

## **PLAYFULNESS AND TEACHER’S SELF-EFFICACY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS**

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**Abstract:** This study aims to determine the relationship between playfulness and self-efficacy among early childhood teachers. Playfulness is a personality trait that underlies an individual's tendency to be intrinsically motivated, have a clear orientation toward pleasure, and participate spontaneously and without restrictions. The method used in this research is quantitative research methods with a correlational research design. The tool to measure playfulness is the Adult Playfulness Traits Scale (APTS), which consists of 19 items and Norwegian Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (NTSES) to measure teacher’s self-efficacy, which consists of 24 items. The subjects of this study (N=52 people) were early childhood teachers. The correlation statistical test in this study uses Pearson product-moment correlation to measure the relationship between variables through the correlation coefficient. The results revealed a significant correlation coefficient between playfulness and teacher's self-efficacy  $r = -0.398$  and  $p = 0.003 < 0.01$ , indicating negative relationship between early childhood teachers’ playfulness and teacher’s self-efficacy. In other words, the higher the playfulness, the lower the teacher's self-efficacy among teachers. Hence, the importance of playfulness for teachers to build warm relationships with students in the classroom so that students feel safe, is inseparable from teacher competence which is based on beliefs about their own abilities or self-efficacy.

**Keywords:** Playfulness, Teacher’s Self-Efficacy, Early Childhood Education Teachers

### **INTRODUCTION**

Teachers play a very important role in the success of the education system (Shahzad & Naureen, 2017). In other words, the more competent

teachers are, the more effective the education system will be. Teacher's competence is based on beliefs about one's own abilities or self-efficacy (Shahzad & Naureen, 2017). A good teacher is a teacher who has various qualities. One of the teacher's qualities that can best predict the success of a teacher's teaching and learning process is teacher's self-efficacy (Henson, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), i.e the confidence to carry out these tasks (Shahzad & Naureen, 2017).

Teaching is an art and teachers are artists. John Dewey (in Skilbeck, 2017) stated the importance of playfulness in education, which according to him playfulness and seriousness can represent the mental attitude of an ideal artist. In pedagogical practice, the mental attitude of teachers in their work combines the harmonization of playfulness, humor and seriousness as the initial capital for creating extraordinary teaching and learning activities. This approach creates the type of enjoyable experience that can help students achieve desired educational outcomes. Griffith and Burns stated that exceptional teachers utilize play and fun to enhance their students' learning experiences (Griffith & Burns, 2012; Skilbeck, 2017).

Young children as students spend a lot of time in educational settings, where traditionally, their main occupation is play. A pleasant preschool environment has been linked to better cognitive, social and emotional development. Although it is assumed that teachers' play behavior is important in creating a pleasant school environment, empirical knowledge about this is still lacking (Pinchover, 2017). The terms play and playfulness are related, play is defined as behavior, while playfulness is the basis and spirit of play (Lieberman 1965; Akyar & Celik, 2022). Bundy (1997) further showed the importance of interactions between teachers and students with the environment. In this case, children who are cheerful (playfulness) show less play behavior when the environment is not supportive, but a supportive environment can increase children's play actions (Bronson & Bundy 2001).

The playfulness of adults, in this case, teachers, is very important for building warm and close relationships with students in the classroom where they can feel a high level of security (Bergen, Reid & Torelli 2009). This playfulness cannot be separated from teacher competence which is based on belief in their own abilities or self-efficacy (Shahzad &

Naureen, 2017). Apart from that, a good teacher is a teacher who has various qualities. One of the teacher qualities that can best predict the success of a teacher's teaching and learning process is teacher's self-efficacy (Henson, 2002) where there is self-confidence to carry out these tasks (Shahzad & Naureen, 2017).

Teacher's self-efficacy according to Bandura (Cansoy, Polatcan & Parlar, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007) is the self-confidence that a teacher has regarding several abilities. These abilities are in terms of influencing decision making, managing the class, organizing a series of lessons, teaching, motivating students to learn, and communicating with students effectively to support their activities at school to achieve educational goals. Early adult individuals can take responsibility for their actions and develop emotional control within themselves (Santrock, 2017).

Teacher's self-efficacy has been proven to be related to several things that are important for increasing the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process in the classroom, such as motivation and student achievement (Ashton & Webb; Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles; Moore & Esselman; Ross, in Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007), improving teachers' attitudes towards innovation and change (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Bishop; Guskey, cited in Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007), and so on. Teachers' self-efficacy is also related to teachers' confidence in dealing with various student behavior problems in their classrooms (Bandura, in Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

The school where the research was conducted is a private school in Tangerang, Indonesia which has several locations spread across several areas. This school has several levels of early childhood education level classes, namely toddler, playgroup, kindergarten 1 and kindergarten 2. This school is not an inclusive school, but in each school year there are several children with special needs who are included. This is certainly a challenge that early childhood education teachers must face in teaching and learning activities in their classes. Previously, a preliminary study was carried out using a focus group discussion method with 10 early childhood education teachers at the school. Several points were found, namely that some teachers felt ready to teach all students even though there were special needs student in their class, others stated that they were not ready and needed help. Apart from that, the teaching methods

applied will vary according to the characteristics of the students, as well as for students with special needs.

Previously, there were several studies, such as Pinchover's (2017) research, examining the relationship between teacher's playfulness and children. The sample was thirty-one pairs of teachers aged 24-57 years and children aged 40-72 months. The measuring tool used is the Adult Playfulness Scale (APS) and thirty minutes of video recording of teacher-child play interactions are used to evaluate children's playfulness using the Test of Playfulness. Through this research, it was found that there is a positive relationship between spontaneous and silly teachers having a positive effect on children's playfulness. These findings indicate that teachers' and children's playfulness scores are close to each other. This study is the first to show that aspects of teacher playfulness are associated with higher playfulness in children. Promoting teachers' play behavior may be associated with better teacher-child play interactions, thereby increasing children's playfulness.

According to Pinchover (2017), teachers who internalize the importance of play have a greater tendency to use a play approach in the classroom, compared to teachers who are less concerned with the value of play, which ultimately results in a more structured, directed, and rule-based approach in the classroom (Barnett 2018 ). Likewise, teachers who enjoy playing have an intrinsic motivation to try innovative ideas that make their classrooms and teaching more engaging for children (Bateson & Martin 2013; Singer 2013). Playful teachers have a high tolerance for ambiguity which supports children's curiosity, risk taking, and creative problem solving skills (Tegano, Groves & Catron 1999). In addition, they are often eager to integrate active and adventurous activities inside and outside the classroom (Akyar & Celik, 2022). Teachers' views and appreciation of fun are very important for maintaining children's fun in their classrooms (Pinchover 2017).

Oyola et al. (2018) examined the perspectives of parents of autistic children regarding play experiences and self-efficacy during play. Using a semi-structured interview method, it was given to 8 parents of children aged 3-7 years with ASD. Participants associated self-efficacy during play with their perceived ability to interact with their child and with positive emotions experienced during play. It was found that fathers

generally derived greater self-efficacy from play experiences than mothers, and this was explained by differences in fathers' and mothers' motivations for play. Mothers were motivated to play for outcome-oriented reasons (e.g., promoting child progress) whereas fathers' motivation reflected greater emotional emphasis, reflecting a better relationship between motivation and perceived indicators of self-efficacy during play. The results show that the relationship between motivation to play and indicators of perceived efficacy during play is important for parents' sense of self-efficacy.

Other research was conducted by Barnett (2018), who examined the quality of playfulness in preschool children in relation to the child's personality traits and individual characteristics. The sample consisted of 271 children (127 boys and 144 girls). It was found that teachers in primary grades viewed children who liked to play, especially boys, as more disruptive than children who did not like to play. Teachers' negative perceptions can be transferred to a child's peers who like to play, which can create problems for the social development and academic success of children who prefer to play (Barnett 2018). These teachers' perceptions are very important, especially during children's early years of development, where they begin to develop warm and caring relationships with teachers. As a result, it is important for teachers to appreciate the joy of children in their classrooms (Akyar & Celik, 2022).

However, the focus of most research on playfulness is its inner psychological qualities (Shen, 2010). In addition, studies on teacher playfulness and its examination in educational contexts are still limited, especially early childhood education (Pinchover 2017). Therefore, researchers want to know a broader picture of the relationship between playfulness and self-efficacy in early childhood education teachers.

### **Teacher Self-Efficacy**

Bandura defined self-efficacy as a person's confidence in their capacity to exert a range of control over their own behaviors and occurrences in their surroundings (Feist & Feist, 2018). Both teachers and students can benefit from having high levels of self-efficacy (Pajares, Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, cited in Schunk, 2011). According to Bandura (Cansoy, Polatcan & Parlar, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007), teacher's self-efficacy refers to a teacher's confidence in

a variety of abilities. In order to assist students' activities at school and help them reach their academic objectives, teachers need to develop competencies such as influencing decision-making, managing classes, organizing a series of lessons, teaching, inspiring students to study, and effectively communicating with students. According to Bandura (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007), teacher's self-efficacy is also correlated with instructors' perceptions of their ability to manage a variety of student behavior issues in the classroom.

A teacher's beliefs regarding all the abilities he has can include the ability to adapt, cognitive capacity, intelligence, and the ability to take and decide what should be done to carry out the necessary actions, tasks in learning activities, and help his students in learning, including students who are less fortunate, motivated and have learning difficulties. Teacher's self-efficacy refers to personal beliefs about a teacher's capability to help students learn. Teacher's self-efficacy will influence teachers' activities, efforts, and tenacity in educating students (Ashton; Ashton & Webb, in Schunk, 2011). Thus, it can be concluded that teacher self-efficacy is the belief that teachers have about their capabilities to help the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process in schools.

It is important to increase a teacher's self-confidence because it can support and provide a foundation for a teacher to strive diligently, tenaciously, develop strong motivation and courage in facing obstacles in educational programs to support his activities at school. Self-efficacy is very important for teachers, because having self-efficacy will provide a teacher assessment to estimate the extent of confidence in his abilities and the efforts he has in carrying out tasks, facing various challenges faced, and completing his duties as a teacher. Teacher's self-efficacy is a driving force for teachers which will be seen from the achievements received by students and will also influence student motivation in learning (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2011).

Bandura in Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2009) identified seven dimensions of teacher self-efficacy. These dimensions include: 1) Instruction-The importance of teachers having confidence when imparting knowledge, elaborating on concepts, and responding to questions that might improve student understanding; 2) Adapting education to the needs of each individual. The importance of teachers feeling confident in their ability to

identify the various special needs of students; 3) Motivating students. The importance of a teacher's confidence in their ability to inspire students for the best learning process; 4) Applying discipline-The importance of teacher having the confidence to be able to maintain the rules they set in the classroom; 5) Cooperating with colleagues and parents-The importance of a teacher having confidence to collaborate with a team and share responsibilities, as well as being expected to continue working closely with parents to provide information about students' academic development and to make decisions with them. Early childhood education actually demands that the parents and the schoolwork well together (Wisudawati, 2023; Wisudawati & Damayanti, 2021); 6) Coping with change and challenges -The importance of teachers feeling secure enough to implement various curricula and lesson plans with students with various special needs in the classroom (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009).

There is four things can influence teacher self-efficacy, namely 1) Mastery experiences (experiences of success). A teacher's self-efficacy will rise when they experience success frequently (mastery experiences), whereas it will fall when they experience failure. Typically, success that is mostly attributable to causes other than the person will not have an impact on that person's ability to increase self-efficacy. However, if the achievement was a result of a significant amount of effort on the part of the individual, this will have an effect on increasing self-efficacy; 2) Vicarious experiences (imitating or modeling). In addition to one's own experience, the success stories of others (vicarious experience) who perform tasks similarly to oneself typically boost a person's confidence in their ability to complete the same work. Social models, which typically appear in people who are unaware of their own strengths and inspire imitation, are a way to develop self-efficacy. However, the self-efficacy obtained will not have much effect if the observed model is not similar or different from the model; 3) Verbal persuasion (verbal persuasion). The ability to persuade or indicate that someone is capable of solving the issues they will encounter. This verbal persuasion can motivate people to work harder in order to succeed and reach their goals. However, the self-efficacy that develops with this approach typically does not continue for very long, particularly when the person goes through a distressing traumatic event; and 4) Emotional arousal (emotional states). When a person experiences anxiety or worry while performing a task, it is

frequently perceived as a failure. Low self-efficacy is typically characterized by high levels of tension and anxiety, whereas high levels of stress and anxiety are a sign of high self-efficacy (Pendergast, Garvis, & Keogh, 2011).

### **Playfulness**

Playfulness or cheerfulness is one of the internal states described as a quality of play, and it transfers itself into the player's personality traits in the development process (Lieberman, 1967; Akyar & Celik, 2022). Playfulness can be observed and is related to imagination, creativity, and play. In addition, Lieberman (1967) described physical and social playfulness as having cognitive spontaneity, manifesting playfulness, and having a sense of humor. Barnett (1992) explained the characteristics of playfulness and developed a scale to measure it (Shin 2004). Apart from that, according to Barnett (1992), age, gender and family characteristics influence playfulness (Akyar & Celik, 2022).

Shen, Chick, and Zinn (2014) defined aspects of playfulness as a personality trait consisting of three interrelated motivational and cognitive qualities: (1) fun-seeking motivation which encourages individuals to actively gain pleasure from the fun. or its internal and/or external environment, including; a) fun belief, namely believing in the value of pleasure in life); b) initiative, namely actively creating fun activities; and c) reactivity, namely responsiveness to pleasant stimuli; and awareness, consciously choosing a lighthearted approach to life events (Csikszentmihalyi, 1981; Shen, 2010); (2) uninhibitedness (freedom), the ability to conquer potentially limiting situational factors and create a free and uninhibited mental state; and (3) spontaneity, a mental tendency to respond immediately without deep thought (Shen, 2010; Akyar & Celik, 2022).

Therefore, the objective of this study is to determine the relationship between playfulness and self-efficacy among early childhood teachers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The method used in this research is quantitative research methods with a correlational analysis. It was used to explain relationships regarding social settings to explore a phenomenon by describing a number of

variables related to the problem being studied. The sampling method used in this study was non-probability sampling, namely the convenience sampling technique, because it is based on the availability and ease of obtaining respondents and the willingness of respondents to become research subjects. The taking of participants was not distinguished from the aspect of race, gender, or economic background. The total samples of early childhood education teachers in this research were 52 subjects.

### **Subjects**

The participants in this study were early childhood education teachers at several kindergarten schools in Tangerang. In this study, research participants had to meet predetermined criteria, namely a) adult, with an age range of 20-45 years, b) early childhood education teacher, c) domiciled in Tangerang, Indonesia. The researcher choose early childhood education teachers as research participants based on the researcher's assessment that the sample could represent the population, as well as to get a more precise picture of playfulness and teacher self-efficacy of early childhood education teacher in several kindergarten schools in Tangerang.

### **Instruments**

The measuring tool used to measure the playfulness variable is in the form of a questionnaire consisting of 19 items compiled referring to the Adult Playfulness Trait Scale measuring tool by Shen, Chick, and Zinn (2014), namely the Adult Playfulness Trait Scale (APTS). Researchers chose to use the three dimensions in the APTS because they have the same background, namely measuring the self-efficacy of adults, namely teachers in this study. Meanwhile, the instrument used to measure self-efficacy is the Norwegian Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (NTSES). The measuring tool used to measure the teacher's self-efficacy variable is a teacher's self-efficacy questionnaire which consists of 24 items compiled referring to the teacher's self-efficacy measuring tool by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007), namely the Norwegian Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (NTSES).

### **Data Analysis**

The correlation analysis aims to see whether there is a relationship between variables, expressed as a correlation coefficient. To measure the closeness of the relationship between two variables, this research uses the

Pearson Product Moment correlation through the correlation coefficient.

## RESULTS

The data description for playfulness and teacher's self-efficacy is based on categorization norms at 27% lower limit and 73% upper limit. In the playfulness variable, there were 14 people (26.9%) in the low category, 24 people (46.2%) in the medium category and 14 people (26.9%) in the high category. Likewise, in the teacher's self-efficacy variable, 14 people (26.9%) found the low category, 24 people (46.2%) were in the medium category and 14 people (26.9%) were in the high category. Thus, early childhood education teachers have a moderate level of playfulness and teacher's self-efficacy. The data can be seen in table 1.

**Table 1: Descriptive Analysis Of Playfulness And Teacher's Self-efficacy**

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low	14	26.9
Medium	24	46.2
High	14	26.9
Total	52	100.0

In this section, the relationship between playfulness and teacher's self-efficacy which is analyzed using the Pearson product moment correlation method. Based on the results of the analysis, it is known that the correlation coefficient between playfulness and teacher's self-efficacy,  $r = -0.398$  and  $p = 0.003 < 0.01$ , shows that there is a negative relationship between playfulness and teacher's self-efficacy in early childhood education teachers. In other words, the higher the playfulness, the lower the teacher's self-efficacy in in early childhood education teachers. The data can be seen in table 2.

**Table 2: Correlation Analysis Of Playfulness And Teacher's Self-efficacy**

Variable	r	p	Result
Playfulness & Teacher Self-efficacy	-0.398	> 0.60	Negative relationship

## DISCUSSION

In this research, the sample used was 52 people. Based on analysis tests using the Pearson product moment correlation test, the coefficient

obtained was  $r = -0.398$  with a significance value of  $p = 0.003 < 0.01$ . A significance of 0.003 indicates that  $H_a$  is accepted, because 0.003 is smaller than 0.01, which means there is a negative relationship between playfulness and teacher's self-efficacy in early childhood education teachers. In other words, the higher the playfulness, the lower the teacher's self-efficacy in early childhood education teachers.

In this study, it was found that playfulness was related to teacher's self-efficacy. Playfulness or cheerfulness is one of the internal states described as a quality of play, and it transfers itself into the player's personality traits in the development process (Lieberman, 1967; Akyar & Celik, 2022). This traits cannot be separated from teacher competence, which is based on belief in their own abilities or self-efficacy (Shahzad & Naureen, 2017). Teacher's self-efficacy according to Bandura (Cansoy, Polatcan & Parlar, 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007) is the self-confidence that a teacher has regarding several abilities. These abilities are in terms of influencing decision making, managing the class, organizing a series of lessons, teaching, motivating students to learn, and communicating with students effectively to support their activities at school to achieve educational goals. Early adult individuals can take responsibility for their actions and develop emotional control within themselves (Santrock, 2017).

The data description for playfulness and teacher's self-efficacy is based on categorization norms at 27% lower limit and 73% upper limit. In the playfulness variable, there were 14 people (26.9%) in the low category, 24 people (46.2%) in the medium category and 14 people (26.9%) in the high category. Thus, early childhood education teachers have a moderate level of playfulness and teacher's self-efficacy.

This data is in line with the results of the correlation test of this research which shows that there is a negative relationship between playfulness and teacher's self-efficacy in early childhood education teachers. In other words, the higher the playfulness, the lower the teacher's self-efficacy in early childhood education teachers. This might happen because in this school there are several children with special needs which can certainly affect teacher's self-efficacy in early childhood teachers, hence playfulness cannot be implemented equally among all students. Currently, many children with special needs are starting to be found in

public schools (Mangunsong, 2010). In reality, the learning process in schools where there are children with special needs is not optimal. Schools do not yet understand the different needs of children with special needs. Apart from the uneven socialization of the concept of inclusion, teachers are also incompetent in handling children with special needs (Kompas.com, 2011).

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of this research are certainly different from the previously proposed hypothesis and the results of previous research, where it turns out that this school phenomenon can influence the results of this research. Based on the data analysis that has been carried out regarding the relationship between playfulness and self-efficacy in early childhood education teachers, it can be concluded that there is a negative relationship between playfulness and self-efficacy in early childhood education teachers. In other words, the higher the playfulness, the lower the teacher's self-efficacy in early childhood education teachers.

## **Informed Consent Statement**

Data is accessible and there is no consent issues.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) have no conflict of interest to declare.

## **Ethics Statement**

Data is accessible and there are no ethics issues.

## **Author Contributions**

Winy Nila Wisudawati : designing the study/research; analysis and interpretation of data, final review with critical and intellectual participation in the manuscript.

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### **Data Availability Statement**

The contents underlying the research text are included in the manuscript.

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