

Factors Influencing Social-Emotional Development in Preschool Children

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

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Review Stage at time of this submission - Preliminary searches.

Conflicts of interest - None declared.

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Amendments - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 5 January 2026 and was last updated on 5 January 2026.

INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective To quantify and compare the strength of associations between five categories of factors (peer-related, academic/school, emotion understanding & regulation, behavioral inhibition, and emotion regulation/control) and social-emotional development in preschool children aged 3-6 years.

Condition being studied Social-emotional development (SED) of preschool children, encompassing competencies such as emotion regulation, empathy, peer interaction and related behavioural outcomes. Influencing factors of social-emotional development in preschool-aged children.

METHODS

Participant or population Typically-developing children 3-6 years old, sampled worldwide from preschool or kindergarten settings.

Intervention Any non-experimental intrinsic or contextual factor reported in the literature as potentially influencing SED — e.g., peer interaction quality, classroom climate, academic engagement, temperament dimensions, emotion understanding, behavioural inhibition.

Comparator Not applicable.

Study designs to be included Quantitative or mixed-methods empirical studies (longitudinal, cross-sectional and intervention) with ≥ 30 participants, published in English between 2005-2025.

Eligibility criteria Include: 3-6 y samples; at least one direct SED outcome; sufficient statistics for effect-size calculation; peer-reviewed English articles. Exclude: non-SED focus, wrong age group, purely theoretical papers, grey literature, or full text unavailable.

Information sources PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar.

Main outcome(s) Validated measures of preschool SED, synthesised in five domains: peer-related SED, emotion regulation/control, behavioural inhibition & anxiety, emotion understanding/regulation, and academic & school-related outcomes.

Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis

Newcastle-Ottawa Scale (child-development adaptation); studies scoring < 6/9 excluded. Dual independent coding, consensus resolution of disagreements.

Strategy of data synthesis Random-effects meta-analysis using inverse-variance weighting; heterogeneity assessed with Q and I^2 ; publication bias evaluated by funnel plot and Egger's test. funnel plots and Egger's regression test.

Subgroup analysis Effect sizes will be analysed separately for each of the five outcome domains; additional subgroups (if ≥ 3 studies per stratum) by study design, informant (parent vs. teacher), and geographic region to explore sources of heterogeneity (guided by Q/I^2 statistics).

Sensitivity analysis (1) Leave-one-out re-analysis; (2) fixed-effects vs. random-effects models; (3) exclusion of studies with high risk of bias; (4) trim-and-fill adjustment for publication bias. These steps follow the procedures used for heterogeneity and funnel-plot diagnostics in the preliminary synthesis. Effect sizes will be analysed separately for each of the five outcome domains; additional subgroups (if ≥ 3 studies per stratum) by study design, informant (parent vs. teacher), and geographic region to explore sources of heterogeneity (guided by Q/I^2 statistics).

Country(ies) involved China; Singapore; United States.

Keywords social-emotional development; preschool; peer interaction; emotion regulation; behavioural inhibition; academic outcomes.

Contributions of each author

Author 1 - Juan Gu.

Author 2 - Suziyani Mohamed.

Author 3 - Kamariah Abu Bakar.