



Perceived Level of Self-Efficacy of Preschool Teachers

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Abstract:

The study was conducted to identify the level of self-efficacy of the preschool teachers in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya and their difference when compared with sex, age, and years of teaching experience using the revised version of the KASE instrument developed by Komlodi (2007) and was used by Kimmy (2017). There were 18 preschool teacher-respondents who answered the 50-item survey which was divided into three areas: Instruction of Literacy, Knowledge of Literacy, and Diagnosis of Literacy Difficulties. The data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative analysis. From the study, it was found out that females have higher level of self-efficacy than males. It was also revealed that teachers who are 35 years old or younger have lower self-efficacy level than those who are 36 years old and older. In terms of years of experience, both groups have very high level of self-efficacy but those with less experience in teaching obtained a higher mean score. Overall, the teachers have a very high level of self-efficacy.

Keywords: *self-efficacy, literacy, instruction*

Background of the Study

Literacy is commonly defined as the ability to read and write. According to TD Bank Financial Group (2010), "literacy is so fundamental to learning that its importance cannot be overstated — it is the essential foundation of education." The ultimate goal of any education system is to equip its children with the essential literacy, numeracy, and broader skills that they need to have control of their purpose and fulfill their potential. It is therefore necessary that individuals have the basic literacy to succeed in every endeavor they undertake. Moreover, literacy is deemed essential as one realizes his role in life. From a combined perspective, a literate community is a vibrant one; a community that relates ideas, engages in dialogue is more inventive and productive. The sharing of ideas, perspectives, and concerns can also lead to greater heights of mutual understanding and caring, and eventually strong community spirit.

A number of studies found out that teachers play an important role in shaping literate people. It should be noted that as early as pre-school, literacy skills should be developed. Barnett and Yarosz (2004) cite that federal and state governments invest substantial public funds in preschool projects within the United States as high-quality preschool programs are associated to positive developmental outcomes of young learners and their future school success (Mashburn et al., 2008; Meisels, 2006). Many other countries have also acknowledged the critical need for an improved investment in preschool education, including China, India, Brazil, Indonesia, and Turkey.

A number of studies found out that a distinctive characteristic of a preschool teacher that has been associated with sophisticated quality classroom instruction and increased child achievement is teacher's sense of self-efficacy (Justice et al., 2008; Guo, Piasta, Justice, & Kaderavek, 2010).

Self-efficacy according to Gavora (2010) refers to self-system that controls most personal activity, including appropriate use of professional knowledge and skills as it reflects in the ability

to exert control over one's motivation, behavior and social environment. Agcam and Babanoglu (2016) defines self-esteem as an individual's belief in his/her own abilities to deal with various situations, and it can play a role not only on how s/he feels about himself or herself but whether or not s/he successfully achieves his/her goals in life. Further, the concept of self-efficacy is the major component of Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory which emphasizes the role of observational learning, social experience, and reciprocal determinism in developing a personality.

Dever and Clement (2016) suggest that there are several methods of moving one's sense of self-efficacy to a higher level. Two of these methods include personal mastery experiences wherein a person successfully masters expectations. It is believed that the more times individuals are successful, the higher the efficacy they will achieve. Another method comprises participation in secondhand experiences wherein they witness others successfully participating in an endeavor. To see someone else master a daunting task will help increase one's efficacy belief that they will be successful, too (Bandura, 1977).

Additionally, Bostock and Boon (2012) consider that an individual's self-efficacy can be achieved from one or more of four identified sources; mastery experiences, wherein an individual's efficacy for a domain is affected by the completion of a worthy goal, social persuasion, including "pep" talks, physiological and emotional arousal that increase efficacy for a task provided that it is similar to excitement rather than anxiety and secondhand experiences. As cited by Bostock & Boon(2012), Woolfolk (2007) is certain that these kinds of experiences which perceive an individual's self-efficacy increase with the observation of a modelled accomplishment; the more identical the individual perceives himself/herself to be to the model, the more prominent the effect on self-efficacy.

With the above-mentioned discussion, it is assumed, according to Guo, et. al. (2011) that preschool teachers' self-efficacy was a noteworthy predictor of the value of classroom where children gain literacy; moreover, teachers' self-efficacy is considerably related with classroom quality in predicting children's development in language. Self-efficacy would refer to teachers' beliefs that they can ignite desirable changes in pupils' behavior and accomplishment. Given the obvious value of preschool teachers' sense of efficacy, it is astonishing that research exploring teachers' sense of efficacy remains limited.

Indeed, the importance of self-efficacy seems to depend on its capacity to affect human's choices and behaviors (Henson, 2001). Additionally, Bandura (1997) supported that self-efficacy performs a vital role in the development of human achievements and motivations. Bandura's work strongly backs up the notion that human behaviors, their motivations and the outcome of their actions (success or failure) are the product of their self-efficacy.

It is therefore necessary to revisit the level of self-efficacy of teachers as it is found out to have played a vital role in the development of literacy skills among learners. On the whole, this study was carried out to examine the perceived level of self-efficacy of preschool teachers who are considered to be strong pillars of literacy. Further, it aimed to compare the level of self-efficacy of teachers with regard to the sex, age, and years of teaching experience.

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study is essentially descriptive in nature. It utilized both quantitative and qualitative data to describe and analyze the level of self-efficacy of pre-school teachers and compare them with chosen variables such as sex, age, and tenure of service.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in Bayombong. It is one of the towns of Nueva Vizcaya which consist of two districts under the Department of Education, Division of Nueva Vizcaya.

Samples and Sampling Procedure

The respondents were 18 qualified teachers in preschool classrooms in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya. The study utilized homogeneous purposive sampling to select participants for the study. Homogeneous purposive sampling is used specifically when the researcher targets to determine the characteristics of a particular group of people (Tongco, 2008). Moreover, purposive sampling was selected because of the limited number of participants, the distance, and location of the schools where the certified preschool teachers are employed. Purposive sampling is used when the researcher needs informed respondents that are willing and able to provide the information necessary to participate in the study (Tongco, 2008).

Data were gathered through completion of a survey by teachers. A message was sent to one of the district supervisors to ensure that access would be given to conduct this study. A letter to the respondents was also attached to the survey. Names of the respondents were no longer required to ensure the confidentiality of responses.

Instrument Used

The survey that was used in this study was a revised version of the KASE instrument developed by Komlodi (2007) which was used by Kimmy in 2017 in her study entitled "Preschool Teachers' Views of Literacy Instruction". This was used to investigate teachers' perceived self-efficacy for a study on variables affecting their self-efficacy for literacy instruction. The revised survey utilized a Likert Scale which include these choices: "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." Information that addresses teachers' perceived self-efficacy for teaching early literacy skills, knowledge of early literacy skills, and diagnosis of literacy difficulties were studied with the use of KASE survey regarding preschool teachers' self-efficacy for early literacy instruction.

Kimmy (2017) emphasizes that self-efficacy of teachers in the area of literacy instruction has something to do with the level teachers feel that they can plan and execute lessons that have impact on learner literacy achievement. She also stresses that self-efficacy in the area of literacy knowledge tells us that teachers feel adept of their understanding of information related to literacy theory. Moreover, diagnosis of literacy difficulties describes the area of the survey which incorporates items that have something to do with learning problems that teachers may encounter as they teach children. These statements include the identification of problems of teachers and explanation of the nature of the problems encountered.

Data Analysis

This study used both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitative analysis primarily consisted of determining the frequency and percentage of the different quantifiable variables mentioned in the previous pages and the mean scores of the teachers' responses to the used survey, KASE instrument. Qualitative used to describe the results.

To get the level of the self-efficacy of teachers, the table below was used.

Mean Score	Interpretation
4.21- 5.00	Very High
3.41- 4.20	High
2.61- 3.40	Moderate
1.81- 2.60-	Low
1.00-1.80	Very Low

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics

Table 1: Number of Respondents According to Sex

Sex	Number	Percentage
Female	15	83.33
Male	3	16.67
Total	18	100

In terms of sex, majority of the participants were female with more than 83 %. There were only 3 males equivalent to less than 17 %. This data implies that in the preschool, there are more female teachers than males.

Table 2: Number of Respondents According to Age

Age	Number	Percentage
35 Below	7	38.89
36 Above	11	61.11
Total	18	100

With regard age, there are less respondents who are 35 years old and below with almost 39 %. The youngest is 22 years old. On the other hand, there were more than 61% of the respondents who are 36 years old and above. The oldest is 46 years old. From this data, it implies that there are older teachers in the preschool in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya.

Table 3: Number of Respondents According to Years of Experience

Age	Number	Percentage
5 years and below	10	55.56
6 years and up	8	44.44
Total	18	100

As to the years of experience, there are more teachers who have less than 5 years of teaching experience with less than 56 %. More than 44% of the respondents have 6 or more years of experience in teaching. It is gleaned from the data that age does not necessarily mean that a teacher has served longer in the service.

Table 4: Level of Self-Efficacy According to Sex

Sex	Instruction of Literacy	Knowledge of Literacy	Diagnosis of Literacy Difficulties	Mean Score	Interpretation
Female	4.52	4.50	4.47	4.495	Very High
Male	3.82	3.67	3.89	3.79	High
Overall	4.17	4.01	4.18	4.14	High

From the table above, it could be seen that the female respondents have a higher self-efficacy than males. This study is in support of the research conducted by Ozdemir (2013) who found out that female prospective teachers have higher self-efficacy beliefs than male prospective teachers. On the other hand, the finding is the opposite of what Kimmy (2017) found out that males have higher self- efficacy. Yet, reasons were not mentioned.

The table also shows that the females scored highest in instruction of literacy particularly in the following items: **#2: If I have a student who is having a hard time learning to write their name, I can create my own special activities to help that student with whatever letters they are having trouble writing;** **#4: I can present lessons that teach students to write their names;** **#11: I can start discussions with my students about books, newspapers etc. that we have read aloud together;** **#12. I can create my own techniques for helping a student who cannot understand verbal directions;** and **#16: I can evaluate students on how much their writing is improving** with a mean score of 4.6. The females' lowest score is under diagnosis of literacy difficulties especially on item **#45: I can see when children are having a hard time figuring out what sounds each letter makes by looking at the invented spellings in their writing** having a mean score of 4.4. This implies that female teachers are confident to teach writing and are creative to device instructional materials to enhance understanding on verbal directions and writing skills but are weak in identifying if children have difficulty making sound of the letters in their writing.

For the male teachers, they scored highest in instruction of literacy particularly in item **#20: I can teach lessons that point out that there are specific sounds used in English** with a mean score of 4.67; however, they scored lowest in knowledge of literacy in item **#31 I can evaluate students to determine their level of phonemic awareness** obtaining a score of 2.67. This means that they are confident in teaching specific sounds but are having difficulty in evaluating learner skills on phonemes.

Table 5: Level of Self-Efficacy According to Age

Sex	Instruction of Literacy	Knowledge of Literacy	Diagnosis of Literacy Difficulties	Mean Score	Interpretation
35 Below	4.20	4.17	4.07	4.15	High
36 Above	4.53	4.49	4.56	4.53	Very High
Overall	4.365	4.33	4.315	4.34	Very High

From the table, it is evident that those who are older have higher level of self-efficacy. Though no study has been conducted so far to prove that the older the teachers are, the higher the level of self-efficacy they have. It could be concluded that this is so, because they have more experience and are more exposed to the teaching- learning environment.

Teachers who are 35 and below have the highest score in instructions of literacy in the following items: **#2: If I have a student who is having a hard time learning to write their name, I can create my own special activities to help that student with whatever letters they are having trouble writing;** **#4: I can present lessons that teach students to write their names;** **#7: I can give students the opportunity to use oral language skills by having them tell stories to the class;** **#12: I can create my own techniques for helping a student who cannot understand verbal directions;** **#16: I can evaluate students on how much their writing is improving;** **#19: I can create my own lessons to teach expressive language skills;** and **#20: I can teach lessons that point out that there are specific sounds used in English** having a mean score of 4.42. However, the lowest score is also under instructions of literacy specifically **#3: I can present lessons that increase the number of letter sounds a student can recognize,** and **#13: I can get students to verbally summarize materials we have read together** with a mean score of 3.85. This means that while teachers under 35 years old can confidently teach writing, oral and expressive language skills, verbal directions, and sounds in English, they find difficulty in teaching reading and letting students condense ideas they have just read.

For teachers over 35 years old, their strengths include instructions of literacy item **#23: I can create my own lessons aimed at teaching skills from each area categorized under phonemic awareness,** and diagnosis of literacy difficulties item **#45: I can see when children are having a hard time figuring out what sounds each letter makes by looking at the invented**

spellings in their writing with a mean score of 4.72. Their weakness is on knowledge of literacy item **#31: I can evaluate students to determine their level of phonemic awareness** obtaining 4.27 as its mean score. Teachers on this note are confident to teach and diagnose difficulties on phonemic awareness but are challenged in identifying the students' level of phonemic awareness. It is then assumed that teacher lack standardized test or rubric to determine the students' level on phonemic awareness.

Table 6: Level of Self-Efficacy According to Years in Service

Sex	Instruction of Literacy	Knowledge of Literacy	Diagnosis of Literacy Difficulties	Mean Score	Interpretation
Less than 5 years	4.37	4.36	4.4	4.38	Very High
6 or more years	4.43	4.36	4.33	4.37	Very High
Overall	4.4	4.36	4.365	4.375	Very High

The table shows the level of self-efficacy according to years in service. It is evident that teachers with less than 5 years of experience have a higher mean score of .1, though both have a very high level of self-efficacy. This data back up the finding of the study by Senemoglu et.al. (2009) which states that most of the teachers display strong self-efficacy regardless of experience. On the other hand, the data negate the idea that experienced teachers have higher level of self-efficacy beliefs than novice teachers (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2007), yet they confirm the study conducted by Doğutaş (2011) who established that novice teachers have strong self-efficacy beliefs. Though, the length of service was not clearly defined as to the number of years of experience of novice teachers.

Table 7: Overall Level of Self-Efficacy of Teachers

Instruction of Literacy	Knowledge of Literacy	Diagnosis of Literacy Difficulties	Mean Score	Interpretation
4.39	4.36	4.37	4.37	Very High

It can be gleaned from the table that overall, the teachers have very high self- efficacy beliefs in all three aspects thereby yielding an overall very high rating.

Kaur (2017) concludes that teachers with high efficacy have the inclination to experiment with methods of instruction, seek improved teaching methods, and experiment with instructional materials. It is also emphasized that teachers with a strong sense of efficacy are armed with numerous characteristics. These include:

They tend to exhibit greater levels of planning and organization; They are more open to new ideas and are more willing to experiment with new methods to better meet the needs of their students; They are more persistent and resilient when things do not go smoothly; They are less critical of students when they make errors; They are less inclined to refer a difficult student to special education."

Veresova and Mala (2012) also emphasize that self-efficacious teachers would recognize the demands of everyday teaching as being less intimidating than those teachers who possess self-doubts about their professional performance. Furthermore, Hajghani, Razmi, & Ghavam (2012) believe that teachers with high self- efficacy are more likely than those teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy to execute didactic innovations inside the classroom, to use relevant classroom management approaches, and to provide adequate teaching methods that inspire students' independence, minimize custodial control, and accept responsibility for learners with different learning needs.

It is then understood that with the high level of self-efficacy of the teacher-respondents, the children have more opportunity and experience that are considered their advantage in acquiring high level of literacy skills.

Summary

The study was conducted to identify the level of self-efficacy of the preschool teachers in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya and the difference when compared with sex, age, and years of teaching experience.

The main tool used in the study was a revised version of the KASE instrument developed by Komlodi (2007) which was used by Kimmy in 2017. Using purposive sampling, 18 respondents were chosen.

The data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Using the figures and data gathered from the survey, it was found that:

1. Females have higher level of self-efficacy than males. Teachers who are 35 years old or younger have lower self-efficacy level than those who are 36 years old and older. In terms of years of experience, both groups have very high level of self-efficacy but those with less than 5 years of experience are higher than those with 6 years or more teaching experience.
2. Overall, the teachers have a very high level of self-efficacy.

Conclusion

From the study conducted, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Sex, age, and years of teaching experience can be distinguishing factors in identifying the perceived level of self-efficacy of teachers.
2. High level of efficacy is an effect of the diverse experience of the teachers and their ability to cope with the challenges in teaching employing their knowledge, skills, and exemplifying desirable attitudes and values.

Recommendations

From the conclusions made, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Correlate the level of literacy skills of the children with the sex, age, and years of experience of teachers to their level of self-efficacy and venture on other significant variables that might have effect to the level of-self efficacy such as type of school (public or private), highest educational attainment of teachers, ethnicity and others.
2. Conduct focus group discussion or interview to explore on other factors that contribute to a high level of self- efficacy.

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