Understanding Thai Teachers' Perception of Self-Regulation From an Attachment Perspective

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ABSTRACT

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Self-regulation is defined as the process that incorporates emotion, attention, behavior, and cognition altogether with the aim of bringing the body from a dysregulated state and return to the regulated state. Secure attachment experiences shape formation of healthy internal working models that leads to development of adaptive self-regulation skills. In the classroom context, teachers are important to further development of children's self-regulation. However, teachers' understanding of self-regulation is rarely examined through the lens of attachment.

Through an ethnographic study from working as a classroom kindergarten teacher for five months, data in this research is derived from semi-structured interviews of three Thai kindergarten classroom teachers. Thematic analysis is selected as the method of analysis.

The findings revealed that Thai kindergarten teachers generally understand the effects of past experiences on the developmental process of children' self-regulation . They also have appropriate level of emotional support and classroom management that promote self-regulation in children. The aim of this research is to explore how self-regulation is understood and aiding educators in expanding their capacity to support their students in developing independent self-regulation skills, while maintaining cultural sensitivity to how such skills are developed among children from diverse backgrounds.

Keywords: self-regulation; attachment theory; early childhood education; Thailand

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1   INTRODUCTION

Globalization in education makes international educational transfer taunting, if not inevitable, for many countries to borrow the best practices from what is working in the other side of the world in the efforts to improve their own structures (Crossley, 2000). The unwinding of foreign education curriculum into local classroom practices is never a linear transformation, within which interpretation of what was designed is often tainted through cultural lens (Kelly, 2013; Broadfoot, 2000). This thesis was born out of my internship experience as a kindergarten classroom teacher in a private school in Thailand during the summer of 2023. Particularly, the feeling of outsidedness as an insider of my own country evoked the educational discourse (Sullivan, 2007), or rather the negotiation, between fresh insights on child-centered pedagogy from my studies in Finland and the entrenched hierarchical values and norms of Thai culture within the current Thai education system.

Throughout the five-month internship period at the school, I noticed that teachers were repeatedly using similar patterns of phrases that implied expected behavioral conducts from the children across their daily life at the school, within and outside of classrooms and throughout supervised time or recesses. There were school-wide classroom management practices that teachers used to help children self-regulate such as the use of portable bell as an attention-grabbing technique, compulsory brief meditation episodes at the start and end of any activities from classroom lessons to free plays, and insistence on having every child get in line when transitioning from point A to point B. These observations challenged my comprehension of child-centered pedagogy on self-regulation abilities development that should be scaffolded through encouragement and support rather implicit expectation and cajolery. Could these techniques signify how Thai teachers view development of self-regulation in children? And what does this mean for Thai children in building their ability and expanding their capacity to independently self-regulate as they progress along their maturity? Or was I not

seeing what was working because I was wearing the wrong glasses? Perhaps, the muddiness of my attempt to comprehend the experience is the natural consequence of the ebbs and flows of blending the mixture of foreign and local practices.

The social structure of Thailand that is deeply rooted in patronage system creates conditions where power dynamics manifest in various, if not all, aspects of the school life of a child — ranging from power dynamics between teachers and students, classroom didactics, curriculum design and implementation, and behavioral conducts and school rules (Tian et al., 2024); thus moving away from child-centered education philosophy. Consequently, with this thesis, I took on the challenge in remaining empathetic and sensitive to Thai cultures while attempting to critically evaluate existing teaching practices to help children develop self-regulation. And I turned to Attachment Theory and its extension of Adult Attachment in examining how teacher-child relationships are established and maintained throughout the developmental processes of children's capability for self-regulation.

Evolutionarily, humans are born with the biological expectancy of parental caregiving to ensure protection and nurturance for survival and growth. The innate needs to attach that infants are born with drive outward behavioral cues for their caregivers to provide support and meet such needs (Maté & Maté, 2022). In 1973, John Bowlby posited that the way these needs are met forms and shapes the infants' internal working models that they use to view themselves and others, and what they perceive the world to be. Bowlby's theory was empirically extrapolated by Mary Ainsworth's Strange Situation test in 1978 revealing that infant's tendency to develop certain attachment behavioral pattern was related to the quality of the mother-child dyadic relationship during early years of life. Thus, the capacity for adaptation from birth to adulthood of a person began with their predisposed temperament quality since birth (Siegel, 2020) and further solidified by their attachment experiences through upbring across various learning ecologies (Sroufe, 2005).

School is a breeding ground that enriches the intricate process of relationship formation, everyone shows up with their own history in forging of new relationships with others (Riley, 2010). Maintaining and balancing myriads forms of relationships require certain degree of self-regulatory capabilities that are often subconsciously steered by unconscious beliefs of self and others through internal working models acquired from attachment experiences in the early years (Geddes, 2017). Development of self-regulation from secure attachment perspective is therefore foundational to development of other adaptive skills such as ability to create and maintain relationships, school readiness, and effective learning outcomes (Riley, 2010; Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Malekpour, 2007).

The quality of relationships that children engage in depends not only on the habits learned from home but also how these beliefs are challenged or confirmed by the interactions that their teachers provide or orchestrate directly through individual connection or indirectly through collective classroom management practices (Hedegaard, 2009). The dynamics within teacher-child interactions are explored in detail in this study from both the teacher's attachment histories as well as the children's upbringing experiences. Ultimately, the goal is to gain clarity on how Thai teachers conceptualize self-regulation, and how such perceptions manifest in their classroom interactions and relationships with their children.

I hope that this thesis will contribute a perspective on self-regulation from an Eastern cultural standpoint to the pool of Western literature grounded in different cultural structures. With education for sustainable development and global citizenship being one of United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, the hope is to aid educators in expanding their capacity to support their students in developing independent self-regulation skills while maintaining cultural sensitivity to how such skills are developed among children from diverse backgrounds.

2 CHILDREN'S SELF – REGULATION FROM AT-TACHMENT PERSPECTIVES

Consensus on self-regulation from various disciplines agrees on three interconnected domains encompassing emotions, cognition, and behavior (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009). Different fields of study focus on different aspects of self-regulation. For example, a temperament - based approach to self-regulation examines emotional reactivity at behavioral level such as examining the relationship between children's effortful control and emotion-related regulation of behavior (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004) to the development of social competence and behavioral problems (Blair & Razza, 2007). At the neurobiological level, executive function is considered the central control hub that navigate different brain functioning such as inhibitory control, attention, and cognition in determining how self-regulation plays out (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004b; Smith-Donald et al., 2007).

This study takes on a broad construct of self-regulation and define self-regulation as the process that incorporates emotion, attention, behavior, and cognition altogether with the aim of bringing the body from a dysregulated state and return to the regulated state (Van der Kolk, 2014; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009). It is worth noting that a state of dysregulation does not solely pertain to situations that evoke negative emotions such as fear, sadness, or anger but also include positive emotions such as excitement, joy, or triumphant (Van der Kolk, 2014). Looking at self-regulation from attachment perspective requires looking at the relationships that an individual participates in and understanding the behavioral organization around the attempt to establish felt sense of safety in all domains (i.e. emotional, psychological, and physiological). Taking a developmental perspective of self-regulation provides an understanding of the breadth of variations within and between individuals in the ability of and the way in which they self-regulate within any given time and context, depending on their personalities and

the relational interactions from which the person operates (Sroufe, 2005). This concept will be further defined in the next section.

Attachment is the emotional bond between a child and its primary caregiver that was born out of the dependency for survival and growth during the early years (Sroufe, Fox, & Pancake, 1983; Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Thus, attachment explains the interplay between children's innate temperaments and their up-bringing experiences that shape the course of development of various functioning (e.g. brain functions, psychological and biological developments, and emotional regulation) as the individual progresses toward maturity (Van der Kolk, 2014). In the early years of life following birth, due to the immature and under-developed brain and biological functioning, infants depend on the caregivers for soothing, feeding, stimulation, and emotional regulation (Siegel & Bryson, 2011; Malekpour, 2007). The confidence in having a reliable protector to guide them through distress during novel experiences becomes the secure base from which development of independent regulation are built upon as the infant matures.

Attachment experiences therefore act as the external system that shapes children's internal regulation which becomes the basis for self-regulation as they mature toward independence. The effects of attachment experiences on various developmental domains that lead to physical and socioemotional wellbeing have been well documented. Neuroscience has shown that the pruning of neuron synapses that occurred in the first two years of life are experienced based (Bick & Nelson, 2016). Meaning that environment stimuli create experiences for the infant that play a role in strengthening certain neural pathways and forming brain unique brain architectures with its own unique patterns functioning that integrate different regions of the brain (Siegel & Bryson, 2011). In other words, how infants develop depends on how they were reared. Infants who received consistent sensitive caregiving during the first year of life are more likely to develop higher levels of social-emotional competencies, capacity for empathy, and behavioral control (Malekpour, 2007). On the contrary, infants who were deprived of responsive caregiving are more likely to show social withdrawal symptoms, inattention, and difficulties in emotional or stress regulation (Satchwel-Hirst, 2017).

2.1   Secure attachment

In the first three years of life, an infant's attachment behavior is configured to gain physical proximity, then transcends to emotional interdependency thereafter (Geddes, 2017). Strong emotional development emerges from the confidence in the child that they will be protected and nurtured, thus they become more likely to explore the world and develop ability to manage challenges (Pianta et al., 1997; Van der Kolk, 2014). The responses that infants receive as they try to gain intimacy with their carer for feeling safe, shape how they think about themselves in relation to the world, and what they believe the world to be. Children who were chronically neglected, mistreated, or who were responded to with unpredictability have negative beliefs about themselves and see the world as a dangerous place (Perry, 2008; Van der Kolk, 2014). On the other hand, infants who were responded to with consistency and sensitivity feel loved and trust others that they can be reliably depended upon (Sroufe, 1983).

The importance of attachment to self-regulation is the inclination to approach or repel relationships based on these past experiences and association of being nurtured. And the inclination is driven by the internal working models (IWM), as proposed by Bowlby, that acts as guiding compass for social interactions and behavioral conduct with the world (Riley, 2010). The IWM is unique to an individual because it is constructed based on their experiences of receiving caregiving and how they make sense of the experience; which gives rise to a sense of self and beliefs about others and the world (Hedegaard, 2019). Three main components of IWM that are worth mentioning to understanding children's relational behavior in their interactions with others are; 1. seeing others as trustworthy; 2 seeing self as valuable; and 3. seeing that one's action affects others (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

Therefore, the IWM acts as the source of memories and expectations that children tap into in interpreting other people's social cues when entering new interactions and deciding whether to approach or avoid. For example, children

who have trouble regulating emotions are more likely to have negative emotional experiences towards emotional arousals thus are more likely to withdraw rather than to engage in a novel experience (Blair & Razza, 2007).

The workings of IWM was demonstrated through Ainsworth's Strange Situation experiment. The study highlighted the relationship between the quality of the mother-child dyadic relationship and the infants' coping strategies used when separation anxiety is induced after a brief separation from their mothers (Riley, 2010). The way infants cope with anxiety was cross examined with the quality of mother-child interactions. The study categorized attachment behavior into two types of attachment: secure and insecure. Insecure attachments were further divided into three types of attachment style; avoidant, anxious/ambivalent, and disorganized (Sroufe, 2005). Each style is characterized by its own patterns of behavior, that either avoids or approaches the attachment figure, developed in response to the sensitivity and availability of care from the caregiver.

To understand behavior is to understand its function, which is motivated by their attachment drive (Sroufe, 2005). The process of self-regulation from secure attachment perspective therefore starts with understanding the internal working models and how they guide an individual's decision-making process and behavior in reestablishing a sense of felt sense of safety (Van der Kolk, 2014). The internal working model within each of the four attachment styles can be examined from the level of anxiety and avoidance within the individual of how safe or reliable they feel in relation to others (Geddes, 2017).

Secure attachment is established with the constant provision of sensitive and reliable caregiving. Secure children learn that they can affect the world, and that they can trust others to help them feel safe when they feel afraid; thus, they are more likely to develop adaptive and resilient behavior against environmental challenges and difficulties (Malekpour, 2007). Children with strong attachment to the primary caregiver generally grow up to be well-adjusted and happy adults capable of cultivating mutually rewarding and meaningful relationships and more resilient in the face of challenges in life (Nath & Pradhan, 2012).

On the other hand, attachment relationships that are considered insecure are often characterized by less sensitivity, highly stressful and irritable, and perfunctory caregiving (Network, 1997). Children with anxious attachment are often associated with history of unpredictability in caregiving; avoidant attachment being associated with emotional unavailability and dismissiveness; and disorganized attachment being predicted by caregiver's intrusiveness and maltreatment (Sroufe, 2005). Children with insecure attachment histories are more likely to develop maladaptive behavior as coping strategies during time of distress and challenges. For example, children who had experienced adverse childhood experiences such as trauma, abuse, or neglect, mentally and physically, are more likely to develop mental illnesses such as depression and autoimmune diseases later in life (Maté, 2003).

2.2   Adaptive self-regulation

"The infant–caregiver attachment relationship is the core, around which all other experience is structured" (Sroufe, 2005, p. 355). Secure attachment therefore shapes the formation of mental schema that promotes development of adaptive self-regulatory strategies that further emancipate other developmental tasks to emerge (Riley, 2010). There are three domains of children's attachment behavior that are important to adaptive self-regulation: *self-reliance, emotional regulation, and social competence* (Sroufe, 2005).

Secure attachment breeds self-reliance, a skill which serves as driver for explorations that scaffold learning of new skills. Using Ainsworth's study to elaborate this argument, children with insecure attachment became very distressed and would not return to their plays until the mothers return, and were difficult to be soothed and did not want to leave their mothers to continue playing. In this sense, insecure children forgo the opportunity to explore in exchange for attachment needs. Secure children learned from their attachment experiences to develop the ability and capacity to independently regulate themselves when distressed by using adaptive strategies. In contrast, insecure children who did not

receive enough opportunities to experience healthy way of reestablishing felt sense of safety did not learn how to properly regulate their emotional arousals (Siegel, 2020) and thus always looking for external support to rely on for regulation (Sroufe, 2005). For example, Sroufe, Fox, and Pancake (1983) revealed that children who were rated as precociously independent early were predicted to become more reliant later in childhood.

Secondly, secure attachment provides a foundation for emotional regulation. As previously argued, children learn to regulate their internal emotional state from co-regulation with their caregivers. The capacity to self-regulate is built from children's internalization of the confidence to do things because they have a secure base to come back to when things get tough (Geddes, 2017). This confidence to regulate emotions liberates children into engaging in novelties and taking risks; thus, gaining and mastering developmental tasks (Sroufe, 2005). Sroufe (2005) also showed that secure children are rated higher on specific features such as "flexible, able to bounce back after stress or difficulty" and "curious and exploring," while insecure children "becomes anxious when the environment is unpredictable" and often exhibit negative affects in their coping strategies such as whining, fussing, and frustration.

Thirdly, secure attachment provides positive expectations toward relational interactions, an inclination for intimacy, and the social and emotional capacities that promote social competence (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004). Sroufe (2005) had shown that children with secure attachment histories were more active participants in the peer group and less frequently isolated in both preschool and middle childhood. In a more contemporary study, Hamamci and Dagal (2022) illustrated the relationship between children's emotion regulation and their play behavior. They found a high association between children's emotion regulation scores and tendency to engage in social play, and that their emotion regulation contributes negatively to their reticence behavior.

To conclude, secure attachment experiences in the early years shape children's emergence of adaptive self-regulation. Acquisition of adaptive coping strategies to self-regulate for young children is foundational to development of

healthy sense of self and social-emotional competences, from which other com-plex developmental tasks are built upon (Blair, 2002; Van der Kolk, 2014; Siegel, 2020).

3 CHILDREN'S SELF-REGULATION IN KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOMS

An excerpt by Sroufe (2005)'s 30-yearlong work on the developmental trajectories from early attachment experiences best illustrates self-regulation in the classroom from attachment perspective.

"...not all children approach solving problems the same. For example, some 2-year-old approach problems with great enthusiasm, show joy in task mastery, and they are eager and persistent. When their own resources are exhausted, they effectively seek help and support from care givers. While some other children give up quickly after only weak efforts, become easily frustrated, and are fussy, whine a great deal, or are petulant. Still, others fail to seek help, ignore caregiver's suggestions, become oppositional or passively non-compliant when help is offered.... Some 4-year-olds in preschool settings are enthusiastic participants in the peer group and are well regarded by teachers. They approach and respond to the overtures of other children with positive affect and are empathetic when others are in distress. They can both lead and follow.... The readily follow classroom rules and flexibly adjust behavior to fit particular circumstances. They are self-directed yet respond eagerly to teachers' activities. While other preschoolers are isolated or aggressive, impulsive and unresponsive to socialization, or are unduly reliant on the teachers for nurturance and guidance" (Sroufe, 2005, p.351)

When children enter school in the first year, they show up with pre-established level of emotional, social, and cognitive development formed during the preschool periods (Geddes, 2017). Attachment-based internal working models from parent-child relationship continue to exert influences on children's self-regulation skills in the classroom. The self-regulatory skills that children possess when entering school influence the quality of their relationships with their peers and their teachers. (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Pianta et al. (1997) demonstrated that tran-

scendence of relationship skills in their study that revealed mother-child relationships which were characterized by mutual expressions of positive affect and closeness were correlated with teacher-child relationships characterized as secure. Whereas, mother-child relationships that were rated as having problems with control were associated with teacher-child relationships that were characterized as insecure, conflicted, and dependent. On the social behavioral level, Bick & Nelson (2016) pointed out that children who were exposed to early adversities were more likely to develop attention and behavior regulatory difficulties such as ADHD and are more likely to exhibit delinquency at school.

It is important to emphasize that secure attachment in the classroom through teacher-child relationship should not be marginalized. As a matter of fact, the internal working models continue to be modified by attachment relationships as new experiences are accumulated (Sroufe, 2005). Early childhood education serves as both enforcer of previous attachment experiences from family upbringing or can serves as opportunities to challenge maladaptive behavior through corrective emotional experiences with secure attachment from their teachers (Riley, 2010). NICHD Study of Early Child Care revealed that the quality of childcare can have effects on the mother-child attachment security especially families with insecure attachment and serve compensatory function in fostering formation of more secure infant-mother attachment bonds (Network, N. E. C. C. R. (1997).

Children's learning processes are primarily determined by four essential qualities: a natural curiosity, an integrative mind, an ability to benefit from correction, and a relationship with teachers (Neufeld & Maté, 2005). Secure attachment through provision of felt sense of safety and belonging enhances each of these aspects of self-regulation. As Burchinal et al. (2002) demonstrated that child-teacher relationships moderated child characteristics in relation to early school outcomes. Specifically, a close relationship with the teacher predicted better language skills for children whose parents held more authoritarian parenting views. And Hamre and Pianta (2001) suggested that experiences with adults in early childhood settings can enhance children's success at school.

It is important that young children learn self-regulation skills that promote academic and social competencies for engaged learning and successful school adjustment once they enter school. For example, Blair (2002) pointed out that kindergarten teachers view the importance of self-regulation as essential skills over academic readiness. The self-regulatory skills that these teachers endorsed upon entering kindergarten include ability to communicate wants, needs, and thoughts verbally, demonstration of enthusiasm and curiosity, ability to follow directions and inhibit disruptive behavior, and empathy and sensitivity toward other children's feelings. These self-regulatory skills are fruits of secure attachment experiences in the early years.

Nevertheless, looking at self-regulatory skills from a static standpoint merely provides a standstill evaluation of the current state of capability, but does not explain how current level of capability has been reached. As Blair and Razza (2007) concluded in their study on the association between children's effortful control and their emerging academic ability in kindergarten, there is no specific aspect of self-regulation linking to specific academic outcomes. In other words, mere measurement of current self-regulation skills provides inadequate comprehension of the developmental process of self-regulation, especially among preschool aged children, whose immature brain is developing (Perry & Hambrick, 2008; Van der Kolk, 2014). Social-emotional competences that are built from secure attachment relationships with adults continue to play crucial role in children's development of adaptive self-regulation.

3.1   High quality teacher - child relationships

Like in parent-child relationships, in the classroom, teachers are children's attachment figures, their secure base. If children feel emotionally secure and can communicate effectively with their teachers, children will be better able to devote their energies and attention to learning (Burchinal et al.,2002). Within the classroom, teachers are still the adults whom children rely on for guidance, support,

and protection (Samuelsson & Johansson, 2009); thus, putting teachers in the positions as orchestrator of various relational interactions among the children or with the teachers themselves. Therefore, the relationship between children and their teachers in the classroom is crucial to the development of children's self-regulation.

Numerous studies have found that the quality of teacher-child relationships is associated with children's social and academic competencies both at emergence and in subsequent developments throughout schooling years (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). For example, Pianta and Stuhlman (2004) found that teacher-child relationship quality predicts children's social and teacher-rated academic skills in the first grade. In the same study, kindergarten teacher's perception of conflict in their relationship with students accounted for significant variance in children's prosocial behavior in the first grade, suggesting that children's relationship with their teachers in the early years affects how they interact with their peers in school.

 A longitudinal study done by Hamre and Pianta (2001) further confirmed the continuity of attachment by following children's academic performance such as test scores, work-habit ratings, and discipline record from kindergarten through eighth grade. The study illustrated that the level of conflict and dependency within teacher-child relationship emerged as significant predictor of children's academic and behavioral outcomes.

The three domains of adaptive self-regulation built from secure attachment (i.e. self-reliance, emotional regulation, and social competence) elucidated in the previous section can be extended to characterize high quality teacher-child relationships: *perceived closeness, conflict level, and dependency* (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Birch & Ladd, 1997; Stuhlman & Pianta, 2002).

High level of perceived closeness between and from both teachers and students indicates high quality teacher-child relationships (Sher-Censor et al., 2019; Morris-Rothschild & Brassard, 2006; Nikolić-Vesković, 2023). Closeness refers to how an individual feels toward their relationship with others that is characterized by warmth, affection, and open communication. Classrooms that score high

on Observed Teacher Sensitivity and Regard for Student Perspectives have children who feel close to and have secure relationship with their teachers (Madill et al., 2014). And the same study revealed that children whose teachers were sensitive to their needs and provide opportunity for autonomy reported stronger sense of peer community. Moreover, teachers who perceive themselves closer to children are more likely to provide more emotional support for their students (Sutton et al.,2009).

Secondly, teacher-child relationships that are secure tend to have low levels of conflicts (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). Conflict level refers to how participants within the relationship feel that their relationship is characterized by negativity. Birch & Ladd, 1998 illustrated that children who were reported to have conflicts with their kindergarten teachers exhibited declining prosocial behavior and slightly increasing aggressive behavior with peers in the first grade. Pianta and Stuhlman (2004) also revealed that higher conflict in teacher- child relationships was associated with children's lower social competence. And Stuhlman and Pianta (2002) revealed that teachers who express more negative affect about children in their interviews exhibit larger number of interactions with the children and those interactions tend to be more negative.

Lastly, high quality teacher-child relationships are characterized by effective dependency, rather than overdependence (Sroufe, 2005). Effective dependency is when children are active in seeking and maintaining contact with reliable adults when distressed and can be soothed. Once the state of regulation has been reestablished, the child leaves for exploration again (Sroufe et al, 1983). The authors further explained that self-regulation abilities viewed from attachment perspective entails looking at how the child utilizes effective dependency to learn to regulate themselves. When children choose to rely on their caregiver for safety and mastery at the expense of exploration is when dependency becomes maladaptive (overdependence). Effective dependence provides conditions for emerging self-confidence in self-regulation. Birch and Ladd (1997) illustrated high level of dependence is correlated with school adjustment difficulties, including more

negative school attitudes and less positive engagement with the school environment. Excessively dependent children are also more likely to be socially withdrawn and aggressive with peers.

3.2 Teachers' awareness of attachment histories

Teachers' sense of self as a teacher in relation to their students, their perceptions toward their students, and the importance they place on classroom relationships are influenced by their attachment experiences (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2004). For example, teacher's recollections of less harsh parental discipline in childhood was associated with more perceived closeness in the child–teacher relationship (Kesner, 2000). Riley (2009) also showed that some teachers choose the profession as corrective emotional experience for their attachment insecurities and is likely to be vulnerable to rejection by students. Teacher's attachment histories therefore manifest in their behavior and interactions with the children. Thus, teachers 's awareness of their internal working model toward interpretation of classroom behavior and interactions affect the quality of their relationships with students (Rimm-Kaufman & Hamre, 2010).

Evidence supporting the association between teacher's attachment styles and the quality of their relationships with students is well established. For example, special education teachers who expressed more avoidance and negative valence in their narratives about the children were reported to have lower regard for their students (Sher-Censor et al., 2019). Kennedy & Kennedy (2004) suggested that teachers with avoidant attachment style may have trouble recognizing their own lack of warmth, trust, and sensitivity in their relationships with their students. They may have unrealistic expectations for their students' maturity and independence as they themselves may have learned to be overly self-reliant and distant in their own interpersonal relationships. A teacher with an avoidant personality may be perceived by students as less accessible and supportive. Moreover, teachers with preoccupied status, because of their own dependency needs, may be more supportive of the anxious-resistant student and

rejecting of anxious-avoidant and disorganized students, bolstering the negative IWMs of relationships for these children.

Moreover, teachers' attachment styles play a role in their classroom management practices. Morris-Rothschild & Brassard (2006) demonstrated that teachers' conflict management styles are correlated with their attachment history, and such style affects their support for the students. Particularly, teachers with high degree of attachment avoidance and anxiety were less inclined to use integrative conflict management strategies. Whereas anxious teachers were more likely to rely on emotion-focused coping strategies when under stress while avoidant teachers often fail to accommodate their students' feelings and point of view. While Nikolić-Vesković (2023) revealed that teachers with secure attachment history have more effective classroom management techniques. Teachers with anxious attachment history provided less emotional support and occasionally involved in children's behavior but without really solving the problem, while avoidant teachers tend to have more coercive and controlling behavior with the children.

Teacher's characteristics also affect the emotional climate within the classroom. For example, Sutton et al. (2009) described the relationships between teachers' perception of emotions and their strategies used for emotional regulation to maintain their relationship with the children and manage their classroom. Adoption of classroom rules, how lax teachers are, and what rules mean for the children depends a lot on the teacher's identity. Tian et al. (2024) revealed that teachers who belief that rules create clear boundaries and provide smoother classroom experience favor making classroom rules explicit through direct instructions and teachers making up rules and conducts. Whereas teachers who favor implicit are inclined to enforce rules through natural settings of social interactions and involvement of emotions to internalize rules, making their classroom pedagogy more child centered.

Teacher's attachment histories also play a role in teachers' ability to self-regulate under stress and pressure from their job (Ansari et al, 2022). For exam-

ple, Stark & Bettini (2021) revealed that teachers' interpretation of emotional display rules in school is based on myriads of factors such as their professional identity, school culture, and relationship maintenance with students. These constant balancing acts between various positions, sometimes creating conflicting tensions, can lead to emotional exhaustion which affects classroom instruction and teacher-child interactions. Ansara et al (2022) showed that teacher's emotional exhaustion teachers, regardless of their level of educational background, have lower quality interactions with the children.

In addition to self-awareness, teachers' understanding of developmental effects of attachment experiences to actual functioning of brain and physiology can promote, foster, and alter children's capacity for self- regulation (O'Neill et al., 2010). Findings in the field of trauma and disorganized attachment have shown that the emotional arousal of children who experienced childhood abuse and neglect may be chronically activated; thus, distort and impair their self-regulation leaving them unable to self-soothe, and interfering with the development of affect regulation and tolerance skills (Van der Kolk, 2014).

 Trauma-informed pedagogies are exemplary of the effectiveness of using attachment to help children self-regulate. Attachment enables teachers to understand the developmental age of a child through understanding their experiences and tailor their pedagogical practices that meet their developmental age rather than chronological age (Geddes, 2017). Attachment therapies, for example, that focuses on encouragement (relational support), practice (activating stress response), repetition (predictable mental schema for integrated brain) in establishing secure attachment in the classroom have shown promising results (Perry, 2009; Perry & Hambrick, 2018).

Brunzell et al. (2019) revealed the beautiful narratives of how a special education teacher tailored his interactions to support a student with complex trauma history. "Instead of a lecture on discipline or a confrontational meeting, the teacher took the boy out onto the field, and they threw a rugby ball (i.e. building self-regulation through patterned, repetitive, rhythmic activity in a relational context), while talking through the previous incident when the boy was wrecking

the classroom furniture. Here, the teacher's attachment moves (staying with the student, shoulder to shoulder, using a calm voice) were co-regulating the student. Attachment as a regulatory strategy helped deescalate students in the safety of a trusted relationship while assisting their body to build self-regulation in times of emotional arousal." (p. 607).

3.3   Teachers' support

The last important element for children's self-regulation in the classroom from attachment perspective is teacher's emotional and sensitive instructional support for their students. Decisions that teachers make in the classroom are not only based on their views of their students but determined by their own beliefs, values, ideas of what makes a good student, expectations for behavior, and their interactions with their students (Myers & Pianta, 2008). The pedagogical choices which teachers employ may foundationally rested upon their core beliefs on relationships which was established through their attachment quality in their years (Riley, 2010).

Classroom quality that foster high quality teacher-child relationships are those that have teachers provide emotional support to the children by recognizing and showing sensitivity toward children's unique needs, modify lessons and activities to fit the emotional and academic needs of their classroom, and facilitate positive interactions among peers (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009). For example, instruction support that revolves around providing constant and positive relationship building rather than rewards system are more effective in helping children with Reactive Attachment Disorder in the classroom (Embury et al., 2020).

High quality relationships that foster social and emotional competences are established with approaching emotions as first step to children's self-regulation (Van der Kolk, 2014; Perry, 2009). Affective neuroscience shows that self-regulation is highly connected to executive function (EF) skills. However, an established regulated emotional state is a prerequisite to the ability to tap into these executive functions that allow children to be able to perform tasks of inhibitory controls

and cognitive flexibility (Perry & Hambrick, 2008). It is crucial to pay attention to the sequential brain functioning underlying the process of self-regulation. The brain can only perform integrative processes among different brain regions to form responses that are adaptive after an embodied sense of safety has been established (Siegel & Byson, 2011).

Emotional knowledge is a critical mechanism underlying effective emotional support (Denham et al., 2012). Eisenberg and Spinrad (2004) emphasized the distinction between *external behaviors associated with emotions* and *regulation of internal emotion-related behavior* within the process of emotion regulation; the first being an expression of emotion that does not serve any clear goals and the latter being emotion-related self-regulation serves the goal of *modulating,* to effect change, emotions. Both features are equally important in the emotional attunement of teachers because it opens children to be receptive for co-regulated in learning self-regulation (Van der Kolk, 2014). Children who have strong emotional foundation have the capacity to anticipate, talk about, and use their awareness of their own and other feelings to better manage every social interaction. If feelings are not well managed (i.e. suppressed, deflected, invalidated), thinking can be impaired (Van der Kolk 2014; Siegel & Byson, 2011).

Secondly, teachers within high quality classroom offer sensitive instructional support by establishing episodes of joint attention with children, creating opportunities for and scaffolding of conceptual development, and offering appropriate questioning and feedback (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009). Blume & Smiedek (2024) has shown a link between perceived student—support and students' self-regulation in individual lessons. Specifically, in lessons where students reported more student support than usual, they also reported better self-regulation.

Teachers' monitoring behavior is also important in providing sensitive instructional support for children's self-regulation (Kurki et al., 2018). The authors demonstrated that teachers' active monitoring was associated with children's adaptation of strategy use during challenging situations because teachers' active

monitoring during challenging situation enabled teachers to adjust their support for children and further help children adapt strategy use.

4   THE LANDSCAPE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IN THAILAND

Thailand's formal education system is divided into basic and higher education. Basic education is free and includes pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels (lower secondary and upper secondary). Pre-primary education is not compulsory. Compulsory education starts at the age of six (primary level) and lasts nine years (lower secondary level) (UNESCO, 2021). Early childhood education in Thailand consists of childcare centers that take in children younger than 3 years old and kindergartens (pre-primary level) that take in children from 3-5 years old. Early childhood education is offered by public and private sectors, which are run by individuals, organizations, or companies.

Ministry of Education of Thailand is responsible for early childhood education and created Early Childhood Development Act 2019 that stipulates management between responsible institutions and create learning objectives for pre-primary children that ensure protection, quality care, development, and education management (CAPS, 2023). While public institutions follow the Early Childhood Development Act, private entities follow their own curriculum or adopt international curriculums (e.g. The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IBPYP), the British's EYFS curriculum, and Montessori) and follow minimum standards mandated by the Ministry of Education (OECD/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2016).

The current state of public early childhood institutions in Thailand are underfunded in terms of infrastructure, human capital, material resources, and quality curriculum (CAPS, 2023). Furthermore, there is a lack of evaluation in teacher performance, teachers have no direct degree, no clear establishment of academic standard at center level, poor communication between centers and parents, and patronage system in organizational structure does not experience or degree (Office of the Ombudsman Thailand, 2022).

It is not uncommon to find the average kindergarten classroom size at public institutes to be around 30 pupils per 1 teacher, while the ratio in the private

sector averages around 12 to 1 (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2021). Large classroom size can reduce the quality of teacher-child relationships in both individual level and classroom level, potentially affecting children's development of self-regulation and their capacity to self-regulate.

Currently, there is no specialization offered for Early Childhood Education in Teachers Education in Thailand and much of Teacher Education programs still emphasize on content teaching rather than educational pedagogies and learning theories (Chaemchoy, 2023). Moreover, there is a serious lack of staffs in the ECE sector, particularly trained, educated and experienced. Survey by CAPS (2023) revealed that only 15% of kindergarten teachers have bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and most have high school diploma. They are minimally compensated, and most kindergartens experience low teacher retention rate. In addition, there is also inadequate support for in-service teachers such as professional development programs as well as local resources support such as compensation, staffing, and leadership guidance (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2021).

Inadequate preparation in teachers training programs and support for in-service teachers place an important implication for wider early childhood education quality in Thailand as professional development is linked to higher quality teacher-child interactions in early education and care (Egert et al., 2019). In most early childhood classrooms, rules are established and applied under the guidance of the teacher. Without the moderation effect of high-quality education background, teachers are more likely to rely on their personal experiences for their teaching practices (Egert et al., 2019). Teachers' view of young children has a large impact on the formation of classroom culture that paves way for children's character formation (Tian et al., 2024). Combined with Thai culture that places importance on seniority, there is a high-power relation in Thai classrooms that orient classroom culture toward obedience and conformity (Gunawan, 2016). Rimm-Kaufman and Hamre (2010) showed that professional development has a positive effect on improving classroom quality, which affects child learning outcomes.

In summary, due to large class size, underfunded and limited resources, dated professional development programs, ongoing inadequate support for in-service teachers, and a serious lack of teachers in Thailand's Early Childhood Education sector, it is critical to investigate into kindergarten classroom dynamics during this critical stage of development. Especially, research on social-emotional competencies, which has been argued as foundational to other developmental tasks, is very limited in Eastern sphere of literature on self-regulation (Yong et al., 2023).

5   RESEARCH QUESTION

How teachers understand self-regulation has important implications to their expectation of such skills in children, as well as impacting their interactions with the children. Teachers are children's attachment figures in the classroom as children rely on them for guidance, support, and protection (Samuelsson & Johansson, 2009. To understand how co-regulation in the classroom occur, we need to understand how teachers understand self-regulation in the first place. The aim of this research is to explore how Thai kindergartens perceive children's developmental process of self-regulation and their role within that process. Ultimately, the purpose of this study is to examine if secure attachment manifests in teachers' understanding of the developmental process of children's self-regulation.

The research questions are the following:

1. What do Thai kindergarten teachers think about the concept of self-regulation in young children?
2. Is the concept of attachment part of this perception among Thai kindergarten teachers?

6   RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed an ethnographic approach to understanding the research scene from a five month internship (June to October 2023) in order to come up with semi-structured interview questions as data collection method. Understanding a concept as nuanced and culturally sensitive as self-regulation requires an in-depth immersion of self into the research scene (Veraksa et al., 2016). The researcher must gain access, understand the school culture, and cultivate an adequate amount of experience and knowledge to truly capture what was happening at the scene in order to interpret and portray their reality in the study as accurately as possible. (Bateman, 2015). Thus, I took a participant observation as my stance.

Approaching the research scene this way was appropriate for this study for two reasons. Firstly, because it allowed the researcher enough time to see how development unfolds. Being an outsider at the beginning allowed me to pick out entrenched values and norms that were unique to the school culture (Sullivan, 2007). Once I gained access into the participants' reality as an insider, I incorporated my experiences in designing interview questions as data collection method.

My position as classroom English Teacher during my internship put me in the position to be with the children starting from the time they entered the school vicinity until they were picked up by their parents. I chose to be involved and stayed during transition time with the children to understand the workload and expectation of responsibility expected by the school. I was involved in parents meetings, created a learning project with the children, designed lesson plans, prepared materials, and participated in teachers meetings. This holistic involvement enabled me to understand the school culture as well as the reasoning and justification behind teacher's pedagogical decisions such as lesson planning, modification of lessons when school activities were announced that caused reduction in class time for planned activities, and their strategies for classroom management techniques.

The advantage of being a native Thai speaker with backgrounds of growing up and educating in Thailand enabled me to catch nuances that culture lends to understanding subtle culturally-specific behavioral and verbal cues. A trait in which a complete foreigner would have more difficulty and took longer time to understand and make sense of.

Nevertheless, I am aware of the possibility of biases as a result of being native. Even though I was born, raised, and educated in Thailand, it does not equate my understanding and perspectives on the concept of self-regulation to being the same as other teachers in Thailand. Personal values and biases through beliefs that have been shaped by Westernized literature may create disparity in understanding of emotion, expectation of self-regulation skills, and preferred classroom practices between myself and the research participants. In addition, being native increases the possibility of unconscious omission or negligence of uncontested assumptions that a complete foreigner would have flagged and questioned. Therefore, the continuation that ethnographic approach lends to studying the research scene and its participants provide enough duration for me to understand the depth and complexity of the school culture; thus minimizing biases and allowing me to capture relevant data to make sense of the multiple realities that exist.

6.1   Research scene

This study was conducted at a private school in Thailand that offers pre-pre - primary education (2 years old) to the end of primary education (grades 1-6). The school's education structure is divided into two types of programs, one uses Thai language as the primary language of instruction and another uses English. The majority of the children at the school are Thai nationalities, and at least two or three pupils in each classroom have other nationalities such as Chinese, Korean, or Burmese.

The school is selected as the research scene for this study because play-based learning approach is the guiding principle for their curriculum and lesson

design. Such education philosophy implies emphasis on socioemotional well being of children as well respecting the developmental aspects of children's learning curves. These are essential elements of self-regulation as mentioned in the literature review section. However, data gathered for the study might not represent those found in public schools because the school is a privately owned and managed. It is not mandatory for private schools in Thailand to strictly follow national curriculum compared to public schools; therefore, having more flexibility in designing their own or using pre-established curriculum as guidelines for the school curriculum.

On average, there are 25 pupils within a classroom with two homeroom teachers, one non-native English Teacher and one native Thai Teacher. Children are spoken to in the English language by non-native English Teachers, and in Thai language by native Thai Teachers. It is the vision of the school that children have opportunities to interact in both languages throughout their school days. In addition, there are native assistant Thai Teachers who have complimentary roles within the classroom in assisting and facilitating classroom activities organized by the homeroom teachers. They are involved in the classroom during designated periods of time depending on the type of classroom activities as pre-requested by the homeroom teachers.

6.2   Research strategy

Originally, I tried to look for effective classroom management techniques that could help children learn and develop self-regulation skills. The longer I stayed, I more observed that here was a pattern of emphasis on creating a self-regulatory environment for the children such as lining up for every transition, bell-ringing and brief meditation episodes before and after activities, and insisting on sitting down and not moving when teachers are talking.

I felt further teachers' interviews were needed to elaborate their views on the concept of self-regulation and whether or not such understanding influences their classroom management techniques. The underlying assumption was that

teachers' belief of self-regulation was influencing their decision to employ certain classroom management techniques such as words of choice, routines, and management of children's behavior. However, because culture and values and beliefs sometimes cannot be captured from what is said directly and oftentimes do not manifest in behavior rather than conscious awareness (Christensen, et al 2004). While interviews are good tools to extract declarative knowledge of self-regulation and provide clarifications on many observed interactions. The culturality of self-regulation as internalized by teachers can be understood more clearly through incorporating what the teachers said to my experience of observing the routines and interactions at the classroom.

Moreover, from my internship experience, I learned that there was a distinct division of roles and responsibilities between Thai Teachers and English Teachers within the classroom. The responsibility of English Teachers concerned mainly didactic responsibilities such as lesson planning and leading activities. Thai Teachers were mainly responsible for children's overall well-being and expected behavioral conducts, as well as pupil-related administrative and extra-curricular activities. Thai Teachers also had more contact times with the children during transitions such as lunchtime and after school recess. This separation of roles and responsibility is important to point out as they imply different expectations of self-regulation from the children in different contexts throughout the school day and become apparent and elicit different pedagogical practices.

Furthermore, it must be noted that, even though the school's structure clearly divided responsibilities distinctively between English Teachers and Thai Teachers, I was working as an English Teacher. This added another advantage to my participant observer stance as a researcher because I was immersed in both roles. I was given responsibilities as an English Teacher and was also expected to fulfil the roles of a Thai Teacher; thus, giving me insights into both sets of realities.

6.3   Research participants and interview questions

Primary data in this study is teachers' interviews on their perspective on self-reregulation and their view on the development of such skills with their children and themselves. The interview was a semi-structured interview.

Research participants were three Thai kindergarten classroom teachers. All of the participants were female. Two of participants did not have education background on teaching or related to education and child development, and did not have prior teaching experience. All of the participants were in their second year working in the school. These teachers were selected because they have the most contact time with the children throughout their school day (i.e. classroom activities, recesses, after school, transition, lunch time, free plays).

Because secure attachment is established on the ground of building trust with the caregiver, interview questions were designed to cover the aspects of teachers seeing their role as being the trustworthy secure base for the child to express emotional connection. The order of each question were ranked with an intention to slowing inquire deeper into teachers' perception while minimizing possibility of projecting any judgement or evaluation on their answers. Moreover, the questions were designed to ask different aspects of self-regulation such as behavioral regulation, cognitive, and emotional regulation especially times of distress or expression of negative emotions (See Appendix 1).

The semi-structure nature of the interview allowed flexibility for the researcher to inquire further based on the preliminary answers. Throughout the interview session, I tried to approach the understanding of the concept of self-regulation from various angles, both asking directly how teachers understand self-regulation. Oftentimes, during the interview, the teachers picked out events that happened to explain their thinking. I used that as an opportunity to ask follow up questions that probe deeper into their understanding of the type of support they give to children. Sometimes, I had to improvise the questions because I was getting answers that felt too vague and generalized. In such situation, I had to bring up an events challenging events that involve tantrums or resolving conflicts during my internship period for teachers to answer. How they actually help

the children to get back to regulation and I try to understand it from their expla-
nation. For example, the question "How do you keep yourself regulated?" is the
questions that aimed to examine the coherency between how they regulate them-
selves and how they actually helped their children in the classroom do so. The
last question, "Have you heard of the Attachment Theory?", was designed to see
if the participants understand the relationship between attachment and on self-
regulation. If the participant answered no, I explained the concept briefly and use
that as a discussion topic to get their opinion.

6.4   Thematic analysis

Qualitative thematic analysis is employed in this study. Thematic analysis offers
enough flexibility to capture patterns of facts that exist among the participants
and be able to induct knowledge of reality from patterns of themes emerged from
the data set. This analysis methods allows "thematizing of meanings" from the
research scene that are relevant to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
The analysis performed in this thesis follows 6-step guidelines recommended by
Braun and Clarke.

In the first step, I familiarized myself with the entire interviews again as I
conducted the interview myself and throughout the interview process I recog-
nized patterns of repeated words the teachers used. However as I re-listened to
the entire interview of all three participants while keeping the research question
in mind; that is trying to look for any hint of the concept of self-regulation and
get myself familiarized with the data, I refrained myself from labeling any pat-
terns as to not limit or taint the with my own interpretation and perspective. On
average, the interview lasted for one hour and extraction of transcriptions aver-
ages about 40 quotes per participant.

In the second step of generating initial codes, I listened to the entire inter-
view again while reading the transcriptions. This time highlighting the sections
that were related to self-regulation. These highlighted transcriptions were ex-
tracted into codes that serve as the data corpus for further steps of analysis. These

codes are then placed into an excel file, within which has different tables for each interview participant. Each sheet is anonymously coded with code names with the letter "T" for teacher; T1 T2 T3.

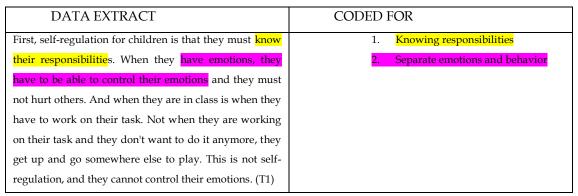| DATA EXTRACT	CODED FOR
First, self-regulation for children is that they must <mark>know their responsibilitie</mark>s. When they <mark>have emotions, they have to be able to control their emotions</mark> and they must not hurt others. And when they are in class is when they have to work on their task. Not when they are working on their task and they don't want to do it anymore, they get up and go somewhere else to play. This is not self-regulation, and they cannot control their emotions. (T1)	1. <mark>Knowing responsibilities</mark> 2. <mark>Separate emotions and behavior</mark>

Table 1. Examples of how data extracts are coded.

After all initial codes were recorded onto the excel table, I reread the entire data corpus to create categories from grouping similar codes, each relating to different aspects of self-regulation; emotions, behavior, and cognition such as "knowing responsibilities" or "behavior management", and each category had its own color highlight (Tabel 1.). There were also codes that did not belong to any of the self-regulation domains but were frequency mentioned; which was "teacher's own teaching experiences". Each code were then reviewed to find overlapping domains. This process resulted in nine categories in total, with each code belonging to more than one category. I tried to code for as many potential themes as possible and did not want leave out by limiting number of codes. I acknowledge the coding process itself from data corpus can be biased or be interpreted in many ways and the same even can be coded under multiple categories. While I was coding the data corpus, I also found myself going back to previously coded data and reassessing whether there was coherency in the category that I categorize my codes into in the initial phase.

In the third steps in the search for themes, after categorizing coded data, I went back to literature review to find out more about teacher's own attachment style to their choice of interaction with the children. This time adding one more

column naming "researcher's notes" to write down my thoughts as I went through each code. These notes served as pointers for my discussion later. For example, I discovered about teacher's attachment affecting their interaction with the children in my second time redoing the literature review because there was repeated emergence of the category from the interview. After reviewing the literature and reviewing the categories of code and seeing if the codes were properly and correctly put in the right category, I tried to reduce the categories in order to start searching for themes (Table 3.). However, during this phases as I was rereading the data belong to different group of codes, I discovered overlapping domain that could be further groups into the same category because they were related to each other (Table 2.).

CODES PHASE 1	REDUCED CODES
Knowing own responsibilities	LOGIC AND REASONING
Reasoning and boundaries	
Separation of emotion and behaviour	
Family upbringing and past experiences	UPBRINGING EXPERIENCES
School adjustment (understanding school culture)	SCHOOL READINESS
Time and space	
Social-emotional support	RELATIONAL SUPPORT
Routines (predictability)	
Teacher's own experiences	TEACHER'S OWN EXPERIENCES

Table 2. Reducing categories of codes that overlap

In the fourth step of reviewing themes, because of the regrouping of the categories, there were no further reduction of the themes. And in the fifth stage of naming and defining themes, I was trying to see it from attachment perspective, and what each themes meant in terms of self-regulation. Then in the final stage, I reviewed all the themes to the coded extract as final assessment for coherency between data and themes, as well as to the research question.

CODES	CATEGORIES	THEMES
Children's self regulation starts from home, from their environment. Their self-regulation is a result of their parents raising them. There are also other factors such as VDOs.....sometimes children misinterpret the content that they watch.' (T3)	UPBRINGING EXPERIENCES	CHILDREN'S PAST EXPERIENCES
'First, self-regulation for children is that they must know their responsibilities. (T1)'	LOGIC AND REASONING	COGNITIVE ABILITIES
'In working as a team, if the child is working with their friends, they have to know what their responsibilities and roles are... knowing how to share...so that they won't e fighting over the toys' (T2)		
'First the boy could not adjust at all. He was crying everyday and he did not understand what does bell ringing mean for him. And why does he have to close his eyes in order to calm himself down before starting class activity. Why he has to line up. Why he has to put things into his locker... after spending time with me for 2-3 weeks, he started to understand that his friends were not crying. Then he could adjust and he stopped crying and started following what his friends do at school. This is fast adjustment to school...'(T1)	SCHOOL READINESS	
'When he cries, he doesn't articulate his thoughts with words well. When he cries, he must be given opportunity to calm down first. Take a deep breath and then explain'. (T1)	RELATIONAL SUPPORT	CO- REGULATION
'At school we always agreements with the children. Talking to the children very often and listen to their opinion. Listen to what they are feeling and what they want to do.' (T2)		
'Here children are more pampered. Over there children are free to play more. Here when something is not going appropriately, I have to communicate to the parents, explaining to the parents, and report to the manage, write an incident report, text the parent, call the parents. There are so many steps.' (T3)	TEACHER'S OWN EXPERIENCE	TEACHER'S EXPERIENCES

Table 3. Codes, categories, and themes of the data corpus

6.5   Ethical Considerations

Before gathering data for this study, I informed and asked for access from the school management for permission to conduct my study at the school. I informed the school principal that my internship experience would be used as a basis in understanding self-regulation and as a basis for coming up with interview questions as data for this study. I was granted permission to conduct teachers interview and use my experience as part of this study.

In addition, I sent out privacy notices, research information, and consent forms as required by GDPR and Finland's national data Protection Act to the school management team as well as to the participants of this study for review (Lewis, 2007). And all participants have been informed of their research rights and signed a consent to participate in the study prior to being interviewed. They were informed that they have the right to withdraw their consent or their statements anytime. I had also informed all participants that I am the sole controller and processor of data collected, and all of the data would be destroyed once the research thesis has been accepted by the university.

All of identifiable personal data such as name and job description have been pseudonymized and partially removed to make sure none of the participants can be identified. The description of the school have also been removed to ensure the research field cannot be recognized. All of the information related to the participants have been synonymized. Interview data files were coded with T and followed by a numerical number, which follows the chronological order of being interviewed. Such as the first participant being interviewed is T1. The transcription of interviews were transcribed using Microsoft teams. Translation of extracted data corpus in this study was translated by the researcher. Semi-struc-

tured teacher interviews were recorded via Microsoft teams using the university's credentials and stored in the researcher's personal computer in a password protected folder.

In addition, I am aware that my closeness to the field as a classroom teacher gives me a deeper understanding but runs the risk of missing or taking for granted protocols that could have been spotted with fresh pairs of eyes. And my power position as classroom teacher may have mediated the effect of Thai teachers, who may have different ways of handling things but refrained from doing so and giving way to my decision; thus not really reflecting what was happening in its natural state.

Although the advantage of being and knowing Thai culture as a native, there was a higher risk that my ability to see the novelty in the experiences during my observations could be clouded by such an advantage. Moreover, having been educated with the Finnish approach to education, it was more likely that my interpretation of interactions and presentation of my analysis could be biased, especially when they came into conflict with my values and beliefs. Therefore, I tred to practice using and giving due credits to scientific sources and theories to my interpretation of data to minimize biases and increase honesty and credibility of the research. The different phases of analysis allowed me to exercise critical analysis to consider data from different perspectives, especially ones that acted as a counter argument to my claims; so I could find a way to dispute it to increase validity of my research findings.

7 TEACHER'S PERCEPTION OF CHILDREN'S SELF-REGULATION

This section discusses the themes derived from thematic analysis of teachers' interviews on their understanding of self-regulation and how they support the development in their children. All four themes – Children's Past Experiences, Cognitive Abilities, Co-Regulation, and Teachers' experiences are explained in relation to Attachment theory. Because self-regulation is a developmental process that has non-linear progression and produces observable behavior that organizes around patterns of functioning based on the unique mental internal working model shaped by past attachment experiences, although these themes are distinct from one another, they are nevertheless interrelated. And one theme influences another and sometimes may overlap, as a natural interrelated characteristic of developmental traits.

7.1 Formation of children's capacity for self-regulation

7.1.1 Children's past experiences

Upbringing experiences is most mentioned among the participants and is usually the first factor mentioned when asked what influences children's current capacity and capability for self-regulation. Family upbringing is most mentioned especially for children who have difficulties with self-regulating in the classroom such as inability to follow instructions, crying when enter the classrooms in the morning, and unable to communicate with words when upset. Moreover, the teachers do recognize variation in individual differences of children's capability for self-regulation, contributed by the quality of their past experiences.

> *'Children's ability to control themselves both their emotions and their behavior can be very different among different children. This depends on, first, their upbringing at home. And second their routines that they perform every day. Is the child being*

raised by getting to do whatever they want? And things that they do every day. Do they take care of themselves in an organized manner like step one first...then step two... and then step three.... Whereas another family might allow the children to do anything they want. If they want to watch TV, they can watch it right away.' (T1)

One of the participants who had prior experience working in a daycare center of a western country also emphasized on difference in parenting practices between the two countries made her case in how upbringing acculturate children to certain practices as part of life.

'They have a lot of self-regulation or self-management because the seed has been planted since young, so they know that it's their role to come to the center every day, and what time they are staying there until. Their parents or grandparents will take them to school, taking the tram, or walking and enjoying the walk.' (T2)

From this excerpt, on the perspective of upbringing, we can see that teachers believe that the child's ability to self-regulate depends a lot on how the child has been raised at home. If the child was exposed to organized routines to follow every day, then they will learn to be systematic and able to think and follow multiple instructions and tasks step by step. Internalizing these norms becomes their habits from which they rely upon to perform independently. Everyday life creates expectancy and predictability that acts as the environment for children to practice and thus increases their capability for self-regulation at school.

'Inability to listen to other people's opinion and lack of social skills can result from background too. For example, the child didn't have peers their age to learn how to make friends. That is a skill that can be cultivated from home like how to play with friends properly. At school, there is only 5 - 10 minutes (dedicated for teaching kids these skills) and might not be very day. But at home, doing homework can be part of the routine that teaches children about their responsibilities at home or asking the children if something happens at school what kind of responses we can home

and how to solve the problem. That is giving them opportunity to practice think-ing.' (T2)

From attachment perspective, factors influencing children's development are not limited solely to the quality of their relationships with the parents. The initiation and responses of interactions from parents depend largely on their parental expectation and values on childhood also play a role in the quality of their parenting, as observed by the teachers.

'(these days) parents coddle their children too much. In the past, we could play in the sand and get dirty. We could play in nature without getting afraid. But nowadays, there are more comfortability, children are more likely to be number one, and the parents have their wishes of wanting their children to be certain way.' (T2)

Teachers think that the opportunities given to children to practice self-regulation at home affect their school readiness and thus capability for self-regulation in the classroom as answered by these teachers when asked "why do you think these children need more support in reminding in the classroom from them".

'The child is used to adults doing things for them at home....maybe the child is used to this from home '(T3)

'....(in his previous school, there was) no agreement, no routine, no rules so when the child comes here, he goes wherever he wants' (T1)

Moreover, teachers also see the social norms can have play a role in the developmental course of children's coping strategies during challenging situations. Adults' responses to children when they are under distress or during the time they call out for help set up expectancy that get internalized.

'...children (in another country) can ride the scooter and trip and fall, and the adults will tell them to try again. If they are not ready to try again, the adults will suggest to them to do something else. They will let the children cry first and then ask them. But for Thai people are different, we tend to blame others and not (teaching kids) to look at themselves for accountability. Thai people don't respond to children like "bad log it was in your way" instead of "oh you tripped over the log I see" ' (T2)

Thai culture is more oriented toward authoritarian approach of parenting but also a culture that more conflict avoidant; thus difficult emotions are more likely to be dismissed or avoided in Thai society. Older generations are more likely to employ child rearing practices that distract children to forget about the distressful emotions such as blaming objects or bribing with sweets. Authoritarian parenting fosters the fear of punishment while authoritative parenting creates space for emotional validation and reasoning of appropriate behavior. This according to the teachers, breeds honesty and capacity to take different perspectives. If children fear punishment, they are more likely to use coping mechanisms that avoid accountability.

'....(adults teach children to) "use your words to tell your friends", but here adults tend to take side with the child only and focus a lot on others and what others do but not helping their child look at their own behavior. Then (these) children will not grow up.... (by explaining cause and effect) children will have honesty. If they do something, they will be honest with their words and their action. They did it because..... But here ,there are a lot dishonesty in many situation' (T2)

Moreover, not only do past experiences within the family matter to children' development of capacity for self-regulation, but the current and ongoing communication between school and home is also important in maintaining coherency and consistency for the children. Thus, the children have opportunities to reinforce these habits throughout their learning ecologies.

*'...we also have to ask for cooperation with the parents in helping the children un-
derstand by talking to them at home and then we discuss with them again at school.'
(T1)*

7.1.2 Children's cognitive abilities

When it comes to defining and conceptualizing self-regulation, teachers empha-
size various aspects of cognitive abilities in self-regulation. It is the theme with
the most codes under its umbrella. Teachers express that early years is the prime
age to start laying foundation for self-regulation, which encompasses both inde-
pendently carry on with their daily life as well as developing adaptive strategies
for self-regulation during time of distress.

*'Knowing their role is the most important for children in my opinion. If children
can not manage themselves, meaning they cannot control themselves to sit down,
to finish drinking their milk. If they keep being distracted, then they cannot con-
tinue onto doing other things. So, knowing their roles in knowing what to do step
1 ,2,3 is very important.' (T1)*

*'Self-regulation is important because they are at the age where their brain is grow-
ing. It is the age of learning and remembering. If they don't start learning how to
control their emotions from this age, it will be difficult for them when they grow up
because they will not know what these emotions are or how to manage them so that
they will disappear or cool down. Otherwise, they will be a problem for society.
Using force to solve problems in the future. Which is not good' (T3)*

Among the teachers, self- regulation is the ability to listen to reasoning or capa-
bility to independently reflect during emotional upset and act appropriately.
Teachers see that explaining is the most effective way to let children practice
thinking with reason and logic and is what builds self-regulation.

'Not as a way of punishment but more of having a discussion with the children about if something like this happens, what can we do in this situation. So "saying sorry" will truly come from the child. If they are not ready, they can have their space to be with themselves, to reflect on the situation, and once they are done, they will come back and know that what they have done is not right' (T2)

'But if they start saying things that are not true, I will tell them that's not what I see but then the child will cry even more. If that's the case, I'll let the child cry, and tell them that once the child is done crying, the child can come and knock on the door and say I'm ready to go into the room now. When I do this often, they will stop crying as soon as I tell them to stop crying and then the child will (suck in the breath) and go back into the room and continue playing with friends.' (T1)

This also entails that self-regulation is a goal to achieve in being able to act according to what is expected of them. In the school context it means being able to come to school without crying and taking care of their own belongings.

'Children are able to manage themselves well. For example, after arriving at school, they can put things into their locker. They know their roles... maybe they cry sometimes because they don't want to part from their parents. But once they arrive at the classroom, they know ok this is my class, what do I have to do next. This is self-regulation on a certain level. And when they become emotional, like very angry, they can control themselves. This is also good self-regulation. Once they go home, as parents, I would say it's something they would be proud of. '(T3)

' It's EF skills. It is practicing these skills starting in the beginning on what they have to do and if they should be doing certain things or not. Children must be given reasons. If they want to climb but no one is watching them, and if they fall and get hurt, who would be there to help them. When they know the reason, they will practice controlling themselves to do what they have to do first. For example, (they will learn that) "I can't go climbing now, I have to walk back to class after the visiting bathroom."' (T1)

Moreover, teachers see the goal of self-regulation as having the ability to make good judgement on behavioral responses in challenging situations. The most agreed upon among all of the teachers is on having the children asking them for help when they can't handle a difficult situation by themselves, which is what I observed from my internship as well. Children often choose to include teachers before their peers not only during challenging moments but also sharing what they are working on or what they bring from home.

'My technique is to tell the kids that if something happens, for example, someone wants to hurt them, they do not have to respond right away. Come to me and tell me that other people are hurting you. But if that child still is hurting you, and you hurt him back, then you both have to say sorry. We don't have the rights to hurt others and others don't have the rights to hurt you.' (T1)

'First, I will call out their name and tell them "do not run, sit down" but oftentimes I don't have to go over to them and grab their arm to come sit out from the circle and next to me. So the child understands "oh I have to sit down , I should not be moving".' (T3)

In my observation, there are abundance presence of Thai teachers' supervision in all most every aspect of children's time at school including class times, transition, free plays, and pick-up/drop off times. The emphasis on teachers seeing their role in being children's supervisor in self-regulation extends to inhibitory and impulse control; teacher's supervision is crucial to children's ability to self-regulate through hands on support, constant reminders, problem solving.

'If I don't go in and help them take off their clothes. If I don't go in there and give them a nudge. The children will start like that. Dazed. I want to see the birds and the clouds. And then I have to be like "quickly please, your friends are coming". Then they will know they have to hurry up. There are a few kids in my class that

need constant reminding, and I have to use different games like counting down game'. (T3)

'I first have to bring the children's attention to focus on me. Once I have their attention, I will hit the bell, and ask them to close their eyes. After a while, I will ask them to open their eyes and tell them what they will be doing today and what class they will have. So, then the children will automatically know that ok step 1 they have to take out their pencils. If we tell them in advance what 1,2,3,4,5 they will have to do, they will know.' (T1)

7.1.3   Routines and classroom agreements

For support of self-regulation, maintaining and following classroom daily routines is the most mentioned and as important promotive factor for self-regulation. Through establishing agreements and expected responsibilities, children internalize what is expected of them and are able to perform accordingly and independently; thus, building self-regulation. Teachers see the importance of creating a supportive environment that allows opportunities for self-regulation and plays a role in children's ability to self-regulate in the classroom.

'CLM is very important. If not everyone is still...I mean if some of them are still shouting or jumping, when other friends see they will also follow. So, if we can manage the classroom well, meaning if we are able to manage the classroom environment to be calm, everything else will flow. (T1)

However, the presence of emotions is not considered as part of the regulatory process. Teachers think that emotions motivate children to act illogically, a distraction from concentration in classroom work.

'The child is capable of doing every tasks but he can not control his emotions so he can not focus doing activities with his friends. The child wants to do things he wants. Today I don't want to do this so I get up and play something else.... But

when asked to answer something I said in class, he could answer. He was walking around but he could answer my question. That's very bizarre. He doesn't want to sit still. He wants to do something else. (T1)

'Children here cry after doing something wrong, they get emotional a lot. It's like being a grown up but not really mature. For example, a kid bit another kid, as soon as I asked them what happened. The child started crying and start (making wailing sound)....say things like he did it to me first! This is emotional being first response. In the beginning, the child would deny doing it, but then I asked but I saw the bite mark, then the child started crying. So I turned to the child who got bitten and asked "did you take your friend's toy, that's why you got bitten?" And then the child started crying. Again....there's a lot of emotions involved in children's self-regulation here.' (T2)

7.2 Teacher's support for development of children's self-regulation

7.2.1 Co-regulation

Even though teachers see the presence of emotions as hindrance to children's capacity for self-regulation, they do place the importance of providing emotional support to the children especially during time of distress. The teacher do this by giving children time and space to tell their stories, bring awareness to the emotions, and talk about how to behavior better or differently.

'If they start hurting others, I will physically hold them like a butterfly, which helped them calm down. I want to let them know that I'm here with them and comfort them. And I will not ask the child as if they are at fault. When I talk to them it's more like "what happened just now. How did you feel?" I will not ask "why did you do that?". I will ask them after I feel they are ready. I don't try to squeeze the answers because they might feel being interrogated. And then I will talk to their family'. (T3)

'We sit down and talk. I call both children in and have a talk together or sometimes with the whole class. I let one child have their say, and then another child have their say. And then also ask other kids.' (T2)

Moreover, as mentioned that creating good routines and execute them in a consistent manner is beneficial in providing a safe environment for children. The organization and provision and consistency in maintaining in itself is the environment in which children can predict what is going on hence it is easier for them to self-regulate because they know what is expected. On the other hand, the predictability that routines lend to children is making them feel safe because they don't have to become anxious of the unknown of what is coming; that is in itself co-regulation for self-regulation. Setting up expectations and predictability through maintaining classroom routines make children feel safe, and soothed.

'My role is to first calm the children down by walking them through the steps. I tell them first what they have to do. Meaning they have to go unpack their bags and then they will have three classes, then after class they will drink milk; after drinking milk they will go for lunch, then after lunch they will come back to take a nap. When you wake up, your mom will come pick you up. It's not that you mom will not come back. I have to tell the child what will happen, what will they be experiencing so they can prepare themselves.' (T1)

Teachers also see the importance of peer relationships in helping children adjust to school or self-regulate.

'When they are all together, they follow their friends. If they see their friends do, they will follow suit and that will help them adjust faster. If they see their friends sit, then they will see. That's children's development, right.' (T1)

Moreover, teachers also understand self-regulation functions in a situational manner and that behavior is a function of attachment needs. Two of the three

teachers, whom I observed have calmer and warmer attitude toward the students, mention scenarios when children who have deviated behavior from their normal level often are facing challenging situations at home.

> *'The child's behavior improved for a while (after joining group therapy) but relapsed after a while because the family had a smaller sibling. And the child didn't get enough attention from the parents. So I think when the child screamed and overreacted because his friends accidentally bumped into him was because the child wanted to get some attention.' (T1)*

> *'I communicated with the parents when I saw that the child was not behaving (out of the norm) at school and asked if they had smaller siblings at home. Maybe the child had this behavior because the child wants more attention. Maybe you (the mom) can give him more time at home. This could also be the reason why some children cry when they come to school. But some Thai people don't look at it that way.' (T2)*

All of them see the importance of being an attachment figure at school through establishing secure relationships with the children so they can help the children with self-regulation.

> *'It has to be Thai teachers who calm down the children. Children look for us more than English teachers because doesn't matter what happens, the children also call me and not the English teacher. Children always call me first maybe because their first language is Thai and they are Thai. But.. yeah even non-Thai children (also call me first).' (T1)*

> *'The (new) kid (in class) won't trust other teachers who's not his classroom teacher. I think that's amazing because they remember their teacher. When I had my gate duty and was not in the room, the child would not go into the room and stood in front of the room to wait for me. He wouldn't go with other teachers. He wouldn't get inside the classroom until I took his arm to go inside with me.' (T3)*

How teachers regulate themselves is also an important insight into their practices with the children. Teachers often use cognitive strategies in self-regulation, which is coherent with how they give support to the children.

> *'It also comes from us (teachers) to be able to regulate ourselves. If children see that when there's problems, they can sit down and speak with us. We are able to calm them and allow them to slowly talk. No need to be emotional. I take my time in talking to the children. Calling them over and ask them to tell me their stories and then discuss with them a better way to do things. If it doesn't work, then we can try other ways.' (T2)*

7.2.2   Teachers' experiences

School's structure, which acts as a support system for teacher's own attachment relationships with the management team, plays a role in their capability to provide support for the children. When asked about support from school, teachers express the importance and usefulness of school's protocols on bell ringing, eye closing before and after activities, lining up, and daily routines.

> *'Good thing about this school is that they teach the children to be used to routines. To get used to having responsibilities and know their roles. The school has laid out agreements on what the children should do' (T1)*

However, there is some ambivalence in the presence of scheduled routines to follow as teachers express that schedules sometimes can create inflexibility that does not allow for variation in children's capacity to follow routines from day to day.

> *'At school we always make agreements with the children. Talking to the children very often and listening to their opinion. Listen to what they are feeling and what they want to do. But sometimes, school's daily activities can be quite...a routines*

(high pitched voice). Sometimes the curriculum is a bit too difficult for the children's life.' (T2)

And such concern on school's expectation on children's self-regulation capabilities, which in turns is evaluated upon the quality of teachers' classroom management capabilities, and policies also extend to the quality of play environment in which teachers can provide for the children. School culture plays a role in how teachers decide to help children with support self-regulation. Although, teachers see the importance of letting children play as play is crucial to development of self-regulation, due to certain demands by school regulations and protocols, teachers cannot fully carry out their duty as they deem developmentally appropriate for the children.

'Here (Thailand) children are more pampered. Over there, children are free to play more. Here when something inappropriate happens, I have to communicate with the parents, explain to the parents, and report to the manager, write an incident report, text the parents, and call the parents. There are so many steps... Sometimes when I see it's not so safe (for the children to play), I warn them "hey guys...". But I also can't help it to let them just play. It's ok for them to fall sometimes but also sometimes I get reluctant and a bit nervous that there is no support for me. So when I see that the situation might not be safe, I have to stop the children from playing. I think that takes away that exploration. '(T2)

' (the curriculum) has changed from learning through play to being more academic. The children complain they don't want to write. If you were to ask me if this affects their self-regulation, I see them trying even more now. I see them trying to write and to memorize. But they are not happy. They can only do and try everyday but they are not happy. And when they are not happy, they will forget the next day.' (T1)

Operational structure also affects the quality of teacher-child relationships through delegation of responsibilities that affect the amount of contact times they

have with their children, which play a role in the development of children's capacity and capability to self-regulate.

> *'Thai teachers and assistant teachers are most closest to the children because the school mandates that Thai teachers have to take the children to eat lunch at the cafeteria, to take them to the bathroom, to line up (for lunch, for leaving the room for outside activities, or for going to free play), to wash their hands. Even though policy says that we (English teachers and Thai teachers) have equal responsibilities over the children, but that's the school culture.' (T1)*

As school doesn't provide specific guidelines on how to handle difficult situations such as children's behavior such as fighting, tantrums, conflicts with peers or with the teachers, teachers are left to resort to their own self-learning endeavors (i.e. learning from social media platform is the most commonly cited among all the teachers) or from other resources such as colleagues or their own from trial and errors in the classroom.

> *'It's self-learning because children are different... The school provides some training on theory such as what is EF and telling us that children must have the capability to control themselves. But we were not given any specific techniques because they said that children are different, so we have to find our own way to work with each child. We are with the children so we will learn from them. The first time trying this method might not work, then second time trying another method also doesn't work, and third time another method and worked. So I know this technique works with this kid' (T1).*

> *'Self-learning from my own teaching experience. From observing children in my classroom. This method with this kid might work but might not work with another kid. And from the internet. When I have time to learn about child psychology, I try to find different techniques to use with different types of children and their parents.' (T3)*

How teachers see themselves in relation to their students also influences adaptation of their classroom strategies. As T2 replied when asked further of how she regulated her emotions after losing her temper with the children due to misbehavior.

'I see from their reactions. They never see me in this mood. And I'm afraid I might have hurt their feelings. I care about how they feel. I don't want them to fear me. I'm afraid they might not love me.' (T2)

There are traces of teacher's attachment history in their perception of their professional identity and personal characters that they bring into their classroom. These attachment histories influence how they choose to maintain or change their relational interactions with the children.

'The child is pretty clingy to me possibly because I'm his first teacher. So, that made him feel like "oh this is MY teacher".' (T3)

8   DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore Thai teachers' conceptualizations of children's self-regulation and how these perceptions influence their interactions and relationships with students in the classroom. Overall, teachers recognized the significant role of past experiences in shaping children's development and capacity for self-regulation. They agreed that parent-child relationships are foundational in forming children's self-regulatory abilities. Specifically, children from families where parents are engaged, maintain regular communication with teachers, and establish routines and rules at home demonstrate stronger self-regulation skills in school. This finding aligns with attachment research suggesting that past experiences contribute substantially to individual development (Riley, 2010; Sroufe, 2005). However, understanding children's backgrounds offers only part of the picture. Teachers must also be mindful of how their own experiences and attachment styles influence their behavior and approach to building relationships with children. The findings indicate that many teachers have a basic awareness of their behavioral patterns but may benefit from further reflective thinking and critical self-assessment, potentially facilitated by professional development programs (Egert et al., 2019; Rimm-Kaufman & Hamre, 2010). For example, even though the school takes a play-based approach for learning, none of the participants used play as a regulating activities (Sandseter et al., 2023), rather play was treated as either a tool to learn academic goal or as a free play.

In terms of teachers' expectations for children's self-regulation, the focus often rests on cognitive and behavioral aspects. However, Martin et al. (2024) highlight those children whose preschool teachers engaged in more redirection of behavior experienced fewer gains in self-regulatory skill over the school year. Thai teachers could risk undermining attachment relationships if emotional domain in the process of self-regulation is overlooked. Across all participants, the presence of emotional expression, especially during challenging situations, is often viewed as a disruption to self-regulation. Emotion expression is the natural consequence of existence of internal world (Blair, 2002; Van der Kolk 2014), and

teachers acknowledge that expressions of emotion, like crying, were also recognized as self-soothing mechanisms that help children manage emotional arousal. However, emotion-related regulating self-regulation arises from underlying needs that may not always be directly observable but can be understood from attachment perspective (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004; Geddes, 2017). Teachers taking this perspective might benefit from deeper understanding of attachment styles and fostering relationships that account for the dynamics of children's home environments, both past and present. Notably, some teachers, despite lacking formal training but thanks to teaching experiences, recognized that self-regulation functions situationally and that behavior is often influenced by attachment needs and could improve their sensitivity toward their children.

To support self-regulation, maintaining and following consistent classroom routines was commonly noted as an important factor. They agreed that children who understand classroom expectations and responsibilities are better able to self-regulate. Teachers found that encouraging children to discuss past experiences and explore alternative responses through logical reasoning could further enhance self-regulation. Teachers play an essential role in nurturing children's ability to self-regulate, which is further reinforced by supportive peer relationships. When teachers emphasize the importance of peer interactions, they are helping children learn to trust and depend on one another, forming connections that ground them as they navigate school. A strong social network is crucial for children, enabling them to build trust and reliability in others, laying the foundation for a sense of belonging (Madill et al., 2014). Furthermore, the structure and culture of a school can greatly impact a teacher's capacity to support these vital skills, making a compassionate, attachment-based approach ever more important.

9   SECURING ATTACHMENT FOR OUR CHILDREN

These findings enrich the growing understanding of attachment and self-regulation in educational settings. From this research emerge three key reminders for educators on the importance of embracing attachment-based teaching for the well-being and growth of our students.

Firstly, attachment serves as a guiding compass for our children's learning and healthy maturity. Attachment relationships are close relationships but not the reverse is always true. A relationship that make children feel safe, protected, and belonged is one that cultivates secure attachment. The healthy ones that inform our children the very essence of being a human. To be loved and appreciated. To discover that we are loved for who we are. Attachment creates capacity for children to be receptive to our teaching and learning through trial and error. Through secure attachments, children feel empowered to take on new challenges, forming a growth mindset that will bolster their resilience and adaptability throughout life.

Secondly, because self-regulation is the product of attachment needs, it should not be developed at the expense of authenticity. Learning to self-regulate is to learn to embrace all aspects of oneself. To accept and acknowledge all ranges of emotions but build the capacity to tolerate the emotional experiences of riding through. Children need to learn that they are unique individuals through attachment to mature adults in gaining the confidence to eventually grow into independent beings. Attachment forms an integrative mind who are capable of tolerating mixed feelings within themselves. Such understanding allow them to be able to perspective take. But before knowing two minds one must learn to appreciate one's own. Self-regulation becomes a journey of self-discovery, of valuing one's own authenticity, and, eventually, respecting that in others. They learn this through our responses and the quality of attachment we offer. Independence, in the truest sense, emerges from a place of supportive dependence.

Lastly, a child's capacity for self-regulation depends on the resources available to them. Having a knowledgeable adult to turn to when their internal resources are low is crucial for human growth and resilience. These relationships with mature adults—and society as a whole—gradually build the personal resources that children can draw upon throughout life. Personal reserves of strength and resilience are formed through years of nurturing connections, and these capacities can either be exhausted or expanded. This is why teachers play such a transformative role in a child's self-regulation—not only in the present but also for their future. The depth of our connection and guidance can profoundly shape the stability and strength with which children approach their lives.

10 LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH AND TRUST-WORTHINESS

The limitations of this study include the small sample size, which restricts the generalizability of findings to Thai kindergarten teachers as a whole. The data was limited to teachers' self-reported perceptions, which introduces a subjective element based on their individual experiences. Given that participants had relatively few years of teaching experience and often lacked formal education in teaching, learning, or early childhood education, the findings are also highly contextual, potentially reflecting specific school practices rather than a broader professional consensus.

Furthermore, due to time constraints, observational data could not be included, which would have enhanced the credibility of the results. Through observation, I noticed patterns in how participants talked about their children (e.g., focusing on positive aspects of challenging situations), selected scenarios to illustrate their thoughts (e.g., emphasis on teacher versus child actions), and conveyed narratives (e.g., critiquing behaviors or helping children problem-solve). Observational data would have provided a more nuanced understanding of teacher-student dynamics, capturing details that are often left unspoken in interviews. Additionally, incorporating children's perspectives would have deepened my understanding of how secure they feel in teacher-student interactions. Asking children about their experiences, especially those described by teachers, could help clarify whether children's perceptions align with teachers' views.

Combining observation and interviews provides a richer understanding of cultural contexts through everyday interactions. This approach would allow for corroboration between what teachers express about self-regulation and their observable behaviors (Sroufe, 2005). While this study serves as an initial exploration of Thai teachers' views on self-regulation, future research could broaden this foundation to design more comprehensive studies.

Moreover, the use of thematic analysis, while appropriate for this study, may be limiting in understanding the complexity of attachment and self-regulation. Narrative analysis could have offered deeper insights into the nuances of teachers' words, rather than focusing solely on common patterns. The reliability of this study's findings is informed by my dual role as a researcher and a teacher, drawing on my own observations and the lived experiences shared by participants. However, the scope is limited by the absence of observational data that could highlight the influence of teachers' own attachment histories on their interactions with children. Future research could address this gap, exploring whether teachers create secure attachments that support children's authentic development.

Lastly, many teachers in the study lacked formal education in teaching or child development, reflecting broader structural and resource limitations in the Thai education system. This context must be considered in interpreting the study's findings and designing future research.

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12   APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview Questions

1. Can you briefly share your education background or work experience? And how long have you been teaching?

2. In your opinion, what is "self-regulation" (การควบคุมตัวเอง)

3. What does self-regulation in children look like? Why is it important or is it important for children? What are important self-regulation skills do you expect preschool children to have?

4. Do you think children are capable of self-regulation? How do children develop/learn self-regulation skills? What do you think influences the ability for children to learn self-regulation?

5. What do you see as your role in helping children develop self-regulation skills? in different contexts? (i.e classroom, activities, freeplays, recess)

6. How do you help a child in distress/dysregulation? (i.e melt downs, tantrums, physical and verbal quarrels, not listening)

7. What do you do when children are not doing what they are supposed/expected to? (i.e to calm down, to get into work, sustain work?)

8. What is the most useful strategies/ways to help children become regulated? How did you learn about these self- regulation/classroom management techniques?

9. What is the least useful strategies you have seen or tried that does not help children become regulated?

10. How do you keep yourself regulated?

11. Have you heard of attachment theory, and do you think it is related to children's self-regulation skill (ทฤษฎีความผูกพัน)