

## MOOD BOARD: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING ASSESSMENT FOR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS IN CLASSROOM SETTING

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### ABSTRACT

Achieving optimal psychological health has always been an important requirement to develop a holistic human being. With regards to the education ecosystem, especially with the negative impact on physical, psychological, and social challenges that were significantly influenced by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the integral role that the teachers have to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their students has grown exponentially. Despite the existence of multiple validated psychometric instruments, however, to accommodate the unique conditions of the participants, the aim of this study was to explore an interactive approach to assess the psychological wellbeing of special needs students in classroom setting. The development of the Mood Board was generated through reflecting on the psychological construct of the Malaysian Mood Scale, Malaysian Perceived Stress Scale and Malaysian Emotion Regulation Questionnaire. The construct of mood, perceived stress and emotion regulation were incorporated with (i) the traffic light analogy through the colours of red, yellow, and green; (ii) numbering – from one (1) to five (5); and (iii) emotions icons – smiling face with smiling eyes, anxious face, weary face. The participants will rate their current perceived emotional experience through the Mood Board, which can be completed physically and virtually, prior to the start of their respective classes. The opportunity to correspond the tangible data derived from the Mood Board with the real-life psychological, physical, and behavioural indicators expressed by the participants, teachers will have better understanding to observe the signs and reactions of the students and access support to manage their psychological distress. Participants also highlighted that they were more conscious of their mental processes. In general, the implementation of the Mood Board in a classroom setting provides a simple yet informative tool to assess, identify and monitor the psychological status of special need students.

**Keywords:** Mood Board, Psychological Wellbeing, Special Needs, Students

DOI: <https://zenodo.org/record/8336781>

Published by: <https://publication.seameosen.edu.my/index.php/icse/issue/view/5>

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The learning and teaching process in classroom settings are integral in the development of students towards achieving education in improving quality of life, developing into a successful member of the society, and contributing actively to the future of the country (Ministry of Education, 2013). Besides emphasizing on the education performance in academic areas, the productive progress in achieving optimal psychological well-being is also an important facet to develop a holistic human being that can contribute to the harmony and successfully establishment of self, family, community, society, and country.

Observing sustained implications for students (Camacho-Zuñiga et al., 2021) and with the rise of significant negative impact on the physical, social, and psychological challenges faced by the special need students (Aishworiya & Kang, 2021; Bruhn et al., 2022) and educators (Hirsch et al., 2021) that was influenced by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the role and responsibility of special need teachers to support the mental health and psychological wellbeing of their students through social, emotional, behavioural support and learning services is of timely importance.

It was acknowledged that students with special needs may have different requirements from normal students with regards to communication patterns, social behaviour, sensory, neural, physical, and psychological characteristics (Abdullah & Omar, 2018; Mohamed, 2005). As cited in Jais et al (2021), the study of Ratnam, Alias, and Toran (2018) highlighted the importance for agencies and organizations from multidisciplinary settings in Malaysia to collaborate and cooperate to support the students in the behavioural, social, and emotional management. Therefore, creative modification in the teaching and learning methods will enhance the acceptance of the students through the formation of positive behaviours and improve achievements of the special need students (Hussein et al., 2020). The professionals involved with special needs education are encouraged to be creative and innovative with the development of appropriate teaching aids (Salleh, 2018), which will attract the attention of the students. Establishing a consistent, organized, and respectful learning environment that incorporates teaching of social skills and offering students to practice appropriate behaviours, guided by specific feedbacks can help in the promotion of students' social and emotional well-being (McLeskey, 2017).

## **RESEARCH PURPOSE**

As acknowledged in the study of Hattie & Timperley (2007), consistent and positive usage of feedback can have a productive impact on the students' educational and social engagement. Therefore, to accommodate the unique conditions of the participants in an appropriate, safe, caring, respectful, and culturally relevant manner, the aim of this study was to develop an interactive feedback approach to assess and monitor the psychological wellbeing of special needs students in classroom setting. The participants' insight on the implementation of the instrument, the quality of administration, and understanding of individualized psychological status will also be explored.

## METHODOLOGY

The main instrument of this study is the Mood Board, which was developed by integrating the psychological construct of the Intellectual Disability Mood Scale (IDMS; Argus et al., 2004), Malaysian Mood Scale (MASMS; Lew et al., 2022, 2023), Malaysian Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (M-ERQ; Lew et al., 2021), and Malaysian Perceived Stress Scale (M-PSS; Lew et al., 2021). The MASMS, M-ERQ and M-PSS are Malay-language translated and validated assessment tools of the Brunel Mood Scale (BRUMS; Terry & Lane, 2010), Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ; Gross & John, 2003) and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen et al., 1983).

The core elements of the Mood Board which consists of mood, emotional regulation, and perceived stress were presented through:

1. The colours of red, yellow, and green using the traffic light analogy (refer Figure 1)
2. Three emotions icons consist of smiling face with smiling eyes, anxious face, weary face (refer Figure 2)
3. Numbering from one (1) to (5) with ascending order in sizes (refer Figure 3).

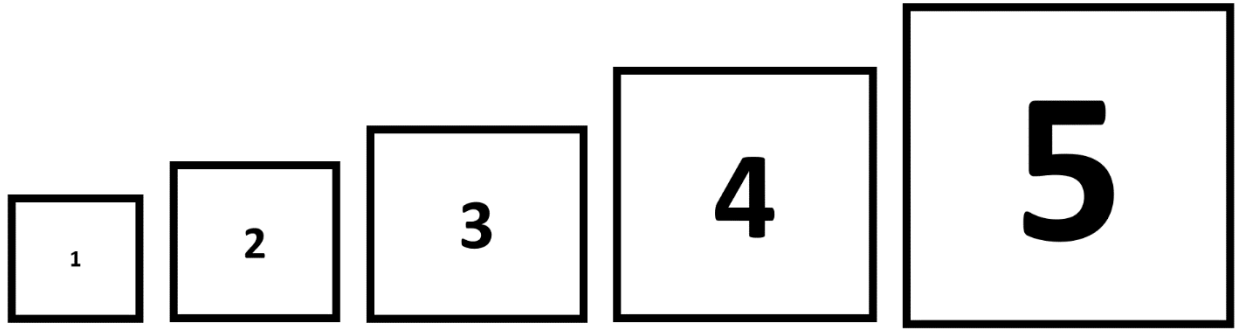
**Figure 1:** *Mood Board – Traffic Light*



**Figure 2:** *Mood Board – Emotion Icons*



**Figure 3:** *Mood Board – Stress Numbering*






All the participants of this study were special need students who are studying in Program Pendidikan Khas Integrasi (PPKI) Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Miharja. The objective of the Mood Board was explained to the participants and informed consent was obtained prior to the commencement of the activity. To address the potential problems regarding scale content among people with disabilities that were highlighted by Finlay and Lyons (2001), the inclusion of visual aids and the guidance of the researchers on the comprehensibility of items provided better clarity to the participants. Each participant rated their current perceived emotional experience and psychological status through responding to the elements in the Mood Board. Their responses were collected prior to the start of their respective classes. The researchers also administered systematic observational methods and post-event feedback interviews to obtain the relevant information.

## **RESULTS AND FINDING**

### *Observation*

Based on the systematic observation conducted during the study, the researchers identified multiple behavioural and psychological indicators that the participants expressed during the classroom education sessions, which corresponded with the input provided in the Mood Board. The correlated outcomes of Mood Board's responses and behavioural – psychological indicators were presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Corresponding real life behavioural and psychological indicators with the responses on the Mood Board.

Mood Board			Indicators	
Traffic Light	Emotion Icon	Stress Numbering	Behavioural	Psychological
Green		<div style="display: flex; gap: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30px; text-align: center;">1</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30px; text-align: center;">2</div> </div>	Physically energetic and looking forward towards activities, confident to try and explore	Happy, Excitement, Joy, Calm, Proud
Yellow		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; width: 60px; text-align: center; margin: 0 auto;">3</div>	Slightly irritated, lower energy levels, inconsistent response patterns	Anxious, Nervous, Boredom, Uncertain
Red		<div style="display: flex; gap: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30px; text-align: center;">4</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 30px; text-align: center;">5</div> </div>	Avoiding interaction with others, fatigue, aggressive engagement, difficult to concentrate	Sad, Angry, Mad, Scared, Frustrated

### Feedback Interview

A summary of the feedback obtained from the interviews was recorded, analyzed and tabulated.

**Table 2:** Results of the feedback from the samples after the study was conducted.

Feedback Questions		Yes	No
1.	Can you understand the purpose of the Mood Board?	38	0
2.	Is the Mood Board fun and exciting to use?	38	0
3.	Can you understand your emotions and feelings better after doing the Mood Board?	38	0
4.	Would you be interested to do the Mood Board again before class begins?	38	0

Based on results presented in Table 2, it was identified that the objectives of this study were successfully achieved as all participants provided positive feedback on the understanding of the Mood Board's purpose, the fun and exciting use of Mood Board, and being able to understand their emotions and feelings better. Participants also highlighted that they were more conscious of their mental processes. They also showed overwhelming interest in conducting the Mood Board again prior to class sessions.

Through the tangible data derived from the Mood Board and observable corresponding real-life physical and behavioural indicators expressed by the participants, the special need teachers will have better understanding in observing the signs and the reaction of the students in classroom setting. It also works as a pre-session monitoring and preparation to guide the students to be in an optimal psychological status to study and learn by prompting questions (e.g., how are you

feeling today; what makes you choose this?) to reflect on the current perspective of the students. Teachers can access support and identify effective strategies and resources to support the students who experienced psychological distress to maximize student's wellbeing. The outcome of the Mood Board can also potentially be used as a summative reporting template through integration of creative arts (Cumming & Maxwell, 2014).

## Conclusions

The development and implementation of the Mood Board in a classroom setting provides a simple yet informative tool to assess, identify, and monitor the individualized psychological status of special need students in a fun and integrative way. It provides adequate information to teachers and students to generate relevant strategies in improving communication, generate follow-up enquiry opportunities to create an engaging educational process. Being empowered to understand their mental status and maintaining an optimal psychological wellbeing also helps to enhance the learning process and improve overall performance of special need students.

## Acknowledgement

Special thanks to all the PPKI teachers, administrators, students' management assistants (PPM), students and parents of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Miharja who provided their cooperation in participating actively in this study.

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