to the importance of understanding others emotions. This was stated by Goleman (1996) in his definition that EL is knowing your own feelings whilst also working towards empathy in understanding others emotions. Through looking at the data I collected there was a strong correlation between qualification and understanding of EL. The above definitions were provided by practitioners who are qualified at Level 2 and 3. However a participant with a BA Degree in Childhood studies provided the definition;

'the ability for children to understand and identify their own emotions, and to understand what they may need in order to help them transition to a positive emotion. It is also about their understanding of others emotions, and the realisation that others may feel differently'

This definition is more detailed and outlines the understanding of empathy, supporting Goleman's definition. 100% of the participants stated they have a better understanding of the term as they stated 'emotional well-being' as opposed to 'emotional literacy'. P5 stated their understanding of emotional well-being was 'a child that is confident in their own mental health and can manage their own emotions.' This shows links to Steiner's (1997) definition of EL showing links to positive mental health. This further links to the research conducted by the Mental Health Foundation (1998) showing emotionally literate children are less likely to experience mental health issues.

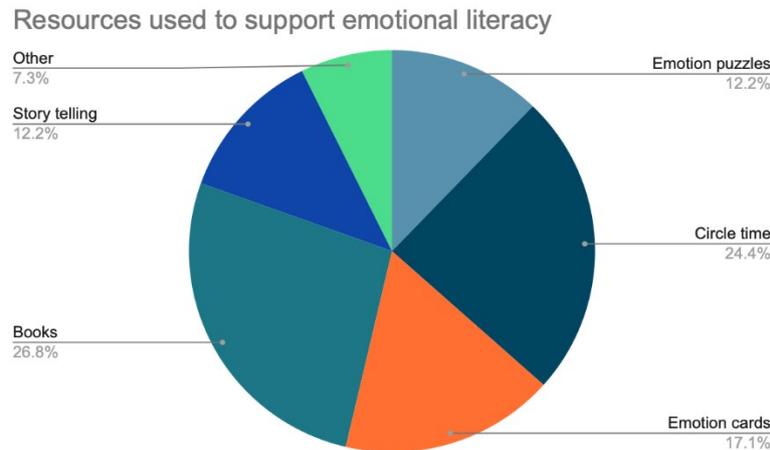
Theme 2- Strategies used to support emotional literacy

As outlined in the literature, in order to help children develop their emotional literacy, a nurturing environment needs to be created. Mukadam (2012) suggested that activities such as puppets and story-time all help a child develop their EL. The EYFS (DfE, 2017) states that in order for a child to experience emotional well-being they must feel listened to and accepted. Mukadam (2012) also stated that this can be done during circle time to give the children time and space to express themselves. Common activities used within settings can be seen in the chart below.

Has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected children's emotional literacy and are we doing enough to support them?

Sophie Penfold – University of Chichester

Chart 1

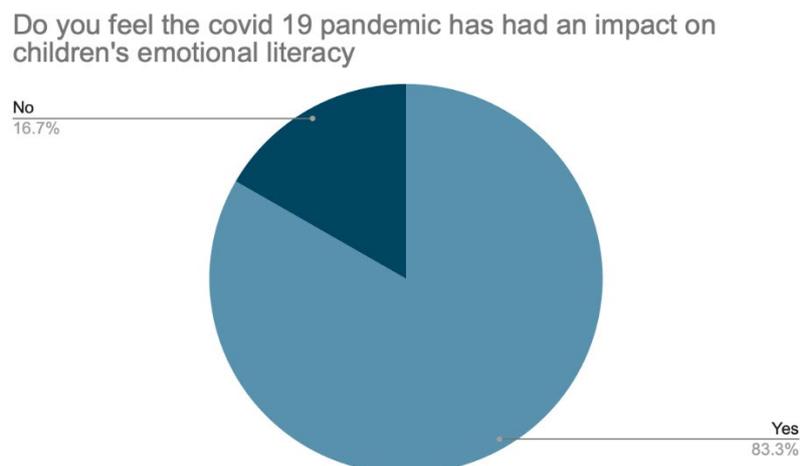


With the most common activity being circle time. This supports the ideas put forward by Mukadam and gives the impression children are given time to share and talk about their experiences. One setting used a different activity they feel has been successful in creating an emotional literate environment and that helped the children through the difficulties the pandemic has created. This was called a 'feelings basket'. The participants from this setting explained how the children talk about what makes them feel better when they are feeling sad. This process is done during circle time and the things the children have talked about are then put into a basket that is accessible to them at all times. Since using this resource, the participants from this setting said that the children now go to the basket voluntarily, when they are feeling sad or angry, and it has visibly helped the children calm down. This has given the children independence, supporting the idea mentioned in my literature review that resources should be readily available to the children at all times stated by Bruce (2010). She advised that this helps create emotional connections to children's experiences, promotes independence and understanding their emotions.

Theme 2- Emotional literacy as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic: Change in children's EL as a result of COVID-19

When questioned about the impact of COVID-19 on children's emotional literacy, 83.35% of participants said that it has had an impact (chart 3) and common responses from the participants raised can be seen in chart 4.

Chart 2

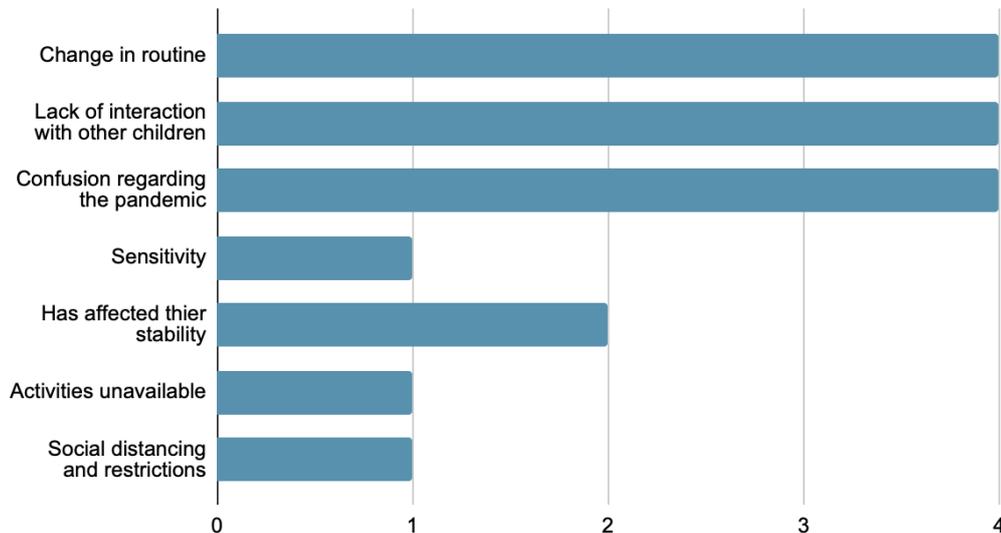


Has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected children's emotional literacy and are we doing enough to support them?

Sophie Penfold – University of Chichester

Chart 3

How COVID-19 has impacted children's emotional literacy



As shown in the above chart, the most common responses from participants were the change in routine, lack of social interaction and confusion. This links to UNICEF's (2020) statement advising that the lack of structure in children's days and the loneliness felt as a result of self-isolation and lockdowns could carry a detrimental effect for many children.

'I believe that COVID has made parents stressed out, these stressed and often confused parents pass these emotions onto their children resulting in the children being confused and anxious about being in school/nursery.'

This statement supports the idea of Bandura's (1963) social learning theory outlined in Chapter 2. With children learning emotions and behaviours from their parents/carers and the lack of time spent in settings, as a result of closures, it is made difficult for children to build resilience and feel secure.

Despite the above impacts to children as a result of the pandemic seeming quite negative, some participants outlined a positive of COVID-19 on children's EL and well-being. One participant stated:

'However, there has been one good side effect of COVID, for the children that are lucky enough to be in school it has allowed staff to work closely with the children in a smaller ratio and we have been able to put in more emotional regulation activities in place.'

Out of the 16.7% of participants that stated the pandemic has not had an effect on children's EL, 100% stated that their setting remained open, having a 'normal' routine. They also held discussions with the children regularly surrounding COVID virus to ensure they understood and did not feel scared.

There is little research surrounding the impacts of the Coronavirus on children's EL and well-being, whereas, from my research it was evident professionals have seen a significant change in children's behaviour and how they express their emotions.

Has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected children's emotional literacy and are we doing enough to support them?

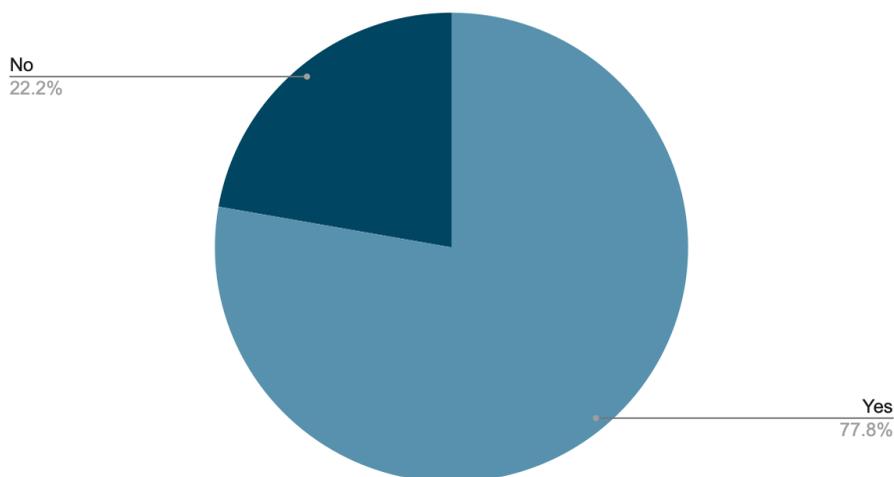
Sophie Penfold – University of Chichester

Change in practice as a result of COVID-19

When questioned in regards to their practice since COVID-19, 77.8% said that their practice had changed (see chart below). In regards to this question there is little evidence in the literature due to the contemporary issue of the pandemic caused. The emerging literature around EL practice within early years settings stated how circle time and other activities mentioned above helped develop emotional literacy (Bruce, 2010). However, it did not address how practice may need to adapt and change as a result of the pandemic.

Chart 4

Has your practice changed as a result of COVID-19?



Despite this, all respondents mentioned how their practice has changed in regards to health and safety and cleanliness, such as hand washing, creating bubbles within the setting and wearing masks. It was also mentioned how this has had an initial impact in adding to the confusion and anxiety of the children attending the setting. P3 stated:

'We rely a lot more on phone calls to update the parents as we cannot have as much contact face-to-face'.

In addition to this P5 mentioned that they now have more of a focus on supporting the parents and carers as they have become more aware of the struggles they may be facing and how this impacts the child.

Analysing the data collected showed that despite there being a gap in the literature in regards to change in practice, practitioners feel they have had to adapt and change what they do in order to support the emerging issues created as a result of the pandemic.

Theme 3- Inclusion

According to Bruce (2010), in order for a child to develop their emotional literacy then they need to feel comfortable and understood in their environment. This can be achieved through inclusion. 100% of the participants in this study said they feel they have a focus on inclusive practice and further said that a focus on emotional literacy helps improve an inclusive environment. One participant stated that:

'Having an inclusive environment does not just include having a physically inclusive environment, most of the needs are emotional needs.'

Has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected children's emotional literacy and are we doing enough to support them?

Sophie Penfold – University of Chichester

This supports the idea Mukadam (2012) suggested in regards to creating an accepting environment where a child can express their emotional needs. Another quote that supports this theory came from P20. They stated that

'A frustrated or angry child will not learn however much we try, however, if we allow that child to go to a part of the classroom or outside where they can push something heavy or throw something high then this helps regulate their emotions and get their anger out.'

Another participants stated that:

'Having a focus on PSE development and emotional literacy are core skills. Children learn to respect each other's feelings and in turn this makes it more inclusive.'

An example, provided by this participant, was the children feeling more empathetic to children getting upset on their first day. They witnessed children giving upset children hugs and asking them to play. This links to Goleman's (1996) definition of emotional literacy focusing on the empathy strand.

Analysis of interviews

After identifying key themes that emerged from the data collected from questionnaires, follow up interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding (Riesman, 2008). The results from these interviews further supported the themes previously identified.

The effects of COVID-19 on children's emotional literacy.

As found in the analysis conducted above, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on children's emotions, how they express them and their understanding of what is currently going on around them. This was further supported by participants in my follow up interviews. P21 stated how they feel the pandemic has affected children:

'I do feel some children have been affected, either in their daily routine, hand washing, the way they cough etc. They are aware of face masks. Some children have been in nursery the whole time as a child of a key worker- they have been in small groups, more time spent with staff. They then had to get used to children coming back and sharing equipment and staff. Other children have been at home with their parents however, if their parents were working from home they have missed out on adult interaction. Looking at this I feel children have missed out on so much.'

Not only does this support the views of the participants outlined in section 2 previously, it further supports the literature specifically relating to UNICEF's view on the change in structure to children's lives. This links to the way that children's routines have gone from socialising with many children and playing together to then having restriction in place and in some cases not interacting with other children at all. Another participant shared similar views.

'Yes definitely, with the face coverings, children being off for long periods of time and then coming back, lots of settling and lock down babies that have never left their parents before.'

Has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected children's emotional literacy and are we doing enough to support them?

Sophie Penfold – University of Chichester

However, another participant interviewed had a different stance on the effects of the Pandemic and contradicts the literature outlined above. The respondent provided an example of how the smaller bubbles helped a child with additional needs develop which can be found below.

'Child A enjoyed playing with the train track, they used to get very angry and upset when the train track broke. Over time, the children in this bubble observed that child A got upset whenever this happened. The other children would then notice that it broke and would then help Child A to fix it. This then provided Child A with the confidence they needed to begin to ask the other children for help when they needed it. This added to their speech and language development as well as emotional management.'

As a result of the above example, the setting decided to remain in bubbles as it has had a positive impact on their children. They also found the children that were not in nursery as a result of the Pandemic were excited to return, as opposed to nervous or sad. This disproves the research currently available in relation to the impacts of COVID such as the research conducted by Benenden Health and UNICEF advising there has been an increase in negative mental well-being and regression.

When questioned further in regards to their practice and their children's reaction to the pandemic, P23 advised that they have remained open throughout, that conversations were held regularly, usually during circle time, in relation to the pandemic and all the changes in place.

'The staff members wear masks but the children are used to this around them now, it has become a popular talking point and the children have enjoyed discussing the different colours and patterns of the masks. The children are very resilient to change and have become more confident.'

Another example provided by P3 was regarding the children's understanding of the pandemic and the natural discussion that followed the scenario.

'One child gave their sibling a hug to which point a child came running over saying you can't do that because of COVID. The child giving the hug responded saying yes I can because we are in the same bubble. A staff member overheard this and then continued the discussion with these children, advising about how we can hug people we live with but not people we don't live with.'

The activities mentioned above such as circle time and open discussion strongly supports the ideas presented by Mukadam (2012) these activities help support an emotional literate environment and provide opportunities for children to take the lead and feel independent. The children having the conversation before the practitioner stepped in were resolving an issue which was given the opportunity to progress with support from the adult.

The above participant was a highly qualified educator who had many years experience in the field. As a manager of the setting, this seems evident in their responses and practices in addition to their understanding of how to ensure an emotional literate environment and to help support children through their development.

Training to support EL

When conducting the literature review it was clear there was a lack of training dedicated to emotional literacy within the early years. As outlined in above, research carried out by Goleman

Has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected children's emotional literacy and are we doing enough to support them?

Sophie Penfold – University of Chichester

(1989) a number of training programs and movements were introduced. Examples of these included, NELIG (2000) and the Campaign for Emotional Literacy (1995). Emotional literacy is also outlined in several government guidelines, including, Every Child Matters (2003) and The Children's National Service Framework (2003).

Within my research I asked participants if they felt there was enough training and resources readily available to them, in regards to emotional literacy. 100% of participants said they feel that more training would be beneficial. When questioned on what training they have undergone there were no similarities, one participant stated 'I have attended 'mental health in children courses' as well as safeguarding'. Another participant stated that they had recently taken part in an online course from the National College in relation to recent issues. Finally, another participant advised:

'It is good to talk to other colleagues as well as support each other if we need and discuss these issues. Further training may be necessary if this pandemic continues- or as we come out of it, it may lead to other issues we are yet to come across'.

No participant referred to the information available in government frameworks, nor were there consistencies in the training each participant has received.

Conclusion

Research findings

The literature review highlighted that there is research on how to create an emotionally literate environment and its impact on the children and their adult life. It was outlined how inclusion is crucial to creating an enabling environment including the EYFS (DfE, 2017) and other government guidelines. After conducting this literature review I was then able to recognise gaps in the field and conduct my research to fit my research aims.

The research aimed to cover the following aims:

1. The benefits of developing emotional literacy,
2. The impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on EL and well-being
3. Whether emotional literacy has an impact on an inclusive environment

In regards to aim 1, the benefits of developing emotional literacy were mentioned throughout the data collected by all participants. The importance of emotional literacy was highlighted as particularly important due to the ongoing Pandemic and practitioners felt it was crucial to have more of a focus on EL. Conducting this research it was found that despite practitioners having a brief understanding of emotional literacy, it was agreed that respondents had a better understanding of emotional well being and felt more training and support would be useful to further deepen their understanding and knowledge of the topic, supporting aim 4 of the study. It was noted that early years practitioners have noticed a significant impact on children's emotional literacy since the COVID-19 pandemic. This being said, although the majority of respondents reported a negative impact on children, some participants had felt the pandemic had increased children's confidence due to the increased time spent with parents or in smaller ratios within their settings, this further supported aim 2 of the study as a proportion of respondents felt it had a positive impact on empathy and confidence in some children present in their setting. It was further found that the smaller groups, as a result of bubbles and lockdowns, resulted in children with SEN becoming more comfortable to interact with their peers. In addition to this the small groups have meant there has been more time to focus on individual needs and put different strategies in place to aid the development of emotional literacy and pick up when children may need further

Has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected children's emotional literacy and are we doing enough to support them?

Sophie Penfold – University of Chichester

intervention. Furthermore, a common theme that emerged from conducting the research was regarding aim 3, inclusion and its links to creating an emotionally literate environment. It was found that the support given to children with SEND and the impacts this has on the other children was highlighted.

A theme that emerged that was not an aim of the study was, how practitioners have changed their practice as a result of the Pandemic and are much more aware of the impact it has had on the parents/carers of the children. The respondents highlighted how they now ensure the parents are coping well whilst ensuring the children are developing emotional literacy skills.

Has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected children's emotional literacy and are we doing enough to support them?

Sophie Penfold – University of Chichester

Bibliography

- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social Learning Theory*. New York: General Learning Press
- BERA, 2020. *BERA Conference 2020*. [online] Bera.ac.uk. Available at: <<https://www.bera.ac.uk/event/bera-conference-2020>> [Accessed 29 September 2021].
- Bruce, C., 2010. *Emotional Literacy In The Early Years*. London: SAGE.
- Department of Education [DfE], 2014. *Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)*. London: Department of Education.
- Department for Education [DfE] 2017. *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*. Available at: https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2017/03/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf (Accessed 12.03. 2020).
- Goleman, D., 1996. *On Emotional Intelligence: A Conversation with Daniel Goleman*.
- Gramigna, J., 2020. *COVID-19'S Mental Health Effects By Age Group: Children, College Students, Working-Age Adults And Older Adults*. [online] Healio.com. Available at: <<https://www.healio.com/news/psychiatry/20200408/covid19s-mental-health-effects-by-age-group-children-college-students-working-age-adults-and-older-ad>> [Accessed 14 January 2021].
- Khan, T. and Mikuska, E. 2021. Impact of COVID-19 on educators in England: online teaching and learning, and the challenges of detecting safeguarding issues amid school closures. *Social Science and Humanities Open*. Vol.3 (1) available online <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2020.100099>
- McTavish, A., 2019. *Ready or Not?*. [online] Early Years Foundation Stage Forum. Available at: <<https://eyfs.info/articles.html/personal-social-and-emotional-development/ready-or-not-r257/>> [Accessed 25 April 2021].
- Mental Health Foundation, n.d. *State of a generation: Preventing mental health problems in children and young people*. [online] Mental Health Foundation. Available at: <<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/MHF-State-Of-A-Generation-Report-2019.pdf>> [Accessed 10 January 2021].
- Mukadam, Y., 2012. *Learning & Development: Emotional Literacy - Feeling Fine*. [online] Nursery World. Available at: <<https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/features/article/learning-development-emotional-literacy-feeling-fine#:~:text=Give%20children%20time%20to%20think,and%20warmth%20for%20each%20child>> [Accessed 14 January 2021].
- Newlove-Delgado, T., McManus, S., Sadler, K., Thandi, S., Vizard, T., Cartwright, C. and Ford, T., 2021. Child mental health in England before and during the COVID-19 lockdown. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, NHS Digital, part of the Government Statistical Service. Available at: <<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2020-wave-1-follow-up>> [Accessed 24 January 2021].

Has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected children's emotional literacy and are we doing enough to support them?

Sophie Penfold – University of Chichester

Paavola, L., 2017. *The importance of emotional intelligence in early childhood*. Bachelor's Degree. Laurea University of Applied Sciences.

Tominey, S., O'Bryon, E., Rivers, S. and Shapes, S. 2017. *Teaching Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood | NAEYC*. [online] Naeyc.org. Available at: <<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/mar2017/teaching-emotional-intelligence>> [Accessed 25 April 2021].

Raver, CC, Garner, PW & Smith-Donald, R 2007, The roles of emotion regulation and emotion knowledge for children's academic readiness: Are the links causal? in B Planta, K Snow & M Cox (eds), *School readiness and the transition to kindergarten in the era of accountability*. Paul H Brookes Publishing, Baltimore, MD, US, pp. 121-147.

Riessman, C. 2008. *Narrative Methods for the Human Science*. London: Sage

Sharp, P., 2001. *Nurturing Emotional Literacy*. Oxon: Routledge.

Steiner, C., 1979. *Healing Alcoholism*. London: Grove Press.

Trodd, L., 2013. *Transitions in the early years*. London: SAGE Publications.

Under 5, 2020. *under5 Publisher Publications - Issuu*. [online] Issuu.com. Available at: <<https://issuu.com/under5>> [Accessed 29 September 2021].

UNICEF, 2020. *Supporting Your Child's Mental Health During COVID-19 School Returns*. [online] Unicef.org. Available at: <<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/supporting-your-childs-mental-health-during-covid-19-school-return>> [Accessed 14 January 2021].

Wisdom, J. and Creswell, J., 2013. *Mixed Methods: Integrating Quantitative And Qualitative Data Collection And Analysis While Studying Patient-Centered Medical Home Models | PCMH Resource Center*. [online] Pcmh.ahrq.gov. Available at: <<https://pcmh.ahrq.gov/page/mixed-methods-integrating-quantitative-and-qualitative-data-collection-and-analysis-while>> [Accessed 15 January 2021].