

## Relevance of batik art therapy in emotional regulation teaching method

**Noraziyannah Md Jais<sup>1</sup>**, University of Science Malaysia 11800 Gelugor, Penang, Malaysia

**Low Hui Min**, University of Science Malaysia, 11800 Gelugor, Penang, Malaysia

**Aswati Hamzah**, University of Science Malaysia, 11800 Gelugor, Penang, Malaysia

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### Abstract

In the school setting, intervention for children with special educational needs typically focuses on reading, writing, and counting skills, with less attention paid to the aspects of emotional regulation. Emotional regulation and management skills are essential for students with special education needs. This article, therefore, aims to identify and discuss the need for exposure and the development of an emotional regulation teaching method, that utilizes batik art therapy as a pedagogical strategy. For a need's assessment, an open-ended survey was conducted with 35 special education teachers identified using the purposeful sampling technique. The research used thematic analysis, which showed the need to develop emotional regulation teaching methods and a strong teachers' interest in attending formal emotional regulation training programs. At the same time, the relevance of batik art therapy as a teaching method for emotional regulation was strongly supported by the special education teachers involved. The research findings pointed to the need to develop an emotional regulation teaching method using the batik art therapy approach.

**Keywords:** Batik Art; Emotional Regulation; Special Education Teacher; Teaching Method; Therapy.

\* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Noraziyannah Md Jais, University of Science Malaysia 11800 Gelugor, Penang, Malaysia  
E-mail address: [noraziyannahbintimdjais@gmail.com](mailto:noraziyannahbintimdjais@gmail.com)

## 1. Introduction

Batik art is a heritage that comes from several ancient civilizations, including the Egyptian civilization (Gittinger & Mattiebelle, 1979; McCabe, 1984; Samah, 1990; Hussin, 2006; Hamzah, 2014; Suliyati & Yuliati, 2019). Since early civilization, the production of batik art motifs has been linked to spirituality (Hakim, 2019). Batik art is narrative and can be described through the colors, shapes, and lines used that is full of emotion (Saputra et al., 2021). Batik therapy is a process of producing batik art with a therapeutic intention and can be considered part of art therapy. Similar to other forms of art therapy, it is predicted that batik therapy can resolve emotional conflicts, improve self-awareness, develop social skills, control behavior, solve problems, reduce anxiety, direct reality, and increase self-esteem (Mukhlis, 2011; Case & Dalley, 1992).

The history of batik art in Southeast Asia is more focused on Malaya (Malaysia) and Javanese (Indonesia) (Samah, 1990; Hussin, 2006). Batik products are well-received by Malaysian people because the motifs and patterns show the identity of the nation and highlight the culture of the community (Hussin, 2006; Pauzi & Said, 2018). Batik techniques often practiced in Southeast Asia are canting techniques, tie and dye techniques, stamp techniques, and stencil techniques (Widodo, 2013; Haron et al., 2014). Several researchers have identified the process of producing a batik product, which requires the appreciation and practice of orderly, repetitive, disciplined, focused, and patient, as similar to the process of emotional management (Mukhlis, 2011; Putri et al., 2014). Meanwhile, drawing techniques in the art can stimulate the cortex system that has a role in problem-solving and behavior control (Mukhlis, 2011).

Emotional management skills and the ability to express feelings according to social situations are very important in maintaining relationships with others (Ratnam et al., 2018). However, these skills are noticeably lower among Special Educational Needs (SEN) students (Ratnam et al., 2018), causing them to experience social-emotional and behavioral challenges (Cavioni et al., 2017). As such, Ratnam et al. (2018) advocate that it is important for multidisciplinary agencies in Malaysia to include SEN teachers to work together to help SEN students in terms of social, emotional, and behavioral management. This initiative aligns with the goals of the Malaysia Education Development Plan 2013-2025 to provide quality education to all students, including SEN students.

Recent literature review notes that to support SEN students to acquire emotional regulation skills, SEN teachers (Special Education Teachers) need to have adequate knowledge and awareness about the emotional regulation teaching method (Ratnam et al., 2018). As SEN students are more at risk for emotional regulation problems, SEN teachers can be more vulnerable to feeling stress and easily feel dissatisfied with their jobs as compared to mainstream teachers (Koenen et al., 2017). The teaching and learning process, including those related to classroom management and emotion regulation, is closely dependent on the competency of teachers (Idris, 2010). Therefore, this study aims to identify a need for the development of emotional regulation teaching methods and the relevance of batik art therapy as a teaching method for emotional regulation among SEN teachers. The previous study on batik art therapy focuses on prisoners, secondary school students, and Alzheimer patients, and little research on SEN students. (Mukhlis, 2011; Putri et al., 2014; Muqtadiroh et al., 2018; Febriantiyastuti, 2018; Ulfiana et al., 2020).

### 1.1. Conceptual background

Some behavior problems shown by SEN students may be caused by poor emotion regulation skills (Bryan et al., 2004). Usually, most special education interventions focus on reading, writing, and counting skills, with less attention paid to aspects of emotional regulation (Cavioni et al., 2017). There was a lack of knowledge and skills among SEN teachers to teach SEN students, a lack of confidence to deliver effective teaching, and a low level of meta-subject competence (Amran et al., 2019).

Emotional Intelligence is an element of the national education philosophy in the context of Malaysian education, but the element of emotional intelligence is only inserted in some subjects

(Darulsalam et al., 2014). The analysis document of the Special Education Primary School Standard Curriculum shows that elements of emotional regulation have been inserted in living skills subjects, but there is still no specific subject that focuses on social and emotional education. Moreover, the application is still not comprehensive because it only focuses on happy, sad, and angry emotions, although, according to Ekman & Cordaro (2011), basic emotions consist of seven categories, such as happy, sadness, fear, surprise, anger, contempt, and disgust.

### **1.2.Purpose of Study**

The need for teacher training on emotional regulation, the lack of trained school counselors for SEN students, and the small number of psychiatrists and therapists show the constraints and gaps that exist in terms of emotional regulation interventions for SEN students. Therefore, the batik art therapy module was built as a source of emotional regulation intervention for SEN students and as additional reference material for SEN teachers in school. A study that focuses on researching the effectiveness of this module is important since this method still has no scientific studies that confirm the effectiveness of using the batik art method for emotional regulation. The purpose of this study is to identify a need for the development of emotional regulation teaching methods and the relevance of batik art therapy as a teaching method for emotional regulation.

### **1.3.Research Objective and Research Question**

The research objective is to identify a need to develop emotional regulation teaching methods among SEN teachers; identify the SEN teachers interested in attending an emotional regulation formal training program; and identify the relevance of batik art therapy as a teaching method for emotions among SEN teachers.

Three research questions to be addressed in this open-ended question include:

1. Is there a need to develop emotional regulation teaching methods among SEN teachers?
2. Is the SEN teacher interested in attending a emotional regulation training program?
3. What is the relevance of batik art therapy as a teaching method for emotional regulation among SEN teachers?

## **2. Materials and Method**

### **2.1.Data collection instrument**

The study reported in this paper is part of a larger study that employs Design and Development Research (DDR) design methods to develop an emotional regulation module. The DDR design method consists of three main phases: 1) needs analysis, 2) design and development, and 3) implementation and evaluation. This paper only focused on reporting the data from the need's analysis phase.

### **2.2.Participants**

In this phase, 35 SEN teachers in Malaysia participated in an open-ended survey. The teachers were identified based on the purposive sampling technique. The criteria for sampling include (i) they must have experience teaching SEN students with emotional regulation problems, (ii) they are the subject teachers for teaching arts and living skills subjects, and (ii) they must have experience implementing the LINUS intervention for SEN students (focusing on the socio-emotional domain). Analysis of data was conducted using Microsoft Excel to generate the themes. Coding R stands for (Respondent).

## **3. Results**

The result from the open-ended question shows the strong support from respondents to the need for the development of emotional regulation teaching methods among the sample of SEN teachers, SEN teachers interested in attending an emotional regulation formal training program, and

the relevance of batik art therapy as a teaching method for emotional regulation among SEN teachers in this study ( $n = 35$ ).

For the first open-ended question *"In your opinion is there a need to develop emotional regulation teaching methods for SEN teachers? Justify your answer,"* the study participants felt it was necessary to have such a module, their written responses were as reported in the bracket (e.g., for teacher reference, to increase teacher productivity, new skills and teacher knowledge about emotional regulation) and were not sure (e.g., necessary for some teachers). There are some statements by the respondent;

*"Yes, for teacher references if anything happens to the student in the classroom."* (R01)

*"Yes. Because with this module, it will increase teacher's work productivity."* (R07)

*"Yes. Because teachers need to be given exposure and "guidelines" if they are faced with a situation involving a student's uncertain emotions and can find a solution by holding teaching and learning activities that can calm the student's emotions at that time."* (R21)

*"Also, interesting if the module were developed because a teacher can refer more detail to the module on the emotional regulation teaching method."* (R26)

*"Yes, can improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process."* (R29)

*"Yes. most PPKI (Program Pendidikan Khas Integrasi - Integrated Special Education Program) students have emotional problems, and teachers need to have a specific module to overcome student problems."* (R31)

*"Not sure. It may be necessary for teachers who want to intensify students' emotions."* (R06)

For the second open-ended question *"In your opinion, are SEN teachers interested in attending emotional regulation formal training programs, such as briefings, some courses, conferences, training, and workshops? Justify your answer,"*. The majority of study participants were interested (e.g., in sharing experiences, sharing new knowledge, and sharing new skills).

*"Yes. Because there may be the discovery of a new method and the sharing of experience is very meaningful. It may be useful."* (R03)

*"Yes. Teachers and student assistants should be given courses like this to increase their knowledge and strengthen their professionalism."* (R09)

*"Yes, because this exposure can provide knowledge for teachers to manage students' emotions well."* (R13)

*"Yes, teachers will be interested in the courses or workshop offered does not burden the teacher (for example, in a cheerful, stress-free, and relaxed situation and the location of the courses is nearby in sufficient facilities)." (R21)*

*"Yes, there are many teachers who want to learn more about this method to help them implement more effective teaching on the emotional regulation of Special Needs Students."* (R26)

*"For me as a teacher, courses, and briefings or anything related to education that helps teachers and students in the implementation of effective teaching and learning process is very much awaited and needed by teachers to solidify understanding and experience to be taught to PPKI*

*(Program Pendidikan Khas Integrasi - Integrated Special Education Program) students in particular.” (R30)*

*“Interested. But not a long and boring workshop.” (R32)*

For the third open-ended question, *“In your opinion, is the batik art therapy method relevant as a teaching method for emotional regulation? Justify your answer.”*. The majority of study participants felt it was suitable (e.g., for emotional management, building positive character, fine motor skills, spiritual aspects, and talent development in the art); while a minority of them felt it was not suitable (e.g., for SEN students with severe disabilities ) and not sure (e.g., depends on SEN student behavior and situation).

*“Yes. It helps to form patience or emotional control for the student.” (R01)*

*“Yes, the color gives peace and expression of feelings.” (R02)*

*“It is very good because the students can express their emotions with the selection of the chosen colors and make a pattern that can make the students feel satisfied and self-confident that they can do their best.” (R03)*

*“Yes. suitable. Students can express what they feel. Batik patterns are more abstract and suitable for expressing and controlling students' emotions.” (R05)*

*“Suitable. Students learn to produce works of art (batik) to express emotions and feelings. Moreover, batik can also be used as an aspect of entrepreneurial material. Students can make money and work and take care of their emotions indirectly.” (R09)*

*“Yes. Because batik therapy involves drawing and playing with color. Most special education students like to color and sketch. They will be calmer and inspired if art activities are held. In addition, it can improve students' fine motor skills.” (R21)*

*“In my opinion, art is one of the broad branches that can be explored more deeply. This is because art is one of the best therapies as a teaching method that can relate to emotions and highlight a person's inner nature in the element of art.” (R26)*

*“Maybe suitable... depending on the student's situation. This method may be suitable for students who are less aggressive during emotional disturbances. However, aggressive behavior may not be appropriate.” (R31)*

*“It can be used to help students to develop their emotions, but it is not suitable for students with major emotional problems.” (R32)*

#### **4. Discussion**

This study aimed to explore the need for emotion regulation teaching methods, the need for emotional regulation formal training programs, and the relevance of Batik Art Therapy as a teaching method for emotional regulation among SEN teachers. The findings showed that the majority of SEN teachers felt it was a necessity. The findings also showed that SEN teachers were interested in joining formal training programs to acquire new skills and knowledge. As for the relevance of Batik Art Therapy as a teaching method for emotional regulation, the majority of SEN teachers in this study felt that it was suitable.

For the first finding, *the need for the development of emotional regulation teaching methods among SEN teachers*, the majority of SEN teachers agree that there is a need for a teaching module that can improve the skills and effectiveness of teaching emotion regulation skills to students. The finding aligns with previous research, which shows that the most effective teaching method to help preschool teachers teach socioemotional skills is a complete module containing appropriate activities emphasizing social and emotional learning skills (Mohammad & Mohamed, 2020).

For the second finding, *SEN teachers' interest in attending formal emotional regulation training programs*, the majority of SEN teachers in this study reported that they are interested in attending such training. The participants also reportedly prefer formal training, such as workshops, conferences, and congresses, as well as a teaching kit as a guide. The finding supported the idea that teachers need to master pedagogical knowledge to help students learn and develop their emotion regulation skills (Fried, 2011).

Meanwhile, in the third research finding, *the relevance of batik art therapy as a teaching method for emotional regulation among SEN teachers*, the majority of SEN teachers agree that integrating art elements, such as colors, shapes, and lines, allows SEN students to express their feelings and help to regulate emotions and build the trait of patience and calmness. Moreover, past research found that batik therapy can contribute to resolving emotional conflicts, improving self-awareness, developing social skills, controlling behavior, solving problems, reducing anxiety, directing reality, and increasing self-esteem (Mukhlis, 2011).

## 5. Conclusion

The implications of the study are based on empirical evidence highlighting the need for batik art therapy to be used as an emotional regulation teaching method for SEN students. The method used has similarities to art therapy, which is commonly used as a guide for the emotional management of SEN students. Although previous studies have consistently reported positive findings on emotional regulation while using batik art, this study is lacking in terms of the suitability of teaching methods for SEN students with severe disabilities, such as aggressive behavior.

The research findings of this study pointed to the importance of developing a Batik Art Therapy module for emotional regulation method teaching for SEN teachers. The majority of the SEN teachers in this study indicated that they need courses and reference materials related to emotional regulation teaching methods. Therefore, it is very important to build resources for teaching the mastery of emotional regulation in the form of modules that do not require high costs and are easily accessible by SEN teachers.

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