

# **Support Systems, Strategies, and Self-Efficacy of Preschool Teachers in Handling Separation Anxiety**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study aimed to ascertain the support system, strategies, and self-efficacy of preschool teachers in handling learners' separation anxiety. It also determined the significant relationship between the support system and preschool teachers' self-efficacy. It also determined if there is a significant relationship between the strategies and the preschool teachers' self-efficacy. Descriptive and correlational method was used in the study. Moreover, the quantitative results were supported by a qualitative interview with the preschool teachers. The respondents of the study were the 127 preschool teachers in Sarangani Division. The instrument used was a researcher-made questionnaire validated by the experts and was pilot tested. The results showed that the teachers' support system was a moderate extent. Also, they have used overprotection, avoidance reinforcement, encouragement, and rewards to handle learners' separation anxiety to a great extent. Additionally, their self-efficacy is to a high extent. Lastly, the teachers shared the following success stories: enjoying the company of the learners, being a resourceful preschool teacher, showing love and compassion towards the learners, collaborating with the learners, and extending their Patience for the learners. Based on the results, the researcher developed an intervention program dubbed PROJECT SEPAX.

**Keywords** — Education, separation anxiety, self-efficacy, support system, strategies, Sarangani, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

Separation anxiety in children has been studied to figure out what might be causing it. Most research has connected separation anxiety to parental relationships and parenting methods. Parental overprotection, for example, has been linked to separation anxiety in children. Children are prohibited from exploring the world around them due to their parents' overprotection, limiting their opportunities to face unfamiliar situations. It also contributes to a lack of self-assurance. Separation anxiety is known to be linked to parental intrusiveness. If parents provide needless assistance to their child who is intended to be undertaking the activities independently, the youngster's mastery of skills is limited, resulting in dependency on adults (Mofrad et al., 2009).

Separation anxiety may be anchored on the study of Bowlby and Ainsworth (1991), in which they collaborated on their proposition regarding attachment theory. John Bowlby developed the theory's basic tenets by drawing on ideas from ethology, cybernetics, information processing, developmental psychology, and psychoanalysts. The author thus transformed our understanding of a child's attachment to his or her mother and its disruption resulting from separation, deprivation, or bereavement.

In Poland, children with separation anxiety disorder exhibit varying degrees of avoidant behavior that correlate with the severity of their symptoms. This anxiety in adolescents and schoolchildren significantly interferes with their daily lives and developmental tasks. Children with separation anxiety disorder are brought to the clinician when SAD results in school refusal or embarrassing somatic symptoms. When analyzing responses to shown images relative to controls, children with anxiety disorders experience more excellent negative emotional responses to the presented images. They are less successful at applying reappraisals but show their ability to reduce their negative emotions and feelings following reappraisal. They also may report less frequent use of reappraisal in everyday life (Wald et al., 2018).

On the other hand, in Indonesia, a study by Niman et al. (2021) on the prevalence of separation anxiety disorders employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive design. The model Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorders (SCARED) was used, which included 41 questions, and the instrument's

Reliability and Validity were 0.81 and 0.67, respectively. This study included 135 students from private elementary schools. The results suggested that health workers, teachers, and parents must collaborate to manage anxiety in elementary students. Furthermore, nurses working in community primary health must collaborate with counseling and guidance teachers to provide preventive and promotional interventions through the school's mental health services. Teachers have a variety of ways of dealing with their children with separation anxiety. They concentrated on the child's activities. They used a sense of humor in their classes. So far, no studies have been done to back up the usefulness of these strategies for children with separation anxiety. These could be the bases for future exploration directions of further studies.

Furthermore, teachers took the initiative to get to know and understand their pupils with separation anxiety by conducting a background check, although the intervention is not well defined. Educators are currently examining their children with possible mental health problems and discussing them with their parents. However, working on interventions with the parents and providing local mental health resources are not obvious (Giannakopoulos et al., 2014).

The preschool teachers in the Division of Sarangani also deal with learners with separation anxiety. Every learner displays different manifestations of separation anxiety which has also challenged preschool teachers in different schools across the country. Some learners cried during the class; some were uncomfortable attending class without their parents. There are already many studies concerning clinical interventions for children experiencing separation anxiety. However, fewer studies explored the support that preschool teachers get, their strategies in handling learners who have separation anxiety, and their self-efficacy. It is the gap that this research would like to fill in. The study would like to determine the self-efficacy, support system received, and strategies of preschool teachers in the Sarangani Division in handling learners with separation anxiety. The success stories of the preschool teachers in handling learners' separation anxiety will also be included.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study's main objective was to ascertain the extent of preschool teachers' support system, efficacy, and strategies in handling learners' separation anxiety to propose an intervention program to help them.

Specifically, it aimed to (1) ascertain the extent of the support system in terms of professional learning and community partnerships, (2) determine the extent of

strategies employed by preschool teachers in terms of overprotection, sanction, avoidance reinforcement, and reward, and (3) measure the extent of preschool teachers' self-efficacy in terms of behavioral and instructional management. The preschool teachers' experiences in handling the separation anxiety of the learners were also noted. An intervention program was then developed after carefully analyzing the results of this study.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study utilized a quantitative research method. Descriptive design was used to identify the strategies used by preschool teachers in handling learners with separation anxiety. On the other hand, correlation design was utilized to know if there is a significant relationship between the support systems that the preschool teachers received and their self-efficacy. A descriptive study's purpose is to characterize a phenomenon and its characteristics. The study is more interested in what happened than how or why it happened. As a result, data is frequently gathered using observation and survey methods. Data may be collected intuitively in such studies, but it is frequently examined quantitatively (Gall et al., 1996).

On the other hand, this study also employs a correlational research design. Correlational research looks into various topics, such as the nature of the link between two or more variables and the theoretical model that could be constructed and tested to explain the correlations that occur (Creswell & Zhang, 2009).

### Research Site

The study was conducted among the Preschool Teachers in the Division of Sarangani. The division has seven municipalities: Alabel, Glan, Kiamba, Maasim, Malapatan, Maitum, and Malungon. It means that all of the preschool teachers were the respondents of the study about support systems, strategies, and self-efficacy in handling separation anxiety. The researcher chose it as the locale because it has the most appropriate respondents from the said schools in the division.

### Participants

The study's respondents were the purposefully selected preschool teachers in the Division of Sarangani. The respondents were those preschool teachers who are permanent employees of the Department of Education, Sarangani Division.

They have been teaching for more than a year and are still teaching preschool this school year, 2021-2022. The researcher used purposive sampling as the sampling procedure. It carefully selected the preschool teachers in the Division of Sarangani to be utilized as the respondents. The preschool teachers must have been teaching for more than five years to qualify as the respondents in the study. The researcher selected 30% of the entire population of preschool teachers in each municipality. A total of 127 preschool teachers were utilized in this study.

### **Instrumentation**

The questionnaires to be used in this study were self-made questionnaires. The researcher prepared questions that were subjected to the validation process. The respondents chose the range one to five depending on the options that corresponded to their choice.

The researcher ensured that relevant research instruments were prepared to gather the needed data in this study. Before the utilization of the questionnaires, it was first validated by a group of experts to ensure the reliability of the materials. The validators were those who were Doctors of Education. Three validators checked the validity of the questionnaires prepared. A tool for the validation process was prepared.

After the validation process, the researcher incorporated and carefully checked all the suggestions of the validators. After incorporating all the suggestions of the validators, the researcher conducted pilot testing on 15 preschool teachers to ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaires prepared. The researcher used Cronbach's Alpha for the reliability of the entire instrument.

### **Research Ethics Protocol**

Since this research study involved preschool teachers, they were initially hesitant to disclose information out of fear. However, as part of research rigor, several safeguards were employed, assuring the informants of its secrecy and non-disclosure measure, wiping out their fears, and establishing trust and confidence. The researcher ensured that the study was guided by ethical principles, and these are respect for persons, beneficence, justice, and confidentiality. Respect for Persons was observed in this study because the respondents were not forced to participate. They were given the prerogative to accept the invitation to participate or not. Beneficence was observed in this study since the results will be shared with those individuals who can benefit from the outcomes and recommendations of this research. Justice was observed in this study since the respondents were also

given tokens as a simple way of showing appreciation for the efforts they exerted. Confidentiality was observed in this study because the participants' right to data privacy was respected. Their names and other personal information were not disclosed.

### **Data Collection**

For the successful conduct of the study, the following steps were followed by the researcher: First, the researcher secured a letter of approval Graduate School Dean of Notre Dame of Dadiangas University. Another letter of approval was given to the Schools Division Superintendent of Sarangani Division; the same letter of approval was secured from the district supervisors of the seven municipalities of Sarangani. The researcher first ensured that a set of experts validated the questionnaires to be used in the study. The experts used a validation tool accurately to assess the reliability and validity of the questionnaires prepared. It is to make sure that the data gathered are accurate.

After securing all the needed documents, the researcher began preparing all the necessary questionnaires. The researcher ensured that the preschool teachers' right to confidentiality and data privacy, as mandated by the Data Privacy Act, was the utmost consideration in this research. During the study, the researcher and the respondents observed proper health protocols mandated by the Department of Health. The respondents wore face masks and face shields and sanitized their hands from time to time. They observed two-meter physical or social distancing. The results from the accomplished questionnaires were verified, checked, and tallied. After all the tallying and validating of results, these were analyzed and interpreted in line with the purpose of the study.

### **Statistical Techniques**

Since the research used descriptive research design, it used means to interpret the data gathered during the survey. Also, since it aimed to correlate if there is a significant relationship between support systems gained by the preschool teachers and their self-efficacy, the Pearson-r moment correlation was utilized as a statistical tool. The qualitative data on the success stories of preschool teachers in handling learners' separation anxiety were interpreted using thematic analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 presents the support system received by the teachers in handling learners' separation anxiety. Two (2) indicators were measured in this variable: the first one is professional learning, and the second is community partnerships.

It could be gleaned from the results that with the area mean of 2.30, the teachers have received support in handling learners' separation anxiety in terms of professional learning to a less extensive extent. On the other hand, it could be noted that with an area mean of 2.84, preschool teachers have received a moderately extensive amount of community support in handling learners' separation anxiety. Interestingly, the teachers have received a pervasive amount of community support in helping them communicate with the parents of their learners.

Table 1. *Support System Received By the Teachers in Handling Separation Anxiety*

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
A. Professional Learning	2.30	Less Extensive
B. Community Partnership	3.11	Moderately Extensive
Overall Mean	2.84	Moderately Extensive

Additionally, with an overall mean of 2.84, preschool teachers have received support systems to a moderate extent. The teachers and the parents may have a strong partnership that helped them to collaboratively work on communicating with the parents of the learners with separation anxiety.

The results corroborated by the findings that several studies have been conducted to discover effective teacher professional development techniques, particularly in collaborative settings. There appears to be some agreement on broad strategies for improving teacher learning and development, such as active learning, teamwork, sharing experiences, reflection, and activities that focus on content knowledge and are close to teachers' classroom practice. The challenge is implementing these strategies in specific settings to help teachers grow in a specific direction. When curriculum innovation incorporates new content and methodology, specific measures must be implemented to assist instructors in concurrent learning and teaching. Furthermore, McArdle and Courtts (2010) stated that reflections on teachers' work are frequently the focus of professional development, with particular emphasis placed on participation in collaborative settings. However, when teachers reflect alone and encounter no challenges

to their ideas, this contemplation may be perceived as shallow, technical, and insufficiently critical. Teachers may become defensive when asked to open up about their established practice when asked to reflect on it. Opportunities for teachers to read and discuss a new curriculum with their colleagues would benefit them, allowing them to express their thoughts and conclusions to themselves and others. As a result, professional development for instructors should ideally take place in collaborative PD programs. Furthermore, a fundamental purpose of such an activity would be for teachers to participate openly and actively with a curriculum guide.

Table 2 presents the strategies employed by preschool teachers in handling their learners' separation anxiety. There were four (4) indicators in this area which include the following: overprotection, encouragement, avoidance reinforcement, and reward.

Table 2. Strategies of Teachers in Handling Separation Anxiety

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
A. Overprotection		
Area Mean	3.61	Highly Extensive
B. Encouragement	3.74	Highly Extensive
C. Avoidance Reinforcement	3.23	Moderately Extensive
D. Rewards	3.56	Highly Extensive
Overall Mean	3.53	Highly Extensive

The results revealed that with an area mean of 3.74, they used encouragement to handle learners' separation anxiety to a high extent. The preschool teachers used almost all of the indicators to a high extent. With an area mean of 3.61, preschool teachers used overprotection to handle learners' separation anxiety to a high extent. However, it was evident that they only encouraged learners to avoid separation anxiety to a moderate extent. Also, with an are mean of 3.56, it was found that the preschool teachers used rewards to handle learners' separation anxiety to a high extent. Lastly, with the area of 3.23, it was revealed that preschool teachers used avoidance reinforcement to handle learners' separation anxiety to a moderate extent. The teachers were using almost all of the mentioned strategies to a moderate extent except for letting the learners with separation anxiety perform their activities which they were utilizing to a high extent. Finally, with an overall mean of 3.53, the preschool teachers used overprotection, encouragement, avoidance reinforcement, and rewards to a high extent. The



results suggest that the teachers frequently used enumerated strategies to handle the learners' separation anxiety. However, preschool teachers were only using avoidance reinforcement to a moderate extent. It may be because the teachers recognize the fact that there were learners who have separation anxiety and that they need to deal with it.

The results were supported by the findings that, As stated in the 1987 Philippine Constitution (Article XV, Section 3), the Philippine government is doing its best to protect children's rights to assistance, including appropriate care and nutrition, as well as special safeguards against all forms of abandonment, mistreatment, cruelty, exploitation, and other conditions which has an effect to their development (2). The first of these agencies is the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), whose mission is to set standards, accredit and consult public and private institutions, organizations, and individuals engaged in social welfare activities, as well as monitor and enforce compliance with standards (Yacat, 2011).

Furthermore, various government agencies in the Philippines are concerned with the welfare of children, including the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the government's primary welfare agency whose role is to establish principles, recognize, and provide consultative services to public and private institutions, organizations, and individuals engaged in social welfare activities. It recognizes, as does the Department of Education that cases of abuse may emerge in a school setting due to the problematic situations teachers and other authorities encounter inside and outside the school. As a result, the Child Protection Policy was implemented to provide special protection to children who are threatened or endangered by conditions that affect their normal progress and development and over which they have no control, as well as to assist the responsible agencies in their rehabilitation (No, D. O. (40). series 2012).

The findings were also supported by the notion that only a few studies have directly examined educators' perspectives on anxiety difficulties in elementary school. In 2012, the Canadian Teachers' Federation surveyed over 3,900 teachers across Canada in collaboration with the Mental Health Commission of Canada. The results indicated that most teachers believed mental health issues such as stress, ADHD, anxiety, and depression were severe concerns in their schools. According to "87 percent of teachers," "a lack of proper staff training in dealing with children's mental illness is a possible impediment to delivering mental health services for pupils in their schools." The TDSB discovered that "anxiety" was the top worry for 44% of those polled in a 2012 study of 900 employees.

To address this widespread concern, the school board developed a mental health strategy in 2013 to provide professional development and training on the mental health topics of anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicide to 100% of school staff, including administrators, teachers, and support staff, by June 2015 (Wuyts et al., 2017).

Table 3 presents the teachers' self-efficacy in handling learners' separation anxiety. There were two indicators in this variable: behavioral Management and Instructional Management. Each of the indicators has five (5) sub-indicators.

Table 3. Self-efficacy of Teachers in Handling Separation Anxiety

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
Behavioral Management	4.04	Highly Extensive
Instructional Management	3.69	Highly Extensive
Overall Mean	3.86	Highly Extensive

It could be noted from the results that with the area mean of 4.04, the teachers' self-efficacy in terms of behavioral management is at a high extent across all of the identified indicators. On the other hand, with the area mean of 3.69, the preschool teachers' self-efficacy in terms of instructional management is at a high extent. Moreover, with an overall mean of 3.86, preschool teachers' self-efficacy in behavioral and instructional management is to a high extent. It means that although there were learners who displayed symptoms of separation anxiety in the class, preschool teachers still had high self-efficacy.

Discussed in the table is the significant relationship between the support system received by preschool teachers in handling learners with separation anxiety and their self-efficacy. Also included in the table are the *r* and *p*-value and the interpretation of the result.

Table 4. Relationship between Support System and Self-Efficacy and the Relationship between Strategies and Self-Efficacy

<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	Interpretation	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	Interpretation
0.43	<0.01	Highly Significant	0.63	<0.01	Highly Significant

It could be gleaned from the results that with an *R*-value of 0.43 and a *p*-value of <0.01, there was a highly significant relationship between preschool teachers' gained support system and their self-efficacy. It also means that there was

a strong positive relationship between the support system and the self-efficacy of the preschool teacher in handling learners' separation anxiety. Furthermore, the better the support system is given to the preschool teachers, the higher their self-efficacy of the teachers would become.

The result aligns with the finding that, for example, self-efficacy may increase motivation and aid in the selection of more complex tasks. High self-efficacy influences the meaning given to situational characteristics, which influences how people feel and act and how they think. Across many occupations, high self-efficacy predicts better adaptability to one's environment and lower levels of strain and burnout. In contrast, a negative relationship between self-efficacy and burnout has been discovered for teachers. Low self-efficacy, on the other hand, has been linked to workplace sadness and anxiety (Millear, 2013).

Furthermore, few studies have examined teacher efficacy through the lens of competence support. Instead of feeling incompetent and ineffectual, competence entails feeling effective and capable of achieving specific results and being masterful in one's activities. According to self-determination theory, the demand for competence is universally relevant to all people and cultures. In the current study, work on social cognitive theory and teacher efficacy is combined with self-determination theory competence support (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Additionally, as revealed in the table, with an R-value of 0.63 and a p-value of  $<0.01$ , it was found that the relationship between the strategies employed by preschool teachers in handling learners' separation anxiety and their self-esteem is highly significant. It means a strong positive relationship existed between the two (2) variables. Thus, it implies that the more teachers use the identified strategies in handling learners' separation anxiety, the better their self-efficacy.

This finding is supported by the discovery that quality is a broad concept with many connotations. In the short and long term, quality environments improve children's cognitive, social, and emotional outcomes. Previous research examined characteristics thought to improve child outcomes. Family factors, teacher behaviors, classroom climate, and teacher-child relationships are all part of early childhood pedagogy and programs. Furthermore, research has consistently shown that higher-quality early development programs provide children with greater social and emotional benefits. Process quality is critical in higher-quality programs, according to this study (Tondeur et al., 2017).

### Experiences of Preschool Teachers

The preschool teachers were also interviewed about their success stories in handling learners' separation anxiety. This part presents the central themes with

the verbatim statements coming from the participants. Five (5) significant themes emerged in the success stories of the preschool teachers in handling learners' separation anxiety: Enjoying Each Other's Company, Resourcefulness is the Key, Showing Love and Compassion, Collaborating with Others in Any Way, and Extending Patience is a Great Help.

#### *Theme 1: Enjoying Each Other's Company*

The first central theme that emerged from the success stories of preschool teachers in handling learners' separation anxiety was enjoying the company of others. The preschool teachers exposed learners who showed symptoms of Separation Anxiety to their close friends so that they would have their support system. Some teachers have even used the "buddy-buddy" system to manage learners' symptoms of separation anxiety. Additionally, some teachers bring their learners wherever they go just to make them feel that they are not alone.

During the interview, the preschool teachers pointed out that handling separation anxiety is challenging and that one of the things they have done is to let the children enjoy the company of others to minimize their symptoms of separation anxiety.

#### *Theme 2: Resourcefulness is the Key*

The second central theme that emerged from the experiences of preschool teachers in handling learners' separation anxiety was that resourcefulness is the key. Teachers used their resourcefulness and innovativeness to develop activities to help them manage their learners' separation anxiety.

#### *Theme 3: Showing Love and Compassion*

The following central theme that emerged from the preschool teachers' success stories on how they successfully managed their learners' separation anxiety was showing love and compassion towards the learners. Preschool learners who show symptoms of separation anxiety need to be given a sufficient amount of love and compassion to feel that they are in a safe and motivating environment where they are being understood and loved.

#### *Theme 4: Collaborating with others in Any Way*

The fourth central theme that came out of the success stories of the preschool teachers in handling their learners' separation anxiety was collaborating with others in any way. The teachers have shared that they are constantly collaborating with the parents of the preschool learners when they have concerns about the

learners, especially those who show symptoms of separation anxiety. The teachers were also seeking the help of their colleagues to manage their learners' separation anxiety.

#### *Theme 5: Extending Patience is a Great Help*

The last central theme that emerged in the success stories of preschool teachers in handling learners' separation anxiety was that extending Patience is a great help. There were times when the learners tested the teachers' Patience, especially when they showed extreme symptoms of Separation Anxiety. Thus, there is a need for preschool teachers to extend their Patience so they do manage the learner's separation anxiety positively.

### **CONCLUSION**

The preschool teachers' support system in handling learners' separation anxiety is to a moderate extent. This area could still be improved. Teachers may strive more to encourage more support systems in terms of their professional learning and community partnerships. They were always using overprotection, encouragement, avoidance reinforcement, and rewards in handling their learners' separation anxiety. Other strategies that were shared by the seasoned teachers may also be adopted by other teachers. The preschool teachers' self-efficacy in terms of behavioral and instructional management is high. Despite encountering various issues regarding their learners' separation anxiety, the teachers still managed to maintain their high self-efficacy. There was a positive relationship between the teachers' received support system and their self-efficacy in handling learners' separation anxiety and the teachers' utilization of the strategies in handling learners' separation anxiety and their self-efficacy; lastly, the teachers have shared various stories in handling learners' separation anxiety. The stories shared by the preschool teachers focused on: enjoying the company of the learners, being resourceful preschool teachers, showing love and compassion towards the learners, collaborating with the learners, and extending their Patience for the learners. These rich stories may suggest contemporary preschool teachers love their job more and become passionate teachers.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The support system to be given to the preschool teachers must be improved so that they will have a higher level of self-efficacy in handling learners' separation

anxiety since it was found that there was a high positive significant relationship between the two variables. The teachers must also use various strategies in handling learners' separation anxiety because it was also found to have a highly positive relationship with their self-efficacy. The kindergarten teachers must be given relevant seminars, training, and workshops in handling learners' separation anxiety since it was found that they were at a less extensive level in terms of professional learning.

The community shall also be encouraged to support preschool teachers, especially in handling learners' separation anxiety. Teachers shall have separate training and seminars on the current trends in handling learners' separation anxiety, including the current strategies for handling learners with symptoms of separation anxiety. The success stories of the preschool teachers in Sarangani Division shall also be shared with the teachers across the country, for this may serve as their basis in crafting programs that will help enhance the quality of services in Early Childhood Education.

### **PROJECT SepAx: Enhancing Teachers' Knowledge and Gaining Necessary Support in Dealing with Learners' Separation Anxiety**

Welcome to PROJECT SepAx! This innovation will help you broaden your knowledge in handling your learners' separation anxiety. This program is a 4—day activity that will help enhance teachers' knowledge and gain the necessary support that kindergarten teachers need in handling kindergarten learners' separation anxiety.

Identified participants of the program are all kindergarten teachers in the Schools Division Office of Sarangani Province. The topics to be discussed during the duration of the program are the following: Recent Separation Anxiety Management Practices in Kindergarten, Dealing with Learners' Separation Anxiety in the Case of Last Mile Schools and Providing Necessary Support for Kindergarten Teachers.

After the conduct of the program, participants will be given Certificates of Completion. Also, the following requirements must be complied with before distributing the certificates: Program Portfolio and proposed localized innovation to improve management of learners' separation anxiety.

## RATIONALE

Separation anxiety is relatively common in the early years of a child's development when children are separated from their parents or caregivers, and it is widespread in younger children at school. Countless crying children (understandably) distressed by their impending separation from their beloved parents have passed through humble classroom doors all over the country.

Separation anxiety is defined by the American Academy of Pediatrics as "the distress that children show when separated from their primary caregivers." In young children, separation anxiety is considered a normal part of childhood development and, in most cases, resolves over time. Separation anxiety in younger students may manifest as crying, tantrums, or clinginess, which are normal reactions for a child when separated from a loved one. Although there has been much focus on teachers' awareness of externalizing behavior problems, research on teacher awareness of internalizing problems like anxiety is very limited. Unlike externalizing behavior problems, mild to moderate anxiety is unlikely to be associated with disruptive classroom behavior. As a result, some argue that anxiety issues go unnoticed by teachers. According to this viewpoint, "children's anxiety problems in most cases remain largely hidden" in the classroom setting (Frick et al., 1994).

In the elementary schools in the Schools Division Office of Sarangani Province, kindergarten teachers were reporting worse cases of learners with separation anxiety. The teachers were already attending seminars about managing learners' symptoms of Separation Anxiety. However, teachers still need to attend more training, especially on the current trends in handling scenarios about learners' separation anxiety.

This program aimed to help the teachers improve and enhance their knowledge regarding separation anxiety and the proper ways to handle it.

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