Reading in Early Childhood Settings: Promoting Socioemotional Skills

## Ma. Lovena V. Moneva, University of Trnava & University of Basel

With the ever-changing world, it is important to have a strong sense of self and others to navigate their environment. Therefore, socioemotional development should be given attention especially in young children. One way to do this is by using picture books which is promoted in preschool classrooms, particularly in Slovakia (MŠVVaŠ SR, 2016). In this study, a literature-based program focused on picture book characters was designed and implemented in Slovak kindergarten classes. The characters demonstrate socioemotional skills by how they were portrayed in the illustration and the text, can serve as models of behavior through *observational learning*. The impact of the program was examined by comparing pre-test and post test results of socioemotional measures.

- **Aim:** Examine the use of picture books in a literature-based program focused on story characters in developing socioemotional skills among preschool children
- **Research Question:** Is the literature-based program focused on story characters from picture books effectively develop socioemotional skills in Slovak kindergarten children?

Participants
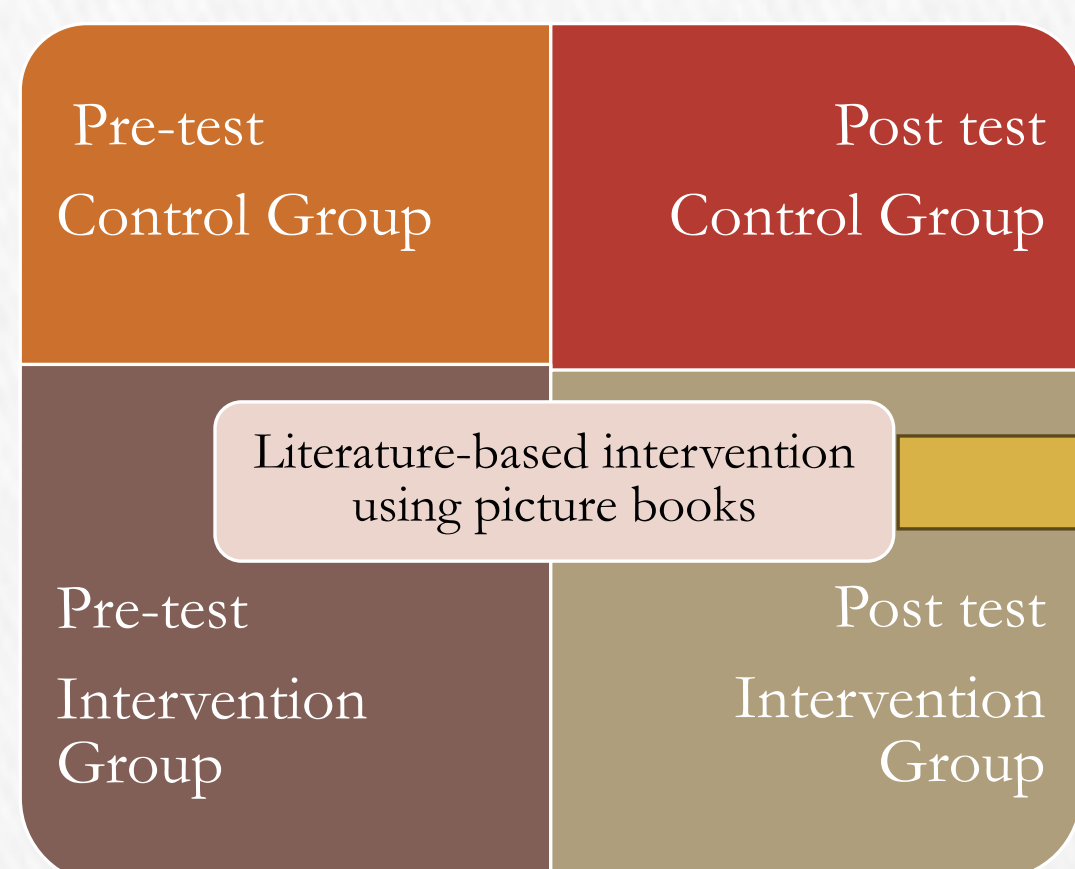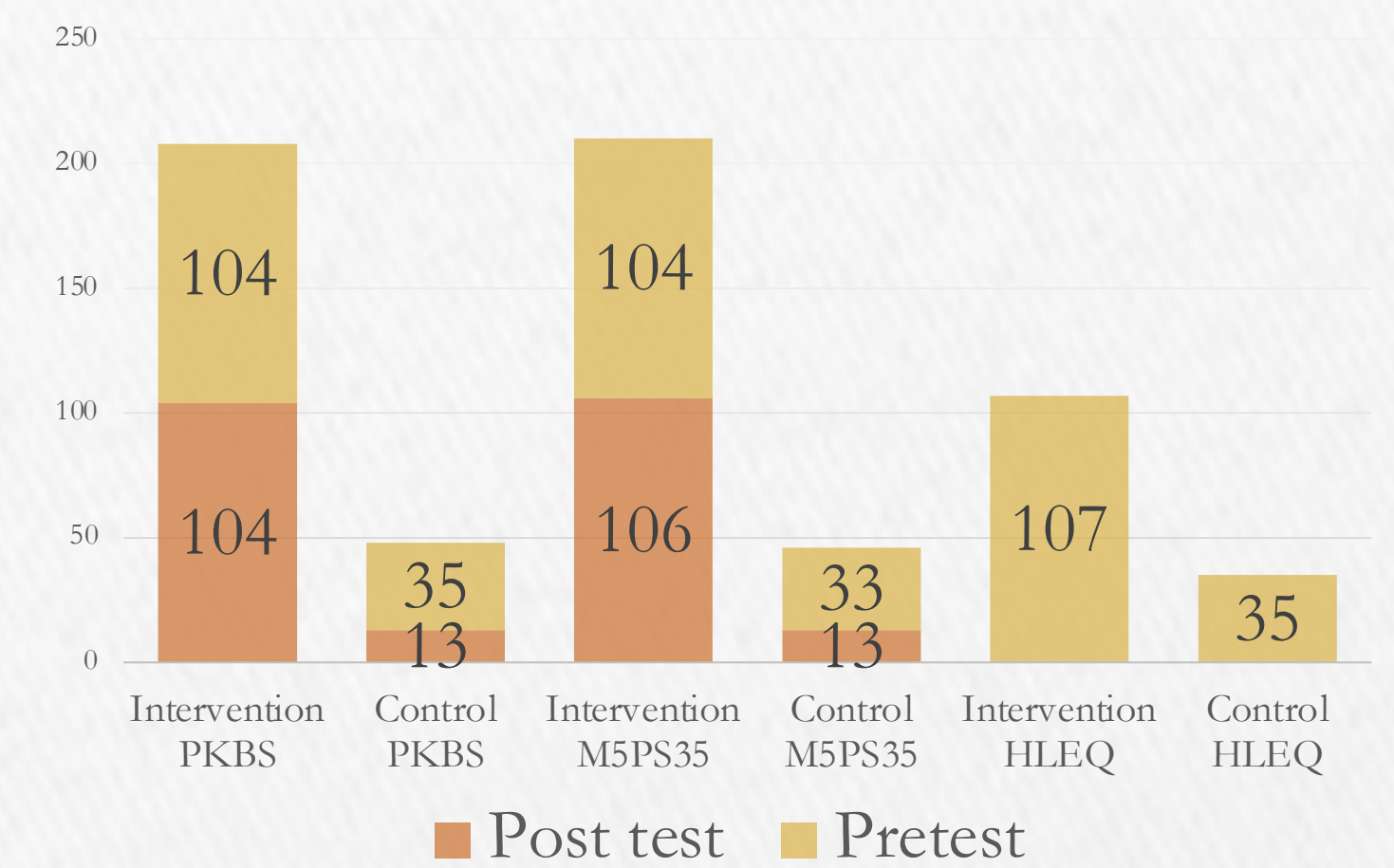
Methodology

Research Design
- Quasi-experimental (Control vs. Intervention)
- Classroom-based
- Pretest–Intervention–Post test

Intervention Design
- 10-weeks
- 1 picture book per week focusing on one socioemotional skills
- 2 sessions per week (1st and 2nd reading
- Focus on character-indicators in the text and illustrations
- During and Post reading questions

Variables and Instruments
- Likert-scales and surveys:
  - **Socioemotional Characteristics**
    - Five-Factor Personality Questionnaire for Preschool Children (M5PS35 by Grist, Socha, and McCord, 2012)
  - **Socioemotional Skills**
    - Preschool and Kindergarten Behavior Scales (PKBS by Merrel, 1994)
  - **Digital and non-digital home literacy environments**
    - Adapted from the Home Literacy Environment Questionnaire (HLEQ by Umek, Podlesek, and Fekonja, 2005)

Results

Socioemotional Skills
Pre-test vs. Post test
Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test (one-tailed)

Construct	p-value	
	Intervention	Control
Social Skills	0.002331	0.9685
Problem Behaviors "less"	4.601e-05	0.932

There is **significant improvements** in both **Social Skills and Problem Behaviors** scores for participating in the literature-based program; while there is no significant change in the control group.

Socioemotional Characteristics
Pre-test vs. Post test
Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test (one-tailed)

Construct	p-value	
	Intervention	Control
Neuroticism "less"	2.947e-08	0.4375
Openness to Experience	1.655e-06	1.655e-06
Conscientiousness	1.104e-06	0.1427
Agreeableness	6.973e-10	6.973e-10
Extraversion	.009236	0.1414

There are **significant improvements** in all 5 socioemotional characteristics scores of children after participating in the literature-based program. However, only **Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, and Extraversion** can be attributed to the intervention because there were no significant difference in the results of these variables in the control group.

Socioemotional Skills (Linear Regression)
Post test Social Skills and Problem Behaviors
Covariates: Intervention + Pre-test Social Skills + Age in Months + Home Literacy Environment

Covariate (p-value)	Social Skills	Problem Behaviors
Intervention	0.0149 *	0.154
Pre-test Scores	1.9e-14 ***	<2e-16 ***

At .001 sig. level, the most significant predictor of post test social skills and problem behaviors are the **pre-test scores.**

At .05 sig. level, the participation in the **intervention** was also a predictor of post test social skills.

Socioemotional Characteristics (Linear Regression)
(Post test Scores
Covariates: Intervention + Pre-test Social Skills + Age in Months + Home Literacy Environment

Covariate (p-value)	Neuroticism	Openness to Experience	Conscientiousness	Agreeableness	Extraversion	
Intervention	0.1987	0.4829	0.4450	0.01256 *	0.7497	
Pre-test Scores	<2e-16 ***	1.21e-12 ***	1.33e-13 ***	< 2e-16 ***	<2e-16 ***	Age: 0.0443 *

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

At .001 sig. level, the most significant predictor of socioemotional characteristics are the **pre-test scores.** The participation in the **intervention is not a predictor except** for **Agreeableness** at .05 sig. level.

At .05 sig. level, **Age** is also a predictor of **Extraversion.**

Conclusion: There was a **significant improvement** in most socioemotional skills and characteristics for children who **participated in the literature-based program.** Despite this, when covariates were considered, the strongest predictor of these variables are **children's baseline scores**. This implies that children who have higher scores in socioemotional skills even pre-intervention impacts the children's scores post intervention. The effects of the intervention were seen in General **Social Skills** and **Agreeableness.**