

# THE ADMINISTRATOR, TEACHERS AND PARENTS INVOLVEMENT IN PRESCHOOL DURING MOVEMENT CONTROL ORDER

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## ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic is affecting the whole education system including the preschoolers in Malaysia in receiving a proper teaching and learning lesson especially in the classroom. Movement Control Order (MCO) implemented by the government has restricted the act for each person in the daily life. However, the action and role that has been played by the preschool administrators, teachers and parents in ensuring the smoothness of the teaching and learning process of the preschoolers should be recognized. This study focuses on the responses and roles that have been conducted and given by the preschool management and teacher as well as parents in assisting their preschoolers children during the MCO period. This study also determined the reaction played by the preschoolers in adapting the new norm act according to the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) given by the government. A qualitative research design by using observation and interview based on the responses given by ten randomly chosen among preschool parents, teachers and administrators in a government preschool in Johor, Malaysia were used in this study. Phenomenology research was conducted to investigate the experience that has been gone through by the informants of the study during the MCO period. Narrative writing analysis were used to explain the outcome. This study indicated that the preschool administrators and teachers were able to collaborate and conduct an excellent code of practice according to the SOPs given by the government. Meanwhile, parents were able to establish a strong communication with the administrators and teachers by following the SOPs and assist the preschool management in ensuring their children are following the new norm acts according to the SOPs. A strong collaboration between all parties involved has shown a good example to the preschoolers during the pandemic MCO period.

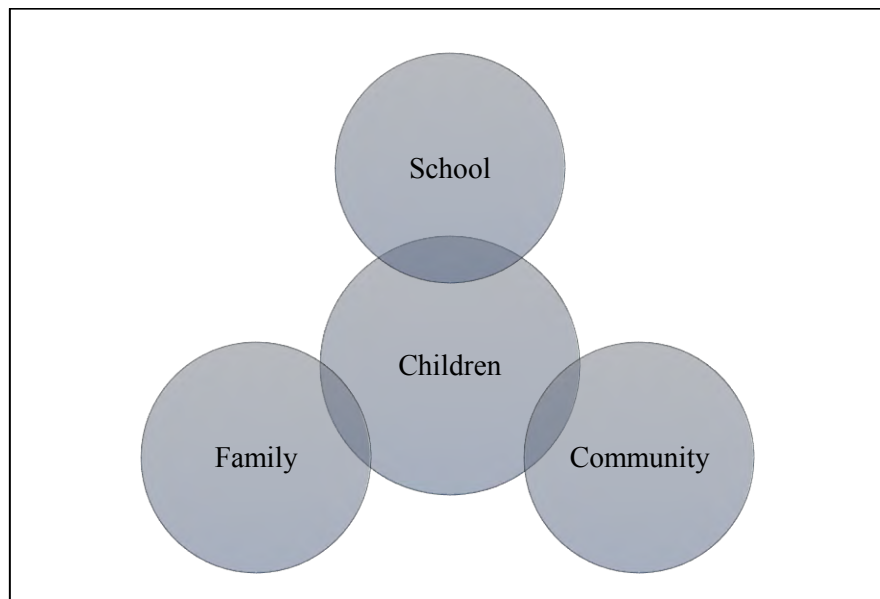
**Keywords:** preschool MCO, parents' involvement, preschool management, teachers' role

## INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian government is taking serious action in implementing the Movement Control Order (MCO) to curb the Covid-19 pandemic from spreading especially towards young children such as preschoolers. The shutting down of preschool centres for few weeks and re-open the preschool centres with a strict Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) is one of the ways in curbing the spreading of the pandemic. However, it is not easy to implement the SOPs guidelines among the preschoolers. To develop the understanding and implementation of SOPs among the preschoolers, it requires the involvement of everyone in ensuring every

SOPs can be delivered and implemented by the children which includes the involvement of the preschool administrators, teachers and parents itself. Active involvement and participation from each of the parties are essential for the young children to understand the reason why the new norm act is important to curb the pandemic Covid-19. The evolution of education that always developed and expanding according to the current situation need a transformation of teaching and learning process and involvement from everyone including parents and teachers (Husin & Aziz, 2003). The MCO period has enforced a new norm of teaching and learning lesson in the education system including in preschools. Therefore, the need for everyone to understand, follow and adhere the new norm act especially in the teaching and learning process.

Communication and collaboration between parents, teachers and school administrators are important in developing trust among them and for them to collaborate easily in any activities that involves their children in school. Epstein (1998) has developed a model in showing the relation among school management and teachers, family and community for the children education development. Figure 1 shows the relation between school members, family and community in helping the children to develop their potential although during the pandemic situation in the education system. A strong collaboration among the parties involved will improve their relationship and collaboration among all parties involved for the sake of the children.



*Figure 1.* Epstein overlapping sphere's of influence (Epstein, 1998).

Therefore, this study focuses on the involvement and action taken by the preschool's management, teachers and parents in ensuring the SOPs given by the government are being adhered by all parties to ensure the new norm act among the children. Besides that, the action taken by the preschoolers in the preschool centre in understanding and following the SOPs given by their teachers and parents were looked deeply in this study. The preschoolers play an important role in showing their understanding by following the rules given according to the new norm SOPs.

## **Statement of Problem**

In understanding the role of each preschool management, teacher and parents during the pandemic MCO period, there are a few statements of problems that can be develop in this study. Firstly, the involvement of parents' in the preschool centre especially in collaborating with the preschool administrators and teachers in assisting them in implementing the new norm act according to the SOPs is important as Shim (2013) has mentioned the importance of interaction among parents and teachers for the success of their children. Therefore, the needs of understanding and involvement among parents towards the new norm that being implemented in the preschool centre is important. Next, the school administrators and teachers need to play an important role in adhering the SOPs for operating the preschools centre according to the SOPs given. This is because teachers professional skills including leadership is important for quality development including trainings by the authorities for the benefits of the children (Foong et al., 2018). Finally, the preschoolers are having difficulties in gaining enough knowledge and trainings in developing their understanding of implementing the new norm action during the MCO period as teachers are responsible in developing the children potential and develop their learning habit effectively (Abdullahi, 2020).

## **Research Objectives**

This study aims to recognise the involvement of parents, preschool administrators, teacher and the preschoolers in adhering the SOPs during the MCO period in the preschool centre. Specific objectives are as follow;

- i) To explore parents' involvement in the preschool centre during the MCO period.
- ii) To identify the roles of preschool administrators and teacher in adhering the SOPs guidelines given by the government.
- iii) To describe preschoolers' action in following the (SOP) guidelines in the preschool centre during the MCO period.

## **Parents Involvement**

There were many studies indicates the relationship between parents and school in achieving good academic and co-curricular activities. In achieving a good collaboration between teachers, preschool administrators and parents, a strong communication among all parties are important in ensuring a good involvement between parents, preschool teacher and administrators. Young children especially preschoolers require a lot of attention in developing their communication skills among parents and the preschool environment. This is important in building up their self-confidence and knowledge during the preschool year. A strong parenting communication at home and the centre would encourage the children development and increase self-responsibility among parents (Mahmud & Haron, 2017). Clear and precise communication among parents and children at home too would create a strong bond of relation in sending and receiving information clearly towards each other.

Parents involvement at home also plays a major role in shaping the children for the future especially in academic path, social and physical development. Ghani (2006) explained that the role that been played by parents at home would determine the shape of the path that

will be acquired by the children. Concerned parents would create a better environment to shape their children development for a better future. Parents and family members involvement at home in academic and school activities that been conducted would give a positive impact to the children as it can influence them (Kamoo, 2013). Keeping the motivation and continuous moral support in learning is an important process in ensuring the preschoolers manage to gain as much knowledge as they can. Parents play an important role in ensuring the continuous support and motivation towards their children especially during the pandemic MCO period. The motivation and support given would create a positive environment in the children teaching and learning process and develop a better relationship between parents and their children (Zakaria et al., 2013).

### **Teachers' and Administrators' Involvement in Preschool**

School administrators and teachers play an important act and role in running the preschool management smoothly. A good preschool management and leadership would deliver a better effect and implementation towards a better progress. Effective leadership in managing preschool can enhance pedagogical and curriculum development and teachers professional development (Heikka, et al., 2013). Heikka and Suhonen (2019) indicated that pedagogical leadership can be developed as sharing goals and missions as well as mutual values among educators. Teachers also play an active role in leading pedagogical development among them and create strong leadership management in their preschool. Hoslin (2006) mentioned that the importance of school administrators awareness and involvement in every aspects of current education development. This includes parents, teachers and school administrators collaboration in developing the school.

The administrators could create more opportunity for more engagement between the parents and teachers with the school administrators for the children progress. This matter was also concerned by Jeynes (2018) on the active engagement that can be conducted by school administrators to attract more parents to get involved with school activities. School administrators play an important role in engaging and creating collaboration with parents and local community for education development. A strong collaboration among parents, community, teachers and school administrators is important in creating a positive environment in the education system (McDowall & Schaughency, 2016). With a continuous support from the school administrators and teachers in developing the children potential and parents active involvement in school would also create a strong relationship among them and a better academic achievement and social development among the children (Park & Holloway, 2017). Therefore, school administrators and teachers engagement with the parents are important in developing trust and collaboration for children development especially preschoolers in encouraging and portraying a good example and role model for them.

### **Preschool Active Participation**

The increase in preschools enrolment has encourage many parties to create and open preschool centres in the community. The main objective in running these centres is to create awareness among parents about the importance of early exposure for children towards social development and early academic exposure. Parents can enrol their children as early as 4 years old for them to play and learn at the same time in any preschool or kindergarten as there were many private centres are available to cater the needs of the early education in the community

(Mustafa et al., 2014). Ismail (2009) explained that active preschoolers during their preschool year would encourage active involvement, participation and readiness before they enter their primary year in any school. Preschool is a good platform for parents to enrol their children to develop their social interaction as well as a preparation for academic and co-curricular activities development (Shabnam, 2003). It is a well-prepared platform for parents to encourage their children to enjoy their schooling years as early as preschool year. Parents can observe and recognize their children improvement during the preschool year till primary schooling years. Cognitive development among children is strongly related to their physiology development and experience that has been through since they were young. The changes were also related to their interaction between genetic and their own environment (Nachiappan, 2015). Thus, active participation among the preschoolers during their preschool year in the centres will help to develop their experience and prepare them for the education system.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses phenomenology research in developing the understanding of the real-life experience in knowing the real situation of an event or situation. A qualitative research design by using interview and observation was conducted in this study to develop the understanding of the real situation happening during the MCO period. The interview was conducted among the preschool teacher, administrators and parents in understanding their roles in assisting their children in the preschool during the MCO period. Ten participants were chosen with their consent from a government preschool. The interview session was conducted separately and unstructured as the study was intent to help to understand the current situation happening. This is also important by simplifying the questions given to the participants involved as it will help the participants to give more rich information about the situation (Creswell, 2009). Besides that, the participants agreed to be confidential as part of the research ethics and a copy of the study was given to the preschool management personnel as reference. All participants were label as participant A till J.

Structured observation was conducted to examine the preschoolers' action in understanding on how the new norm should be conducted in the preschool centre during the MCO period. A checklist with 12 observation details to observe the behaviour and attitude of the participants was prepared. Structured observation focuses more on the general patterns and behaviour of the participants involved in the study as the researcher does not directly involved in the situation. It is also important in understanding and interpret of how people create and maintain their social situation (Neuman, 2014).

In this study, individual interview session was conducted among the chosen preschoolers parents from the selected preschool to identify parents' role in assisting their children and their preschool centre in developing their understanding in teaching and learning process including adhering to the guidelines and SOPs during the MCO period. Another interview session was conducted to the teacher and preschool administration to develop understanding on their readiness and preparation towards the SOPs given by the government. Meanwhile, structured observation with a prepared checklist in a preschool classroom during MCO period was conducted to observe the preschoolers behaviour in applying the new norm and SOPs guidelines during teaching and learning process.

## RESULTS

### Parents Involvement in Preschool during MCO Period

#### a. Communication

During the pandemic MCO period commenced, every parents are trying their best in ensuring their children education progress including the preschoolers. However, since the commencement of the Enhanced Movement Control Order (EMCO) preschool centres need to close their operation until further notice given by the government. In this study, it was found that every parent-obeyed the rules and regulations based on the SOPs given by the government. The closure of the preschool centre for the time being during the EMCO has encouraged parents in ensuring their children to stay at home and continue their learning progress at home. Online medium communication such as WhatsApp helps the teacher to send any information and update to the parents in a short time.

*“As parents we need to understand and cannot blame anyone. Just follow the order and always ask the teacher about the children work. We just help at home”* (Participant A)

*“We have our own WhatsApp group with the teacher and all parents. Anything we just ask and update there.”* (Participant B)

*“I need to get updates from the teacher or I will have nothing to do with my children at home.”*(Participant E)

Communication between parents, preschool centre management and teacher in getting information and clarification regarding the situation were seen as excellent because everyone able to develop a strong communication and understanding among parents, preschool management and the teacher.

#### b. Completing Tasks and Activities

Besides, parents play a major role in assisting their children in completing any activities or tasks given by their teacher at home. Finding shows that, parents were able to help and assist their children in managing and completing the tasks given from their teacher. The responses given by parents were exceptional as the parents were eager to assist their children in completing the tasks given. Parents also may ask, give suggestions or opinion and update their children progress to the teacher through WhatsApp communication as the teacher is ready and willing to assist the parents in ensuring the teaching and learning process were conducted smoothly at home. The teacher also guided the parents in understanding and completing the task given for their children.

*“I’m helping my son to complete his homework. I also work from home, so I can help him with it.”* (Participant C)

*“I can help my child with the work given, but if I’m busy I will ask his brother or sister to help. No problem with it.”* (Participant D)

*“My daughter can do the homework given alone, but I always have a look at her work so it is correct.” (Participant F)*

### **c. Motivation and Support**

The motivation and continuous support from parents to the children is important in maintaining the children motivation to keep learning at home during the MCO period. As physical and outdoor education is one of the most important aspect in children social development, parents need to ensure their children social development were foster too at home. Many additional activities and hands-on involvement can be conducted to develop their children motivation to keep their enjoyment in learning at home.

*“I always congratulate my kid if she’s able to do her work and finish it. She is also happy with it.” (Participant B)*

*“For me, I prepared a bit of tidbit or snacks for my boy to do his work. This would encourage him to do his work.” (Participant D)*

Parents reported that they managed to keep maintaining their children motivation at home as they also had a good time together playing and completing the tasks given. They also supported their children by giving them praises and complement them with gift and prizes if their children able to complete the task. This is a good and positive way for the parents to keep their children motivated in the teaching and learning process at home especially during the EMCO order.

## **Preschool Teacher and Administrators Responses**

Schools and preschool centres including government organisations and private institutions were forced to close to ensure the pandemic does not spread in the community especially among young children during the EMCO period. The government also produced a strict SOPs rules and regulations for each of the preschool centres to follow in reopening their preschool centres. The preschool administrators were responsible in ensuring all SOPs rules and regulations were followed and every aspect were fulfilled including the rules for the children to adhere during their stay in the preschool centre. A list of instructions according to the SOPs were listed and given from the Ministry of Education Malaysia for preschool centres for them to prepare and conduct in their premises.

### **a. Preparation**

In this study, finding shows that the preschool administrators and teacher were able to comply the SOPs given and at the same time ensuring the rules and regulations given were followed by parents and preschoolers who attended the centre during the EMCO period. The teacher and administrators made necessary arrangements and preparations to accept preschoolers back to the preschool centre according to the guidelines given. All symbols, labels and markers were prepared clearly and it should be stated obviously around the preschool compound so that it would be easy to be recognised and readable by the

preschoolers. Attendance were recorded and each of the attendee will be scan for their temperature and health safety check.

*“In making sure everything was in good condition, I prepared all the labels and symbol markers to make it easy for the children. This was given in the guidelines and I just prepared it” (Participant G)*

*“Luckily the administrators provided all the materials needed. So I just used all the materials and this can save my money. It just I need to spare some of my time to do all the materials.” (Participant G)*

*“As we need to prepare the all the important things such as the hand wash basin and temperature check points, we prepared it for the preschool centre too. Different from the main school building for other pupils. The preschoolers have their own basin and temperature check point only for them.” (Participant F)*







*Figure 2. Preparation conducted by the teacher and administrators to welcome preschoolers during MCO period.*

Although there were many preparations required such as labels, walking and pathway symbol markers, movement instructions and reminder posters and stickers, the teacher and administrators were able to prepare and display it clearly around the preschool centre for the parents, children and visitors. As for the preschoolers, big and clear posters were required as they can see it clearly and remind them of the importance of following the SOPs according to the new norm act. With the support from the administrators, the teacher burden of preparing the materials were also eased.

#### ***b. Administrators Supervision and Inspection***

On the other hand, administrators play a vital role in ensuring the preschool centre are following all the rules and regulations according to the SOPs given by the government. They need to monitor, instruct and supervise the staff in the preschool centre to ensure all preschoolers and parents were able to follow the SOPs. Regular supervision and inspections by the administrators to the preschool centre in adhering of the SOPs are being followed were essential in assuring all of the new norm acts situation was able to be followed by everyone.

*“I need to always check and go around the preschool compound to make sure everything was in place. The children also must understand why we are doing this. So, I always attend the classroom and have a check and give my advice to them.” (Participant H)*

*“I encouraged my teacher to always update our administrator’s decision in the WhatsApp group so the parents will know the latest update from us. The Parents-Teacher Association is also helping us in distributing information to other parents.” (Participant I)*

*“We also helped our preschool teacher in any ways so that this would ease her burden. As long as it for the children sake, every safety measure given we will follow.” (Participant J)*

There was good communication among the teacher and parents’s in providing updates and latest information regarding the SOPs conducted. This is important as parents will receive the latest updates and information pertaining their children especially about the compliance of SOPs in the preschool centre. Parents were also be seen to be active in their participation in the preschool management during the MCO period as this is the only way for them to get updates on the preschool operation.



*Figure 3. Meetings, discussion and inspection with pre-school administrators, teacher and Parents Teacher Association (PTA) to the pre-school centre.*

**Preschoolers’ Action during MCO Period**

Young children such as preschoolers are still young to understand or at least figure out the situation happening around the world pertaining the pandemic and MCO order. Parents and teacher play a vital role in giving enough information for the children to at least know and realise the situation happening in the country. In assuring the preschoolers were also involved and understand the new norm act and SOPs guidelines that has been given by the government, everyone including parents and teacher are responsible in teaching, modelling and give enough understanding to the preschoolers to follow all the rules given. As for the preschoolers, they need to learn and follow all the new norm acts according to the SOPs. Observation checklist was prepared to see the ability of the preschoolers in obeying the SOPs guidelines given.

Table 1  
*Observation Checklist for Preschoolers in Complying to the SOPs Guidelines.*

	Details	Yes	No
1.	Temperature check upon arrival		
2.	Hand wash before entering premise		
3.	Seat at assigned chair and table		
4.	Receive information and reminder on the importance of following the SOPs guidelines from the teacher		

5. Complete tasks and activities individually
6. No disturbing, movement and touching other classmates
7. Moving around with only teacher permission
8. Queuing with 1 metre distance to toilet
9. Social distancing of 1 metre among classmates
10. Hand wash before and after eating and drinking
11. Use hand sanitiser regularly
12. Hand wash before leaving premise

Table 1 shows the observation checklist that has been prepared to see the preschoolers behaviour and attitude in the preschool centre. Findings show that all preschoolers were able to fulfil all the checklist and obey the guidelines based on the SOPs given. However, the teacher was seen need to always remind the preschoolers about the guidelines, do's and don'ts during their stay in the centre. Nevertheless, the effort in ensuring every preschoolers to obey the rules and regulations should be emphasise for their own health safety.

Besides that, the teacher was able to prepare all the preparation in the preschool centre in assuring the children were able to follow the new norm act rules. Finding shows that the children were able to adhere the rules by following all the labels, symbol markers and posters displayed around the preschool. This making it easier for them to follow. However, the teacher needs to always making reminders and recall the children behaviour and attitude in the classroom regarding the new norm acts. This to ensure that the preschoolers will not forget the guidelines and always follow the guidelines given.



*Figure 4.* Preschoolers applying the guidelines by using the symbol markers provided on the floor and around the preschool centre.

Besides that, the activities and tasks in the classroom were conducted limitedly as there were no touching activities among the children. This is important in assuring there were

limited movement and touching situation between the children. Individual tasks were given to replace group work activities that may increase the interaction and movement among the preschoolers. Although individual activities may give difficulties to the children but with the assistance and guidance from the teacher, the children were able to follow the instructions given in the classroom. The teacher needs to always remind the pupils about the SOPs and the importance of it. Outdoor classroom activities were also cancel and being replaced with indoor games and activities. Nevertheless, the games and activities that being carried out were planned early and emphasised on individual movement instead of grouping actions.



*Figure 5.* Limited seating for each preschoolers as following the social distancing guideline.

For teaching and learning process in the classroom, as there were more individual tasks and activities were given to the preschoolers, the teacher always observed the attitude and behaviour of each children in the classroom. Every child was also assigned with different seatings and complied with the 1 metre distance between seats. Only a maximum of 2 children per table were allowed instead of 4 to 5 children before. This is important as social distancing is one of the most important SOPs that need to be obeyed by everyone.

## **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

Based on the findings, it is important for parents to collaborate hand in hand with the preschool administrators and teacher in getting for more information and updates regarding the guidelines and SOPs that has been lined out by the government for preschool centre to operate during the MCO period. Besides that, parents play a major role in assisting their children in completing the task and activities during MCO period especially during the teaching and learning process at home. It is not deniable as parents could have difficulties in assisting their children at home (Björk & Browne-Ferrigno, 2016). The challenges arise could be managed with communication and interaction among family members at home. However, in this study findings has shown that with the assistance and guidance from the parents at home, the preschoolers were seen to be able to complete the task and at the same time develop their relationship among family members. Continuous support and motivation from parents and family members to their children is also important in keeping the motivation of their children to keep learning at home.

On the other hand, preschool administrators and teacher were responsible to prepare a conducive preschool centre with a strict guidelines based on the SOPs that has been given by the government especially through the Ministry of Education Malaysia. Findings show that the preparation that has been arranged in receiving the preschoolers during the MCO period also need to be taken seriously as it will help the children in following all the guidelines smoothly. Stable administrators' leadership and management in running the school with a strong relationship and communication among parents and teachers will develop more involvement towards the school (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004). By complying to the guidelines given, the preschool centre was able to operate smoothly with regular supervision and inspection form the administrators. Regular supervision and inspections will encourage the teacher to always remind the preschoolers to always follow the guidelines in the centre and update any new information to the administrators and parents regarding the teaching and learning process.

For preschoolers, in adhering all the guidelines based on the SOPs, they need to follow all the instructions given by their teacher at the preschool centre and listen to the advice given by their parents at home. The children behaviour and attitude at the preschool centre were always observed by the teacher to ensure their movement is limited and does not distract other children in the centre. Distraction and unnecessary movement could create another social distancing problem that can cause disobey to the guidelines given. By following all the instructions given and imitate the action that has been portrayed to them by their parents and teacher, this would expose them with a proper action that can be done by them to ensure their health safety. Parents approach and their openness action at home is playing a vital role in developing their children action (Jeynes, 2018). Thus, it is important for the parents to assist the teacher in giving appropriate approach in teaching and learning progress at home. With the help of the teacher and parents, the children were able to follow the guidelines and follow the new norm act in their daily life.

This study is important in showing the effect of a strong involvement of the parents, preschool administrators and teacher in working together for the sake of the preschoolers during the MCO period. Communication, preparation, motivation and support, frequent supervision and inspection and self-development among all parties involved are the keys for a preschool centre to operate smoothly during the MCO period. Thus, the preschoolers would be able to keep their teaching and learning progress remain sustained. The finding of this study is also important in showing to the authorities such as the government especially to the Ministry of Education Malaysia that the preschool centre especially those who are operated under the government institutions were able to adhere and obey the SOPs and guidelines given. The commitment of the preschool administrators, teacher and parents in ensuring all the guidelines were fulfilled should be complimented too as they spent their time and money in helping each other providing all the preparation to overcome the spread of pandemic Covid-19 especially among the children.

On the other hand, future studies could emphasise more on the effects of the preschoolers during the MCO period. Physical traits and emotional stability among the preschoolers is important in helping them to grow healthily especially during the MCO period. Besides that, a qualitative approach research could also be conducted to expand the number of participants in this type of study. More information can be gathered to seek for more diverse and different data according to different location, personality, approach and management.

## CONCLUSION

The pandemic of Covid-19 has changed the way of life for everyone including the preschoolers in adapting the new way of life. New norm acts according to the SOPs guidelines given by the World Health Organisation (WHO) is an important guideline to be adhered by everyone in assuring the pandemic can be stopped from spreading. Self-cleanliness, social distancing and health safety is crucial in maintaining a healthy lifestyle especially during the pandemic situation.

As the government is playing an important role in curbing the pandemic from spreading, everyone is playing a crucial role in applying and implementing all the guidelines given including young children such as preschoolers. Parents, preschool teacher and administrators play a vital role in assuring the new norm acts can be delivered, understandable and comply by the preschoolers too. Preparation in the preschool centre to guide the preschoolers to follow every steps and guidelines by preparing clear symbols and markers is a good way in helping the children to comply with the guidelines. They also act as a role model towards the children in displaying a good example in adhering the guidelines based on the SOPs. A strong communication between parents and preschool teacher and administrators would create a strong collaboration among them for the sake of the children.

Meanwhile, young children such as the preschoolers would imitate the actions that has been displayed to them by their parents and teachers. Thus, a good example should be portrayed to the children as they will follow and apply the behaviour and attitude in their daily life. For them, by listening and understand the instructions given will help them to figure out more the reasons why the new norm acts were conducted. Keeping the motivation and continuous support to the children is another important element in ensuring the children able to keep learning at home during the MCO period. Every effort that being made by the preschoolers should be recognised and complimented as a way for them to develop their social skills especially during this tough time.

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