A STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' COMPETENCY AND SELF-EFFICACY IN A-BRAND KINDERGARTEN IN BIJIE CITY, GUIZHOU PROVINCE, CHINA

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Abstract: This study aimed to examine the relationship between teacher competency and self-efficacy among teachers in A-brand kindergartens in Bijie City, Guizhou Province, and to analyze the influence of demographic variables—including gender, household registration, marital status, and educational background—on these two constructs. A questionnaire survey was conducted using a five-point Likert scale to assess teacher competency and teacher self-efficacy. Data were collected from 100 in-service teachers at A-brand kindergartens in Bijie City and analyzed using SPSS 29.0. The results indicated that teacher competency was generally high, and self-efficacy was at a moderately high level. Significant differences were found in teacher competency and self-efficacy across different demographic groups. Furthermore, correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and teacher competency. The findings provide empirical support for enhancing teaching quality and professional development among kindergarten teachers. Based on the results, it is recommended that coordinated improvement of teacher self-efficacy and competency be emphasized in teacher training programs, especially through strengthened support in areas such as organizational management and teacher–child interaction. Additionally, differentiated professional development paths based on marital status may be explored to further enhance teacher quality and optimize educational outcomes.

Keywords: Preschool Teachers, Teacher Competency, Self-Efficacy

Introduction

In recent years, there has been increasing global attention to the quality of preschool education, with studies highlighting the critical role of teacher competency in early childhood development. Teacher competency, which includes dimensions such as instructional organization, emotional support, classroom management, and home-school communication, is closely linked to children's cognitive,

emotional, and social development (Ogunbode et al., 2022). Teacher self-efficacy, or teachers' confidence in their own ability, plays a pivotal role in enhancing teaching effectiveness and fostering continuous professional growth (Kim, 2024). These competencies are fundamental for achieving educational equity and improving the overall quality of education (Crouch et al., 2021).

In China, significant strides have been made in improving preschool education, especially in rural areas like Bijie City, Guizhou Province, where educational resources are limited (Lamanauskas et al., 2021). Despite government investments in preschool education and teacher training, imbalances remain in resource allocation and teacher professional development, particularly in the western regions (Guo et al., 2024). These gaps underscore the need for further exploration of the relationship between teacher competency and self-efficacy, especially considering demographic factors such as gender, educational background, and marital status, which can influence these constructs.

Bijie City, as a representative region in Guizhou, faces multiple challenges in preschool education, such as inadequate teacher training and insufficient practical skills (Yu et al., 2024). Although local authorities have introduced various measures to improve teacher competency, their impact has been limited due to economic and social factors. Therefore, this study aims to explore the connection between teacher competency and self-efficacy among preschool teachers in Bijie's A-brand kindergartens, providing insights that can inform policy and support the professional development of teachers in underserved regions.

This research seeks to bridge the gap in empirical studies on this topic, contributing to a deeper understanding of how teacher self-efficacy and competency interact, and offering practical recommendations for improving teacher training programs in similar contexts.

This summary maintains the core ideas while focusing on key themes such as teacher competency, self-efficacy, and the specific context of Bijie City. Let me know if you need any further adjustments!

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate in depth the relationship between Teacher Competency and self-efficacy of Preschool teachers of Bijie City, Guizhou Province, Brand A. The specific objectives of this study include:

(1) To investigate the status of Teacher Competency of Preschool teachers of brand A in Bijie City, Guizhou Province.

(2) To investigate the level of self-efficacy among teachers of brand A kindergartens in Bijie City, Guizhou Province.

(3) To understand the differences in Teacher Competency and self-efficacy among teachers who understand different background variables (gender, household registration, education, marital status)

(4) To reveal the correlation between Teacher Competency and self-efficacy in brand A kindergartens in Bijie City, Guizhou Province.

Literature Review

Teacher Competency

Teacher competency refers to the comprehensive set of skills, knowledge, and attributes that teachers must possess to perform effectively in their teaching roles. This includes both technical skills, such as instructional design and classroom management, and interpersonal skills, such as communication and emotional intelligence (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2001). It is a multidimensional construct that encompasses areas like organizational management, responsibility, interpersonal communication, instructional knowledge, and professional ethics (McClelland, 1973; Korthagen, 2004). Research has shown that teacher competency is directly related to student performance, with competent teachers contributing significantly to the cognitive, emotional, and social development of their students (Ogunbode et al., 2022).

In early childhood education, teacher competency is especially important because young children require not only cognitive support but also emotional and social guidance. Teachers' abilities to manage classrooms, interact with children, and design effective learning activities are crucial for fostering a supportive learning environment (Kim, 2024). In China, the concept of teacher competency has evolved, reflecting the broader needs of educational reforms. Studies have identified key dimensions of teacher competency, such as organizational management, responsibility, and professional knowledge, which align with improving teaching quality and educational outcomes (Li, 2017; Li et al., 2024).

Moreover, teacher competency plays a significant role in achieving educational equity. In regions with limited resources, such as rural and remote areas, teachers' competencies can bridge the gap between educational disparities, enabling them to provide higher-quality education despite the lack of material resources (Crouch et al., 2021). Thus, improving teacher competency is critical to enhancing educational equity and ensuring that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have access to quality learning experiences.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1977), refers to an individual's belief in their ability to accomplish specific tasks and achieve goals in the face of challenges. In the context of education, teacher self-efficacy is a vital factor influencing teaching behavior, emotional regulation, and professional development. Teachers with high self-efficacy tend to exhibit greater motivation, creativity, and persistence, particularly when confronted with challenges in the classroom (Lin et al., 2021). This belief in their abilities shapes how teachers approach their instructional tasks, manage classroom dynamics, and interact with students.

Self-efficacy has been shown to have a direct impact on teachers' professional growth and career satisfaction (Travers & Cooper, 2024). Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to adopt innovative teaching strategies, engage students effectively, and create a positive classroom atmosphere (Saglam et al., 2023). Furthermore, teacher self-efficacy is closely linked to reduced burnout, improved job satisfaction, and overall well-being (Bardach et al., 2022).

In preschool education, where teachers play a central role in both educational and emotional development, self-efficacy is particularly important. Teachers with high self-efficacy are better equipped to manage classroom interactions, support emotional development, and foster a positive learning environment (Le et al., 2020). Moreover, self-efficacy can enhance teachers' resilience, enabling them to cope with the unique challenges of early childhood education, such as managing diverse learning needs and addressing emotional issues (Setyaningsih & Suchyadi, 2021).

Research has demonstrated that self-efficacy is not solely an individual trait but is also influenced by external factors, such as institutional support, professional development opportunities, and feedback from peers and parents (Lauermann & ten, 2021). Thus, enhancing teacher self-efficacy is a critical goal for improving teaching quality, especially in regions with limited resources, where teachers may face additional stressors such as large class sizes and inadequate training.

Research on the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Teacher Competency

The relationship between teacher self-efficacy and teacher competency is well-documented in educational research, with studies consistently showing a positive correlation between the two. Teachers with high self-efficacy tend to demonstrate stronger competencies in key areas such as classroom management, instructional planning, and teacher-child interaction (Barrot et al., 2021). This relationship is reciprocal: higher teacher competency often leads to an increase in self-efficacy, as teachers who experience success in their teaching practices develop a stronger sense of their capabilities (Zamora et al., 2022). Conversely, teachers with higher self-efficacy tend to adopt more effective teaching strategies and create better classroom environments, which in turn enhances their competency (Bardach et al., 2022).

Research in preschool education further emphasizes the importance of this reciprocal relationship. Preschool teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to engage in proactive classroom management, effective lesson planning, and positive teacher-child interactions, all of which are critical components of teacher competency (Li et al., 2022). Moreover, the development of teacher self-efficacy can enhance teachers' willingness to innovate and engage in continuous professional development, which ultimately improves their overall competency (Kasneci et al., 2023).

This dynamic interaction between self-efficacy and competency has significant implications for teacher professional development programs. Educational systems should focus not only on enhancing teachers' competencies through training and development but also on fostering self-efficacy by providing teachers with the tools, support, and encouragement they need to succeed. By strengthening

both dimensions, educators can create a more positive and productive teaching environment that benefits both teachers and students.

A-Brand Kindergarten in Bijie City

A-Brand Kindergarten in Bijie City, located in Guizhou Province, serves as an important case study in improving preschool education in resource-constrained regions. Despite facing challenges such as limited educational resources and teacher training opportunities, A-Brand Kindergarten has made significant strides in enhancing both teacher competency and educational outcomes. The kindergarten employs a child-centered approach, focusing on the holistic development of children and the integration of academic, emotional, and social learning (Lamanauskas et al., 2021).

One of the key strategies implemented at A-Brand Kindergarten is its emphasis on teacher professional development. Through regular training sessions, collaborative teaching practices, and a supportive learning environment, teachers are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to improve their competency in key areas such as classroom management, instructional planning, and teacher-student interactions (Yu et al., 2024). Furthermore, the kindergarten places a strong emphasis on home-school collaboration, recognizing the importance of parental involvement in children's education (Davis-Kean et al., 2021).

The experiences of A-Brand Kindergarten offer valuable insights for other kindergartens in similar regions, particularly in terms of how to improve teacher competency and foster a positive educational environment despite resource limitations. The kindergarten's success in balancing teacher development with community engagement provides a model for addressing educational disparities in rural and underserved areas. Moreover, the implementation of targeted policies and practices that enhance teacher competency and self-efficacy can help promote educational equity and improve the quality of preschool education in underdeveloped regions (Lamanauskas et al., 2021).

Methodology

In this study, the teachers from three A-brand kindergartens in Bijie City, Guizhou Province, were selected using a convenience sampling method. The total number of teachers in the three kindergartens was 105, and these institutions served as the research areas for this study. The sample included teachers from Kindergarten K, Kindergarten F, and Kindergarten Z. To ensure comprehensive representation, the teachers' basic demographic information, including gender, age, years of teaching experience, educational background, and marital status, was collected and categorized.

A total of 100 valid questionnaires were collected, resulting in an effective response rate of 95.24%, which meets the statistical standardization requirements for analysis. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 29.0 software to explore the relationship between teacher competency and self-efficacy, and to assess the impact of demographic variables on these constructs.

Teacher Competency Scale

The teacher competency scale used in this study was based on Li's (2017) model, which consists of five dimensions: organizational management, interpersonal communication, responsibility, achievement, and professional knowledge. This scale was chosen due to its applicability to preschool education and its proven reliability and validity in similar studies. The questionnaire included 25 questions, each designed to assess the teachers' self-reported competency in these areas.

Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale

The teacher self-efficacy scale was adapted from Le et al.'s (2020) four-dimensional model, which includes: teacher-child interaction, classroom management, instructional planning, and home-school collaboration. This scale is well-established for assessing preschool teachers' self-efficacy and has been validated for use in Chinese educational settings. The questionnaire consisted of 20 items, each aimed at evaluating teachers' confidence in managing various teaching and classroom tasks.

Demographic Information

To analyze the effects of demographic variables on teacher competency and self-efficacy, the following variables were included: gender, household registration (urban or rural), marital status, and educational background. These variables were chosen based on prior research indicating their potential influence on teachers' professional development and performance (Yan et al., 2024; Li et al., 2022).

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis to test the relationships between the key variables and to explore the influence of demographic factors.

Results

Demographic Analysis of the Respondents

In this study, 100 valid questionnaires were collected from in-service teachers of A-brand kindergartens in Bijie City, Guizhou Province. The demographic analysis focused on gender, age, teaching experience, educational background, and marital status. Among the respondents, the gender distribution was heavily skewed toward female teachers, with 94 female teachers (94%) and only 6 male teachers (6%). Regarding age, most teachers (45%) were between 31-40 years old, followed by 20% under 30 years, 25% between 41-50 years, and 10% above 50 years. Teaching experience varied, with 40% having between 3 and 10 years of experience, and 30% with 11 to 20 years. In terms of education, the majority (79%) held a bachelor’s degree or lower. Lastly, marital status showed a strong majority of unmarried teachers, comprising 97%, with only 3% being married.

Status of Teacher Competencies

Descriptive statistics were conducted to assess the competency levels of preschool teachers in A-brand kindergartens in Bijie City, Guizhou Province. As shown in Table 4.2, the overall competency level was high (M=3.82, SD=0.598), indicating strong performance across dimensions. Among the five dimensions, “sense of accomplishment” had the highest mean (M=3.90, SD=0.651),

while "organizational management" was relatively lower (M=3.71, SD=0.610), though still at a high level. The variation in standard deviations suggests differences in individual performance across dimensions. In summary, the overall teacher competency was strong, with room for improvement in specific areas.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Competencies (n = 100)

Dimension	N	M	SD	Interpretation
Organizational Management	100	3.71	0.608	High
Interpersonal Communication	100	3.83	0.643	High
Sense of Responsibility	100	3.88	0.649	High
Sense of Accomplishment	100	3.90	0.651	High
Professional Knowledge	100	3.81	0.683	High
Overall, Teacher Competency	100	3.82	0.598	High

Source: SPSS data analysis summary

Current Status of Self-efficacy

Descriptive analysis revealed that the overall self-efficacy level of preschool teachers in A-brand kindergartens in Bijie City was moderate to high (M=3.99, SD=0.640), indicating relatively strong confidence in teaching tasks. Among the four dimensions, classroom management had the highest mean (M=4.03, SD=0.580), while teacher-child interaction was the lowest (M=1.94, SD=0.239), suggesting that teachers felt more confident in managing classrooms than in interacting with children. The variation in standard deviations reflects some diversity in teachers' self-efficacy across different dimensions.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Self-Efficacy (n= 100)

Dimension	N	M	SD	Interpretation
Teacher-child Interaction	100	1.94	0.239	Low
Classroom Management	100	4.03	0.580	High
Lesson Plan	100	3.97	0.611	High
Home–School Collaboration	100	3.94	0.620	High
Self-efficacy Overall	100	3.99	0.640	High

Source: SPSS data analysis summary

Statistical Analysis Results

Results of Testing the Research Hypothesis H1

H1: There were significant differences in teacher competency among A-Brand kindergarten

teachers in Bijie, Guizhou Province, across different background variables.

H1.1: Gender Differences in Teacher Competency

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine gender-based differences in teacher competency. Results showed a significant difference in the dimension of organizational management ($p = 0.049$), with female teachers scoring higher ($M = 3.74$) than male teachers ($M = 3.24$). No significant differences were found in the other four dimensions. The limited impact of gender overall may be due to the sample's gender imbalance, as female teachers made up 94% of respondents.

H1.2: Differences by Household Registration

An independent samples t-test revealed no statistically significant differences in teacher competency across household registration backgrounds (all $p > .05$). Although urban teachers scored slightly higher in Sense of Responsibility and Professional Knowledge, the differences were not significant. Thus, household registration did not have a meaningful impact on teacher competency across any dimension.

H1.3: Differences by Marital Status

test results showed significant differences in teacher competency across marital status (all $p < .05$), with married teachers scoring higher than unmarried teachers on all five dimensions and overall competency. The largest gap was in Sense of Responsibility ($p = .000$). Despite the small number of married teachers, their scores were consistent and higher, suggesting that marital status may positively influence teacher competency, possibly due to greater life experience and responsibility.

H1.4: Differences by Educational Background

A one-way ANOVA revealed no significant differences in teacher competency across educational levels (all $p > .05$). Although teachers with a bachelor's degree showed slightly higher mean scores in most dimensions, the differences were not statistically significant. This suggests that educational background did not substantially influence teacher competency, indicating that practical experience and training may play a more important role than academic qualifications.

H2: There were significant differences in the self-efficacy of A-brand kindergarten teachers in Bijie City, Guizhou Province, across different demographic backgrounds.

H2.1: Differences in Self-Efficacy by Gender

An independent samples t-test showed no statistically significant gender differences in self-efficacy across all four dimensions and the overall score (all $p > .05$). While female teachers had higher mean scores than males in every dimension—most notably in Classroom Management ($p = .074$)—these differences were not significant, likely due to the small number of male respondents. Therefore, gender was not found to be a significant factor influencing teacher self-efficacy.

H2.2: Differences in Self-Efficacy by Household Registration

T-test results showed no statistically significant differences in self-efficacy between urban and rural teachers across all dimensions and the overall score (all $p > .05$). Although urban teachers had

slightly higher mean scores, these differences were not significant, likely due to the small urban sample size. Thus, household registration was not a significant factor affecting teacher self-efficacy in this study.

H2.3: Differences in Self-Efficacy by Marital Status

T-test results showed significant differences in Teacher–Child Interaction, Instructional Planning, Home–School Cooperation, and overall self-efficacy (all $p < .05$), with married teachers scoring consistently higher. The most notable gap was in Home–School Cooperation. Although Classroom Management approached significance ($p = .068$), it did not meet the threshold. These results suggest that marital status may positively influence self-efficacy, particularly in interpersonal and planning-related dimensions.

H2.4: Differences in Self-Efficacy by Educational Background

ANOVA results showed no significant differences in self-efficacy across educational levels (all $p > .05$). While teachers with a master's degree or above generally scored higher, these differences did not reach statistical significance due to the small sample size in the master's group ($n = 3$). Thus, educational background was not found to significantly impact teacher self-efficacy.

H3: Correlation Between Teacher Competency and Self-Efficacy

Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant positive correlations between teacher competency and self-efficacy across all dimensions ($p < .01$). Notable findings include:

Organizational Management: Strong correlations ($r = .581$ to $.637$), with the highest with overall self-efficacy ($r = .649$), suggesting organizational skills boost teacher confidence.

Interpersonal Communication: Correlations ranged from $r = .699$ to $.725$, especially with Instructional Planning ($r = .725$), indicating that communication skills enhance instructional confidence.

Sense of Responsibility: Correlations ranged from $r = .722$ to $.752$, with the highest in Instructional Planning ($r = .752$), reflecting proactive teaching behavior.

Sense of Achievement: Strong correlations ($r = .737$ to $.793$), especially with Classroom Management ($r = .793$), indicating that a sense of achievement increases teaching confidence.

Professional Knowledge: The strongest correlations ($r = .791$ to $.862$), particularly with Instructional Planning ($r = .852$), underlining the importance of knowledge in boosting self-efficacy.

Overall Competency and Self-Efficacy: The correlation was $r = .835$, supporting the hypothesis that higher competency leads to higher self-efficacy.

In conclusion, key competency components—particularly professional knowledge, responsibility, and achievement—are crucial in enhancing teacher self-efficacy. Future teacher training should focus on these areas for improved teaching performance and confidence.

Table 3 Correlation Analysis between Teacher Competency and Teacher Self-Efficacy

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Organizational Management	1	.789**	.779**	.774**	.752**	.581**	.637**	.636**	.612**
2. Interpersonal Communication		1	.872**	.791**	.785**	.709**	.708**	.725**	.699**
3. Sense of Responsibility			1	.893**	.834**	.722**	.736**	.752**	.741**
4. Sense of Accomplishment				1	.896**	.787**	.793**	.776**	.737**
5. Professional Knowledge					1	.791**	.824**	.852**	.808**
6. Teacher-Child Interaction						1	.911**	.813**	.808**
7. Classroom Management							1	.903**	.863**
8. Lesson Plan								1	.924**
9. Home–School Collaboration									1

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Discussion

Overall Status of Teacher Competency and Self-Efficacy

A-brand kindergarten teachers in Bijie City exhibited high competency and moderately high self-efficacy. Strong scores were observed in Sense of Achievement, Responsibility, and Professional Knowledge, reflecting strong professional values and literacy. However, Teacher–Child Interaction showed lower scores, indicating room for improvement. Teachers performed well in Classroom Management and Instructional Planning, reinforcing their instructional and organizational strengths. The results align with research showing a positive correlation between teacher competency and self-efficacy. Despite high competency, Organizational Management was the weakest area, pointing to the need for targeted training to enhance teachers' organizational and adaptive skills.

Differences Across Demographic Variables

Gender and marital status were significant factors influencing teacher competency and self-efficacy. Female teachers outperformed male teachers in Organizational Management, and married teachers showed higher self-efficacy in Home–School Cooperation, Teacher–Child Interaction, and Instructional Planning. In contrast, household registration and educational background did not significantly affect either competency or self-efficacy. These results suggest that practical teaching ability and emotional factors have a greater impact than academic qualifications in shaping teachers' professional performance.

Relationship Between Teacher Competency and Self-Efficacy

A significant positive relationship was found between teacher competency and self-efficacy, especially in Professional Knowledge and Instructional Planning (r = .852), and Sense of Responsibility (r = .777). This supports Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the influence of self-perception on efficacy. Enhancing teacher competency can strengthen self-efficacy, highlighting

the importance of both in teacher training and professional development programs. A focus on practical training and fostering a positive teaching culture can further improve both competency and self-efficacy.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: Teacher Competency and Self-Efficacy

Teacher competency was generally high, with strong performance in Sense of Achievement, Sense of Responsibility, and Professional Knowledge. However, Teacher–Child Interaction was the lowest self-efficacy dimension, indicating a need for improvement in this area.

Conclusion 2: Demographic Variable Effects

Gender: Female teachers scored significantly higher than male teachers in Organizational Management, but no significant differences were found in self-efficacy.

Household Registration: No significant differences were found between urban and rural teachers.

Marital Status: Married teachers outperformed unmarried teachers in multiple dimensions of both competency and self-efficacy, marking marital status as the most differentiating variable.

Educational Background: While small differences were observed, education level did not significantly impact teacher performance.

Conclusion 3: Correlation Between Teacher Competency and Self-Efficacy

A strong positive correlation ($p < .01$) was found between all competency and self-efficacy dimensions. The highest correlation was between Professional Knowledge and Instructional Planning ($r = .852$), emphasizing the crucial role of professional ability in boosting teachers' instructional confidence.

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