



## The influence of the PATHS curriculum on children's social-emotional competence

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### ABSTRACT

Preschool-aged children tend to have a wide range of social-emotional skills and problems, making it difficult for them to enter school, leading to negative peer relationships and low academic achievement. Programs must support children in learning important skills early to perform socially appropriate actions, such as social behavior and coping skills. Prevention focuses on reducing aggressive and disruptive behaviors in children and developing children's social-emotional competencies. One of the preventions is the PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) program. Based on this, the researcher tried to examine the effect of the PATHS curriculum on social-emotional competence in preschool and elementary school children. The method used in this article is a Systematic Literature Review. There are three stages in the Systematic Literature Review: searching and filtering the literature, analyzing the literature, and writing the analysis results in scientific arguments. The results show that PATHS will provide long-term effects if applied as prevention rather than treatment in preschool and elementary school-aged children. Because at that age, children are not yet able to control their emotions, which impacts social competence when attending school.

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### ABSTRAK

Anak-anak pada usia prasekolah cenderung memiliki berbagai keterampilan sosial-emosional dan masalah yang beragam, membuat mereka mengalami kesulitan dalam memasuki sekolah sehingga menyebabkan adanya hubungan negatif dengan teman sebayanya dan prestasi akademik yang rendah. Perlu adanya program yang mendukung anak-anak dalam mempelajari keterampilan-keterampilan penting sejak masa kanak-kanak untuk memungkinkan mereka melakukan tindakan yang baik secara sosial, seperti perilaku sosial dan keterampilan dalam mengatasi masalah. Perlu dilakukan pencegahan bukan hanya berfokus pada pengurangan perilaku agresif dan mengganggu pada anak, tetapi juga perlu dilakukan pengembangan kompetensi sosial-emosional anak. Salah satu pencegahannya diadakan program PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies). Berdasarkan hal tersebut peneliti berusaha mengkaji pengaruh kurikulum PATHS terhadap kompetensi sosial-emosional pada anak usia prasekolah dan sekolah dasar. Metode yang digunakan dalam artikel ini adalah Systematic Literature Review. Terdapat tiga tahapan dalam Systematic Literature Review yaitu pencarian dan penyaringan literatur, analisis literatur dan penulisan hasil analisis dalam bentuk argumen yang ilmiah. Hasilnya didapatkan bahwa PATHS akan memiliki efek jangka panjang jika diterapkan sebagai pencegahan bukan penanganan untuk anak-anak usia prasekolah dan usia sekolah dasar. Karena pada usia tersebut, anak belum bisa mengontrol emosi yang berdampak pada kompetensi sosial ketika bersekolah.

**Kata Kunci:** Kurikulum PATHS; kesehatan mental; sosial-emosional; usia prasekolah.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the risk of illness, job loss, food shortages, and health problems has all resulted in stress among both adults and children. This can impact the quality of interactions children experience with their parents, disrupting the positive environment children need during a crucial time for their brain development. (Schiavo, 2020). This is consistent with what was reported by Jarvers *et al.* (2023). Preschoolers, parental stress, and parental mental health were the two environmental factors that showed the strongest association with children's internalizing problems. Parents' mental health was affected by the COVID-19 lockdown. Consequently, the COVID-19 pandemic also significantly impacted the quality of interactions children had with their parents due to the mental health issues they experienced. According to Kusumaningrum *et al.* (2022), although children are not at greater risk of contracting COVID-19 than adults, children and adolescents in Indonesia are at risk due to the socio-spatial context in which they live. Children constitute a third of the Indonesian population, many of whom experience increasing economic hardship, lack of access to formal social protection, and inadequate health systems. In addition to these challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the lifestyles of adults and children alike.

In line with research conducted by Fauziah *et al.* (2022), during the pandemic, preschool-aged children tended to spend more time indoors, leading to an increase in unhealthy lifestyles. Low-income families triggered mental health issues experienced by preschoolers. This is consistent with what was reported by Fishbein *et al.* (2016). Children raised in low-income families are vulnerable to mental health issues, while children raised in more affluent families often experience no mental health problems.

Due to COVID-19, these issues significantly impacted parents' stress levels and influenced their parenting styles. Consequently, children experience various mental health issues. Preschool-aged children tend to have various social-emotional skills and various issues, making it difficult for them to enter school, leading to negative peer relationships and low academic achievement. According to Anindyajayati *et al.* (2021), COVID-19 has also led to increased anxiety issues. This is because people generally have close relationships with extended family and peers. Still, social restrictions and the sudden shift to remote working and learning from home, especially for extended periods, have the potential to impact mental health. Around 20% of people have seen an increase in mental health disorders due to anxiety during COVID-19. (Anindyajati *et al.*, 2021). So, Lopez *et al.* (2000) emphasized the importance of conducting experiments to reduce mental health problems in children.

The impact of COVID-19 has significantly impacted children's emotional control. This is consistent with the research conducted by Nonweiler *et al.* (2020). Children are experiencing developmental coordination disorders, poor emotional symptoms, hyperactivity, and prosocial behavior due to the COVID-19 pandemic. One reason children have difficulty controlling their emotions is due to quarantine, which limits their movement. (Idoiaga *et al.*, 2020). According to Greenberg *et al.* (1995), over the past eight years, there has been a growing interest in understanding, discussing, and managing children's emotions. However, few studies on children's emotional development can diagnose their emotional states. According to Fishbein *et al.* (2016), there is a need for programs that support children in

learning important skills from childhood to enable them to perform good social actions, such as social behavior and problem-solving skills. Children's ability to control their behavior to achieve certain goals will gradually develop alongside their cognitive and linguistic abilities through various processes. (Becker *et al.*, 2023 ; Zhan *et al.*, 2022).

Based on the above description, prevention efforts are needed, not only to reduce aggressive and disruptive behavior in children, but also to develop social-emotional competencies, given the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and external factors from parents. One such prevention effort is the PATHS program, Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies, in Indonesia. This study aims to examine opportunities to develop the PATHS curriculum by noting that there is little research or published material on the application of the PATHS curriculum in Indonesia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

PATHS, which stands for *Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies*, is a universal, teacher-taught curriculum designed to improve children's social competence and reduce problematic behavior. In this curriculum, teachers are key to its success. The PATHS curriculum primarily focuses on preschool children. According to Einarsdottir & Jónsdóttir (2019), the preschool age is 2 to 6 years. The PATHS curriculum can then be used with elementary school-aged children. According to Gilligan *et al.* (2019), children in elementary school range in age from 6 to 10 years.

COVID-19 has had a huge impact on a person's mental health. According to Cullen *et al.* (2020), one consequence of limited resources to manage or mitigate the pandemic's impact is its effect on mental health and well-being. Anxiety levels due to COVID-19 have increased by 29% (Wang *et al.*, 2020). Menurut Freeman (2022), mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with life's stresses, realize their abilities, learn well, work well, and socialize. According to Shorer & Leibovich (2022), the importance of parental emotional skills for children's emotional adjustment during the COVID-19 pandemic is highlighted. Children can learn to regulate their emotions by observing their parents' strategies. However, many parents during COVID-19 have struggled to control their emotions, which has resulted in children also being unable to control theirs.

One of the mental illnesses that is difficult for parents to deal with is *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder* (ADHD). According to Shuai *et al.* (2021), a child with ADHD exhibits symptoms of inattention, oppositional defiance, and emotional problems. The majority of ADHD treatment experiences in children in seven states involve administering ADHD medication. According to Moran *et al.* (2019), behavioral therapy is recommended as a first-line treatment for preschool-aged children diagnosed with ADHD. Children with ADHD exhibit more depressive symptoms, and children with ADHD and co-occurring anxiety or depression are at a tenfold greater risk of poor academic performance than children with ADHD. (Morales-Hidalgo *et al.*, 2023). *Social Determinants of Health* (SDH) are one of the major causes of children experiencing ADHD. (Spencer *et al.*, 2022). According to Tankumpuan *et al.* (2019), *social determinants of health* (SDH) are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. These conditions are shaped by the distribution of money, power, and resources at global, national, and local levels.

PATHS is an experimental school-based prevention model designed to improve children's ability to discuss and understand emotions, as well as their understanding of emotional concepts. The social and emotional learning process through PATHS will support social behavior and positively guide good behavior in emotional contexts. According to [Bradshaw et al. \(2012\)](#), the PATHS program is conceptually based on a neuroscience model of development. Based on this, researchers sought to examine the impact of the PATHS curriculum on social-emotional competence in preschool and elementary school-aged children. Social-emotional competence in early childhood is multivariate, encompassing skills and knowledge across all domains of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral development. ([Denham et al., 1994](#)). Therefore, the PATHS curriculum will influence emotional behavior towards peers, resulting in positive social relationships.

The condition of children who have ADHD can be addressed with the PATHS curriculum. In line with [Panayiotou et al. \(2020\)](#), supportive peer relationships can help children become resilient to feelings of loneliness and depression. This is consistent with the findings of [Calhoun et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Inam et al. \(2022\)](#), who reported that poor social-emotional conditions, poor academic performance, and hyperactivity can be treated with the PATHS curriculum without medication.

Findings from the research by [Domitrovich et al. \(2007\)](#) were an effort to improve social and emotional competence in children. Testing was conducted on twenty classes in two communities in Pennsylvania. This research was conducted over three years. In the first year, collaborative teams were developed to create and pilot the curriculum. Then, in the early stages of the second year, a pretest was conducted, followed by a posttest at the end of the school year in the experimental and control classes. Teachers used the experimental PATHS curriculum in 10 classes, implementing it weekly and conducting outreach activities for 9 months. Assessments were conducted on children and teachers, and parent reports regarding children's behavior were collected at the beginning and end of the school year. This study showed that after PATHS was implemented in the experimental classes, children had higher emotional knowledge skills and were assessed by parents and teachers as having these skills, compared to their peers who did not have them.

However, this study has limitations, including the use of teachers' direct observations of children's behavior. This resulted in subjective assessments of each child's character. However, assessments should be conducted objectively by teachers and parents. Furthermore, during the implementation of this curriculum, the principal conducted evaluations, but parents were unaware of the results or the complete curriculum design. Another limitation is that the analysis was conducted at the individual level, with children randomly grouped into classrooms, potentially biasing the statistical results. Another limitation is the lack of follow-up actions after the assessments.

One of the programs implemented in the PATHS curriculum is a training program for prospective implementers to help them understand the theory behind positive youth development approaches, curriculum design, experiential teaching and learning pedagogy, and project evaluation. ([Shek et al., 2022](#)). According to [Domitrovich et al. \(2019\)](#), other programs implemented in the PATHS curriculum include teachers trained in classroom behavior management.

## METHODS

The method used in this article is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). This method is used because it can identify, evaluate, and interpret data and research results according to the research questions. Then, according to [Rao & Ye \(2016\)](#), SLR can reduce the complexity of scientific work, distribute the literature search process, and enable comprehensive analysis. Meanwhile, according to [Mengist et al. \(2020\)](#), SLR is a research process that allows the collection of facts relevant to a specific topic according to predetermined eligibility criteria and the formulation of research questions. SLR is used to collect, analyze, and synthesize data on the accuracy and value of previous articles in this research area, namely PATHS. ([Ahmed et al., 2019](#)).

The SLR in this article aims to examine the extent to which the PATHS curriculum has influenced the improvement of children's social-emotional competencies at preschool and elementary school ages. The stages in the SLR, according to [Pollock & Berge \(2018\)](#), are (1) Clarifying the background and objectives; (2) Finding relevant research; (3) Collecting data; (4) Assessing the quality of the studies found; (5) Synthesizing evidence; (6) Interpreting findings.

Literature sources come from several online sources, such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Direct Science, Springer, and Taylor and Francis. The keywords used in the literature search were 'PATHS curriculum', 'social-emotional competency', 'special needs', 'mental health', and 'mental health programs in schools'. This article filters the literature search from 1995 to 2023, including both journal articles and books. Filtering was carried out because there are not many manuscripts discussing the PATHS curriculum, so most of the sources were taken from older years. Researchers across four focus areas evaluated each article and book: the objectives of the PATHS curriculum, PATHS curriculum programs, the impact of curriculum implementation on children, and the evaluation of PATHS curriculum implementation. This research was conducted by reviewing and identifying various reference sources, such as journal articles and proceedings, which were then analyzed descriptively.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### PATHS Curriculum Objectives

The PATHS curriculum is crucial for improving social competence by training children to manage and understand their emotions. When children gain the ability to train, manage, and understand their emotions, it significantly impacts their social competence with their peers and fosters positive social relationships. [Bierman et al. \(2013\)](#) PATHS can improve the quality of preschool education and promote school readiness. This is in line with what was conveyed by [Panayiotou et al. \(2020\)](#), namely that the implementation of PATHS can significantly improve children's psychological well-being and peer social support. This is also consistent with research by [Gibson et al. \(2015\)](#), which indicates that implementing this curriculum can increase emotional understanding and prosocial behavior.

Neuroscience research provides insights into underlying mechanisms that, if appropriately targeted, can help optimize the impact of social-emotional learning curricula through PATHS.

Recent advances in neuroscience present unprecedented opportunities to translate basic research findings into improved academic and social-emotional outcomes for children and adolescents. (Ziporyn *et al.*, 2022). The relevance of developing neuroscience-related experiments for stress prevention and brain health is influenced by emerging understandings of the dynamic interactions between genetic and environmental factors that alter brain function and behavioral outcomes. This curriculum emphasizes the importance of addressing stress processes in designing prevention experiments and their developmental timing. The PATHS program is conceptually grounded in a developmental neuroscience model. PATHS aims to develop neurocognitive control both vertically (i.e., frontal, emotional, and arousal control) and horizontally (i.e., the use of language in emotion regulation).

Juvenile delinquency can be prevented through experiments that engage alternative thinking skills. Another goal of the curriculum in the leadership project is for children to learn to control their emotions and develop their social skills. The PATHS curriculum is an approach that aims to provide children and adolescents with knowledge about emotional competence. The PATHS curriculum was chosen for its clear conceptualization of emotions, emphasis on cognitive aspects, and its historical development in research. The PATHS curriculum can have a positive impact because, in practice, it involves parents or guardians of students and the community. (Zhu & Shek, 2020). The analysis detected the level of emotional immaturity, generally characterized by poor impulse control and poor emotional regulation. It turns out that, when schools address social competence problems in children, a group or individual approach with peers, along with a direct teaching approach by teachers on emotional management, is more effective. The objectives of this curriculum include 1) to conduct experiments with an approach to the whole class or the whole school in particular; 2) to evaluate the impact of the experiments conducted, especially on students' social competence; 3) to explore whether the experiments conducted can address emotional and feeling problems, which can lead to positive behavior.

### **PATHS Curriculum Programs**

One of the programs implemented in the PATHS curriculum is a training program for prospective implementers to help them understand the theory behind positive youth development approaches, curriculum design, experiential teaching and learning pedagogy, and project evaluation. (Shek *et al.*, 2022). Other programs implemented in the PATHS curriculum, according to Domitrovich *et al.* (2020), are teachers trained in classroom behavior management programs.

Teacher training is essential before implementing the PATHS curriculum. The success of the PATHS curriculum is also influenced by teachers' psychological well-being. Ransford *et al.* (2009). The success of PATHS also needs to be supported by teachers' psychological experiences and perceptions of the curriculum. If teachers experience fatigue while implementing the program, the curriculum's results will be suboptimal, or they will simply be performing administrative tasks. However, if teachers truly implement PATHS and support the curriculum by reporting on its implementation, high-quality results will be achieved. Therefore, individual factors within the teacher themselves will also be highly influential. This was also expressed by Domitrovich *et al.* (2016). The teachers' conditions greatly influence the implementation of the PATHS program. Therefore, teachers need special training before

implementing social-emotional learning using the PATHS curriculum. (Blewitt *et al.*, 2020; McDaniel *et al.*, 2021).

According to Gkeka *et al.* (2018), the PATHS curriculum can be implemented for children with ADHD, and, according to Gkeka *et al.* (2018), the Montessori method is the program of choice. The Montessori method will benefit children in the following ways:

1. Building concentration skills and an active mind: children working as if the teacher is not there will lead them to identify their own mistakes and correct themselves.
2. Perspective on the world: Montessori sensory materials demonstrate the attributes of objects (volume, length, temperature, color).
3. Building self-confidence: By working on their own, children will realize that they can succeed at difficult tasks if they try long enough.
4. Social skills: By acting towards one another with 'grace and courtesy'.

In Montessori classrooms, attention-related incidents are lower than average, so this pedagogy may be a strategy for treating ADHD. The activities included in the PATHS curriculum are Gershon Dan Pellitteri (2018), such as modeling stories, emotional development, learning using puppets, role playing, and discussion.

### **The Impact of PATHS Curriculum Implementation on Children**

In its implementation, PATHS is measured using weekly teacher notes and semi-structured questionnaires completed by PATHS trainers, which are used to assess program fidelity. PATHS research is defined as a process by which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, build and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. (Denham & Brown, 2010). Learning activities in the PATHS curriculum include dialogue, role-playing, storytelling by teachers and peers, social and self-strengthening, and training in understanding one's own character. (Berry *et al.*, 2016). The PATHS curriculum includes detailed lesson plans and scripts, but with flexibility so teachers can adapt to their own styles and activities. Williams (2002) Planning needs to consider 21st-century skills and sustainable development. Therefore, the planning and creation of the PATHS script must be carefully coordinated and prepared. This is consistent with the research conducted by Novak *et al.* (2017). According to them, when implementing the PATHS curriculum, teachers must carefully prepare for social-emotional learning.

According to Inam *et al.* (2015), in Pakistan several revisions were made to adapt the curriculum to the existing culture. Because each region has a different culture, each child's character also varies. Therefore, adaptations are necessary to suit the existing culture. Research conducted by Greenberg *et al.* (1995) involved 30 classes in grades 2 and 3 of an elementary school, with 30% of the children from these classrooms having special needs. PATHS was administered for one school year, with the results showing that PATHS was effective for both children without special needs and those with special needs. PATHS can help children with special needs increase their vocabulary and fluency in discussions about emotional management and emotional development. PATHS was implemented for children

with special needs by planning and solving problems based on their interests and talents. In line with the theory presented by [Greenberg \(2006\)](#), PATHS can prevent problems by developing inhibition, planning, and problem-solving skills, emotional regulation, and interest development in children and adolescents.

Therefore, PATHS is very important because it has a significant impact on children with mental health problems. This is also in line with the statement by [Malti et al. \(2012\)](#). The PATHS curriculum is effective in improving social-emotional competencies for children with mental health issues such as ADHD. One method used to implement the PATHS curriculum is to integrate it into learning with engaging media, especially for children with special needs. This is in line with the opinion of [Donahue-Keegan et al. \(2019\)](#), that social-emotional learning also needs to be integrated with cooperative games for children with special needs. In addition, according to [Kam et al. \(2004\)](#), PATHS can reduce the growth rate of internalization and externalization. Research has previously been conducted by [Crean & Johnson \(2013\)](#) on children in grades 3 through 5 in elementary school. The report showed that teachers and students were related to behavioral problems, delinquency, social competence, and other issues (internalization). The PATHS program was shown to improve the resolution of social problems experienced by children. In line with [Curtis & Norgate \(2007\)](#), PATHS can help children gain a better understanding of emotions and cultivate better empathy and self-regulation skills.

The PATHS curriculum also has a significant impact on children from low-income families. Children from low-income families experience significant challenges in their thinking, emotional control, and social interactions. Therefore, participating in PATHS has been shown to improve children's social competence and behavioral issues. In addition to the economic challenges children face, another significant factor is the influence of their environment. According to [Hu et al. \(2021\)](#), Children's characteristics are influenced by the initial level of behavioral problems that arise, gender, and the school environment.

According to Sukmadinata in his book "*Pengembangan Kurikulum Teori dan Praktik*," the implementation of the PATHS curriculum must align with the principles of curriculum development, including relevance, flexibility, continuity, efficiency, and effectiveness. The PATHS curriculum must adhere to the general principles of curriculum development. The curriculum must:

1. Adapted to the child's needs, interests, and talents;
2. The curriculum must be flexible and aimed at preparing children now and for the future.
3. PATHS programs must also be continuous with each other without interruption between one grade level and another, between one level and another, and between education and work.
4. It is also necessary to consider the efficiency of utilizing available funds, time, energy, and resources to achieve optimal results.

In line with the opinion expressed by [Domitrovich et al. \(2010\)](#), PATHS will have a significant impact if implemented with good quality and sustainability. Furthermore, one problem in the science learning process can be addressed with PATHS. ([Moir, 2018](#)). A well-implemented program will maximize an individual's potential. Even if the implementation is successful, the

program's sustainability is also essential. According to [Li et al. \(2023\)](#), science should not only be carried out using conventional methods, but other alternatives are needed, such as social-emotional learning through PATHS on an ongoing basis.

If the PATHS curriculum is implemented effectively and achieves its intended outcomes, it will affect children's emotional regulation, which in turn will affect their ability to read, write, and count. This is consistent with what was reported by [Schonfeld et al. \(2015\)](#). Children in schools that use PATHS have higher levels of reading, writing, and math skills than those in other schools. While there are significant differences in race/ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status between groups, the PATHS curriculum is effective in improving children's competencies.

In its implementation, it needs to be integrated with engaging media and adapted to current trends to achieve maximum results. One way to achieve this is to report on each child using existing technology to support teachers. As research conducted by [Hamre et al. \(2012\)](#), Using the Web to develop teachers' professional competencies. Teachers submit reports on children's social-emotional competencies through the "My Teaching Partner" website throughout the year. Research suggests that the website will encourage teachers to report on improvements in children's social competencies more frequently. This is because the website is considered more practical and easier to use than manual reporting. The use of technology in the PATHS program will impact teachers' professional competence in reporting on children's social competency development. This is because, according to research by Berg et al. (2017), the curriculum requires teachers to report weekly, so teachers sometimes experience fatigue.

Then Mihalic et al. In his work "Blueprints for Violence Prevention," he emphasized that while a program has clear evidence of positive impact, its implementation also needs to be well-designed, as this design is crucial. The success of a program is also largely determined by the quality of the principal. Hence, [Kam et al. \(2003\)](#) suggested that strong leadership by the principal and the quality of the implementation design determine the program's success. Accurate implementation, quality of implementation, support, and commitment are crucial in running the PATHS program.

There is a hypothesis that social-emotional competence can directly and indirectly influence academic achievement through the school environment and mental health problems. ([Panayiotou et al., 2020](#)). Research conducted through PATHS has shown that social-emotional competence can influence children's academic achievement. This is because low academic achievement can be influenced by mental health. Therefore, according to [Bierman and Sanders \(2021\)](#), there needs to be explicit support from teachers to help develop children's social-emotional competencies. Such as self-awareness (e.g., identifying and recognizing emotions, self-efficacy), self-management (e.g., impulse control and stress management, seeking help), social awareness (e.g., empathy, respect for others), relationship skills (e.g., communication, building relationships), and responsible decision-making (e.g., problem-solving, personal, social, and ethical responsibility).

Some identify the effects of this experiment into two parts, namely primary (for all children) and secondary (for children classified as high risk). ([Humphrey et al., 2016](#)). The primary effect of PATHS was an increase in teachers' assessments of changes in children's social-emotional competence. Furthermore, secondary effects of PATHS identified in the control

class showed a decrease in teachers' assessments of children's peer problems, emotional symptoms, and behavioral problems. Furthermore, an analysis of the relationship between implementation and social and emotional learning revealed that children's quality of learning and comprehension differed from those in conventional learning. (Humphrey *et al.*, 2018). So the PATHS curriculum has long-term effects. In line with what was conveyed by Averdijk *et al.* (2016), PATHS may have little long-term effect if delinquency, drug use, and antisocial behavior have already occurred.

PATHS is used to prevent antisocial behavior in children, which can ultimately lead to criminal behavior in the future. Furthermore, PATHS can also be used to prevent antisocial behavior resulting from low educational and employment attainment. (Lalongo *et al.*, 2019). Parents' educational and occupational attainment will certainly influence a child's character development. PATHS focuses on increasing attention to tasks and reducing disruptive behavior in the classroom, thereby facilitating the acquisition of emotional regulation, social problem-solving, and conflict resolution. (Lalongo *et al.*, 2019). The long-term implementation of the PATHS curriculum will improve children's skills. (Schwartzstein *et al.*, 2020).

Seyhan *et al.* (2019) stated that PATHS would provide a more positive picture of the relationship between children and teachers. According to Hughes and Cline (2015), if preschool children are given this curriculum, they will show less problem behavior, show better emotional knowledge, better attention skills, and better prosocial behavior. Then, according to Mihic *et al.* (2016), her study findings revealed significant changes in children's social and emotional competencies during preschool. This period can be a unique opportunity to enhance children's skills and improve long-term school success by implementing empirically tested prevention programs, such as Preschool PATHS.

### **PATHS Curriculum Evaluation**

According to Domitrovich *et al.* (2007), it has been discussed that one preventative measure for addressing mental health in children is the PATHS program. The findings indicate that it can improve children's social and emotional competencies. Testing was conducted in 20 classrooms across two communities in Pennsylvania. This research was conducted over three years. In the first year, collaborative teams were developed to create and pilot the curriculum. Then, in the second year, a pretest was conducted as an initial stage, and in the next year, a posttest was conducted at the end of the school year in the experimental and control classes. Teachers used the PATHS curriculum in the experimental classes for 10 classes, implementing it weekly and conducting outreach activities for nine months. Assessments were conducted on children and teachers, and parent reports regarding children's behavior were collected at the beginning and end of the school year. This study showed that after PATHS was implemented in the experimental classes, children had higher emotional knowledge skills, as assessed by parents and teachers, compared to their peers who did not have these skills. Meanwhile, assessments in the PATHS curriculum, implemented based on family economic factors, were conducted weekly by teachers and peers. In line with the opinion of Fishbein *et al.* (2016), family economic conditions are very influential. The PATHS curriculum was implemented in four schools with high poverty rates and similar demographic characteristics. The PATHS program was randomly implemented

using control classes and experimental classes. Assessments were carried out by teachers and reported to teachers and peers on the children's behavior.

Assessment in the implementation of the PATHS curriculum does need to be carried out by children, both by teachers and peers, and by teachers themselves on an ongoing basis. However, evaluations need to be conducted not only internally, between teachers and children. Evaluations are also needed by external parties such as consultants, parents, or supervisors. Evaluations are carried out by both internal and external parties. However, these assessments are deemed insufficient; specific assessments of the indicators that need to be assessed based on curriculum components are needed. This aligns with what was conveyed by Kusché et al. In his book "*The PATHS curriculum: Promoting alternative thinking strategies*" the indicators in the assessment consist of:

1. Has the core content of each lesson and the curriculum as a whole been covered;
2. How often are lessons held;
3. Number of lessons given.

## **CONCLUSION**

One solution to prevent mental illness is using the PATHS curriculum with the hope that children can control their social-emotional competencies to reduce problematic children's behavior. The social-emotional competencies expected to emerge in this curriculum are related to self-awareness (e.g., identifying and recognizing emotions, self-efficacy), self-management (e.g., impulse control and stress management, seeking help), social awareness (e.g., empathy, respect for others), relationship skills (e.g., communication, building relationships), and responsible decision-making (e.g., problem-solving, personal, social, and ethical responsibility). PATHS will have long-term effects if implemented as a prevention rather than a treatment for preschool and elementary school children. Because at that age, children cannot yet control emotions that impact social competencies when they go to school. Therefore, careful planning of the PATHS curriculum program is needed, from planning, implementation, to evaluation. Implementation of the PATHS curriculum also needs to be integrated with the development of the times. So learning activities that can be carried out include dialogue, role-playing, storytelling with teachers and peers, social reinforcement, and self-strengthening and self-character recognition training.

## **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The author confirms that the data and content of the article are free from plagiarism.

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