



Self-Confidence Characteristics in Early Childhood Education Students During Learning at School

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Abstract

This study aims to identify patterns of self-confidence in early childhood education students during the learning process at school and explore the gap between self-perception and actual behavior. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach with 10 students at ABA 30 Kindergarten as subjects. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews with class teachers and guidance counselors, and an open-ended questionnaire to explore students' self-perceptions. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing using triangulation of sources and techniques. The results of the study indicate that, through observation, most students still exhibit low levels of self-confidence in learning, as evidenced by hesitation in completing assignments, dependence on peers, and a lack of courage to speak or express opinions in front of the class. However, the questionnaire results indicated that the majority of students assessed themselves as having high levels of self-confidence. This finding indicates a gap between students' self-perception and actual behavior during the learning process. This gap suggests that, at this stage of early childhood development, self-evaluation does not fully reflect actual behavior in learning situations. This study contributes by showing that understanding the self-confidence of early childhood education students needs to be viewed comprehensively through a combination of observation, interview, and self-perception methods, so that teachers can design more effective learning strategies to develop students' independence and courage in learning.

Keywords: *Self-Confidence, Early Childhood Education, Learning Process*

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Introduction

Self-confidence is an essential psychological characteristic that plays a fundamental role in children's learning and social development, particularly in early childhood education. During this developmental stage, children begin forming perceptions about their own abilities and gradually develop the confidence required to participate actively in learning activities. Self-confidence enables children to express their ideas, engage in new experiences, and interact with peers and teachers without excessive fear of failure. According to Siregar & Siregar (2025) self-confidence refers to an individual's belief in their own abilities that allows them to act without excessive anxiety, pursue interests freely, and take responsibility for their actions. Children who possess adequate levels of self-confidence tend to demonstrate greater independence, persistence, and positive attitudes toward learning activities (Muthmainah & Yahya, 2025). Therefore, the development of self-confidence is considered one of the key psychological foundations that support children's readiness to learn and participate in educational environments.

In the context of educational psychology, self-confidence is closely related to several other psychological constructs, including self-concept, self-efficacy, emotional security, and classroom climate. Self-concept refers to an individual's perception and evaluation of themselves, which influences how children view their strengths, limitations, and overall abilities. A positive self-concept encourages children to believe

that they are capable of participating in learning activities and overcoming challenges. Meanwhile, self-efficacy refers to children's beliefs about their capability to perform specific tasks successfully (Bandura & Hall, 2018). When children possess strong self-efficacy beliefs, they tend to approach tasks with greater motivation, effort, and persistence. In contrast, children with low self-efficacy often avoid challenges because they doubt their ability to succeed. These psychological factors demonstrate that self-confidence is not merely an emotional condition but is also deeply connected with children's cognitive beliefs and motivational processes.

Another important factor that contributes to the development of self-confidence in early childhood is emotional security within the learning environment. Emotional security refers to children's feelings of safety, acceptance, and psychological comfort in the classroom. When children feel emotionally secure, they are more likely to express their ideas, participate in discussions, and attempt new tasks without fear of negative judgment. Conversely, environments that are overly critical, competitive, or rigid may lead children to feel anxious and hesitant during learning activities. In addition to emotional security, classroom climate also plays a crucial role in shaping children's confidence. A positive classroom climate characterized by supportive teacher-student relationships, collaborative learning, and opportunities for exploration can significantly enhance children's willingness to participate actively in learning (Mulyanti, Kusmana, & Fitriani, 2021).

From a cognitive development perspective, the development of self-confidence is also closely related to children's learning processes. According to Piaget (1952), children construct knowledge through assimilation and accommodation based on their interactions with the environment. These processes require active participation in thinking, experimenting, and exploring ideas. However, these learning processes cannot occur optimally if children lack confidence in their own thinking abilities. Children who doubt their capabilities are more likely to rely on others, hesitate when completing tasks, or avoid participating in challenging activities. Therefore, confidence in one's cognitive abilities becomes a critical factor that supports children's engagement and persistence in learning activities.

In early childhood education, learning environments that support the development of self-confidence emphasize exploration, creativity, and the appreciation of effort rather than focusing solely on correct answers. Children's confidence grows when they are given opportunities to try new experiences, express their opinions, and learn from mistakes in a supportive environment. Teachers play an important role as facilitators who guide and encourage students through constructive feedback, emotional support, and meaningful interactions. Previous studies have shown that children's self-confidence is influenced by experiences of success, social support, and the emotional atmosphere during the learning process (Ilska, et al 2025). When children experience positive reinforcement and supportive relationships, they are more likely to develop confidence in their abilities and demonstrate greater persistence when encountering difficulties.

Despite the importance of self-confidence in learning, classroom observations often reveal that some children still experience difficulties in demonstrating confidence during learning activities (Dewi & Widyasari, 2022). Certain students tend to hesitate when completing assignments, rely on peers to confirm their answers, or avoid participating in activities that require them to speak in front of others. These behaviors indicate that low self-confidence may still occur even within learning environments designed to support student participation. Rashwan, (2023) explains that low self-confidence in students can be observed through behaviors such as delaying task completion, copying peers' answers, showing anxiety during learning activities, and demonstrating reluctance to engage in classroom interactions. Such conditions can negatively affect learning outcomes, reduce opportunities for cognitive development, and weaken students' motivation to participate actively in the learning process.

Low self-confidence among students may arise from a combination of internal and external factors. Internal factors include negative self-concept, repeated experiences of failure, and limited mastery of learning materials (Silitonga, Maruli, & Simanjuntak, 2025). Children who frequently experience difficulties in understanding learning materials may gradually develop doubts about their abilities. Meanwhile, external factors include unsupportive classroom environments, teaching strategies that limit opportunities for exploration, and academic expectations that place excessive pressure on students. According to Purnama (2022), learning environments that emphasize results rather than learning processes may contribute to feelings of anxiety and fear of making mistakes among students. Over time, these experiences may reduce students' willingness to attempt new tasks or participate actively in learning activities.

Previous studies have widely discussed student engagement and participation in learning activities. For instance, research conducted by Faradita, (2020) highlighted the importance of student readiness and active involvement in early childhood learning. These studies emphasize that students who are actively involved in learning tend to achieve better academic outcomes and demonstrate higher levels of motivation. However,

many of these studies primarily focus on students' engagement in learning activities without specifically examining how self-confidence manifests in students' behaviors during the learning process. Furthermore, limited research explores the potential differences between students' self-perceptions of confidence and their actual behaviors in classroom learning situations (Faradita & Afiani, 2021).

This gap indicates the need for further investigation into how self-confidence is expressed in real classroom contexts and how children's perceptions of their own confidence align with their observable learning behaviors. Understanding this phenomenon is important because children's self-perceptions may not always accurately reflect their actual behavior during learning activities. At the early childhood stage, children's ability to evaluate themselves objectively is still developing, which may lead to differences between perceived confidence and actual participation during classroom activities.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the characteristics of self-confidence among early childhood students during classroom learning and to identify factors that contribute to low self-confidence in these students. By integrating data obtained through observations, interviews, and self-perception questionnaires, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of children's self-confidence in early childhood learning environments. The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to examine not only the observable manifestations of self-confidence but also the potential discrepancy between students' self-perceptions and their actual behaviors during learning activities. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of effective educational strategies that can support teachers in fostering children's confidence, independence, and active engagement in early childhood learning.

Methods

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the phenomenon of students' lack of self-confidence in early childhood learning. This model was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the processes, experiences, and subjective meanings directly experienced by students in everyday learning contexts. According to (Shifa, 2025) a qualitative approach is appropriate for exploring the psychological and social dynamics of students through naturalistic and in-depth narrative data.

In descriptive research, researchers do not aim to test hypotheses, but rather describe phenomena based on data found in the field. This approach is deemed appropriate because self-confidence is an affective variable that cannot be fully measured numerically but must be understood through conversations, direct observation, and student reflection. Therefore, this research emphasizes the learning process, students' emotional experiences, and teachers' strategies for building student self-confidence.

In collecting the data, researchers used the following data collection techniques: 1) Observations were conducted to observe student behavior in early childhood learning, such as expressions of anxiety, doubt, dependence on peers, and passivity. Observations were conducted non-participatory. According to (Embuai & Siauta, 2020), observation is an important technique in educational research because it provides data covering early childhood learning activities. 2) Interviews were conducted with teachers and counselors to understand their perspectives on the causes of low self-confidence. Interviews were flexible so that informants could express their experiences broadly and in depth. Referring to (Siregar & Siregar, 2025) interviews provided space for researchers to dig deeper into information. 3) An open-ended questionnaire was given to 10 students as a supporting instrument to independently map their levels of self-confidence. This questionnaire was used to strengthen qualitative data and provide an overview of the self-confidence patterns of all students.

This study uses qualitative data analysis techniques following the Miles and Huberman model (Huberman & Miles, 2002). Data analysis was conducted qualitatively following the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, data from observations, interviews, and questionnaires were selected, coded, and categorized according to the research focus, such as indicators of low self-confidence and the causes of students' lack of self-confidence during learning. Irrelevant data were eliminated to produce concise and meaningful information. The reduced data were presented in the form of thematic narratives, tables, and matrices to facilitate understanding of the relationships between findings. Data presentation was carried out by displaying general patterns such as forms of low self-confidence, the influence of the classroom environment, and successful and ineffective teacher strategies. Next, conclusion drawing and verification were carried out after the data reduction and data presentation process. Researchers examined the relationship between the results of observations, interviews, and questionnaires to find consistent patterns and meanings related to students' self-confidence in early childhood learning. The verification process was carried out continuously throughout the research through triangulation of sources and techniques to ensure the validity of the data. From this stage, conclusions were drawn that represent the overall state of student self-confidence in the studied class.

Result And Discussion

Observation Results

Observations were conducted during the lesson, immediately after the teacher delivered the material and engaged students in a game-based learning activity that required student independence. The focus of the observations was on indicators of self-confidence, including independence in completing assignments, courage to speak in front of the class, and persistence when encountering difficulties. Observations were conducted during the lesson, immediately after the teacher delivered the material and gave students assignments to complete independently. The focus of the observations was on indicators of self-confidence, including independence in completing assignments, courage to speak in front of the class, and persistence when encountering difficulties.

On the other hand, four students were found to have clearly not completed the assigned assignment, citing fatigue from writing. This behavior indicated doubt, boredom, and a lack of confidence in their own abilities, leading them to choose not to complete the assignment. Furthermore, three students did not immediately begin working on the assignment and only began working after receiving direct instruction from the teacher. This situation indicates low learning initiative, which is also related to low self-confidence. When the teacher gave students the opportunity to present their work in front of the class, only three students volunteered to come forward without being called upon. This shows that the indicator of courage to appear as part of self-confidence is still not evenly visible in all students.

When experiencing difficulty with a problem, only four students attempted to complete it independently. Meanwhile, six students were seen discussing with their peers to confirm their answers before writing them down. These discussions indicated that the students were not yet fully confident in their own thinking and still needed peer validation. Overall, observations revealed that most students still exhibited doubts about their abilities in early childhood learning. Self-confidence, demonstrated through independence, courage to perform, and perseverance, was only seen in a small number of students, while the majority still displayed dependence on others in completing tasks.

Based on observations during the learning process, student behavior can be classified into two categories: those who demonstrated self-confidence and those who demonstrated a lack of confidence. Six students fell into the self-confident category. Students in this category demonstrated behaviors such as immediately working on assignments without waiting for teacher direction, attempting to solve problems independently despite difficulties, and boldly presenting their work. Of these, four students voluntarily came to the front of the class to present their assignments without being called upon by the teacher. Furthermore, students in this category appeared confident in their answers and did not rely on their peers' work.

Meanwhile, seven students fell into the low-confidence category. Students in this category exhibited hesitant behavior while working on assignments, frequently looking back or copying peers' answers, and postponing assignments until receiving direct direction from the teacher. Three students only began working on assignments after being guided by the teacher. Furthermore, when experiencing difficulties, most students in this category preferred to discuss or seek confirmation from peers before writing down their answers, indicating low confidence in their own abilities. In terms of speaking confidence, the majority of students lacking confidence were reluctant to come to the front of the class and only agreed to speak after being directed by the teacher. This indicates that the indicator of speaking confidence, as an aspect of self-confidence, has not developed optimally in most students. Overall, observations indicate that students' self-confidence in early childhood learning is still dominated by a lack of confidence. Only a small number of students have demonstrated independence, courage to perform, and perseverance in completing assignments, while the majority still rely on assistance from peers and teachers.

Interview Results

An interview with the class A teacher revealed that during the lesson, students displayed curiosity, enjoyment, and enthusiasm in participating. However, during assignments, the teacher observed that some students still felt shy when asked to come to the front of the class to explain their work. This indicates that students' courage to speak in front of the class has not yet fully developed. The teacher also stated that when students ask questions or seek assistance, their questions are not posed out of fear of making mistakes, but rather because they spontaneously express their concerns without hesitation. Furthermore, the teacher explained that internal factors influencing students' low self-confidence in learning are a lack of reading habits and a lack of focus during the lesson.

In terms of learning methods, the teacher stated that in addition to using lectures, lessons also begin with fun activities such as games to create a more lively classroom atmosphere and make students feel comfortable while learning. The teacher also felt that low student self-confidence impacted overall learning outcomes. To increase student self-confidence, the teacher provided opportunities for students to speak in front of the class and created a relaxed learning atmosphere by joking around, so that students felt closer and less awkward during the learning process.

Students with low self-confidence tended to appear passive in class, often remaining silent, preoccupied with themselves, and not paying full attention to the teacher during the lesson. This was evident in their infrequent eye contact with the teacher and their lack of active participation in learning activities. In early childhood learning, students generally demonstrated readiness to complete assigned tasks. However, one or two students occasionally complained, while others responded quickly and enthusiastically. Interviews with the counseling teacher revealed that the level of student self-confidence in the class varied considerably. Some students demonstrated confidence in participating in learning, but others appeared passive and tended to accept the situation without much initiative.

According to the counseling teacher's observations, students did not show greater hesitation in early childhood learning compared to other subjects. This was because the learning was considered sufficiently engaging to maintain student interest. The counseling teacher's role in building student confidence was achieved by assisting students who struggled to understand the teacher's explanations. The counseling teacher typically stood at the back of the class to provide direct assistance to students in need, especially those who struggled to understand or hear the teacher's explanations. Counseling teachers' efforts to assist students who lacked confidence included listening, being a friend who made students feel comfortable, and ensuring that students felt supported and cared for throughout the learning process.

The counselor also stated that the most important thing students need to build confidence is understanding the material. When students feel they understand, they tend to be more confident in completing assignments. Furthermore, a personal approach through good communication is also considered very helpful in fostering student confidence.

Questionnaire Results

A self-confidence questionnaire was administered to 10 students as a supporting instrument to assess their self-perceptions in early childhood learning. The questionnaire consisted of several statements representing indicators of self-confidence, namely, belief in one's own abilities, courage to take on new challenges, persistence, and independence.

Observations showed that students' self-confidence levels had not developed evenly. Of the 10 students observed, only a few demonstrated strong self-confidence during the learning process. Students who demonstrated greater self-confidence appeared capable of completing assignments independently, were brave enough to try without looking at their peers' work, and were more confident in their answers. However, some students still displayed hesitation when completing assignments. They tended to complete assignments, then looked at their peers' work, and waited for direction from the teacher before beginning. This indicates that indicators of self-confidence, such as independence, courage to try, and confidence in the outcome of their work, have not fully developed in all students.

Based on the results of the questionnaire filled out by 10 students, a total of 140 answers were obtained from all questionnaire statements which reflect indicators of student self-confidence in early childhood learning. However, when compared with the observation and interview results, the questionnaire findings revealed a different trend. Although students considered themselves confident, their behavior during learning still demonstrated doubt, dependence on peers, and a lack of courage to speak in front of the class. These discrepancies indicate a gap between students' self-perceptions and their actual behaviors during the learning process. The discrepancy between the questionnaire and observational results can be explained through the concepts of self-perception and self-efficacy. According to Bandura, a person's belief in their abilities is often influenced by subjective experiences and personal perceptions, rather than by actual behavior (Bandura & Hall, 2018) In kindergarten-aged students, the ability to objectively reflect is not yet optimally developed, so self-assessments are often more positive than actual outcomes.

Furthermore, in the context of early childhood development, questionnaire responses are often influenced by social desirability bias, which is the tendency for respondents to provide answers that are considered good or expected by adults. This situation led students to choose more positive answers on the questionnaire, even though their actual behavior in learning situations still reflected doubt and dependence on peers. This finding suggests that self-confidence is not only related to self-perception, but also to students'

ability to express that confidence through actual behavior in learning situations. Therefore, direct observation is crucial to complement the self-perception data obtained through the questionnaire.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that students' self-confidence in early childhood learning has not developed evenly, as seen from their actual behavior during the learning process. Observational data revealed that some students still displayed dependence on peers, delayed completing assignments, and doubted their own answers. Only a small number of students appeared to immediately complete assignments independently without consulting their peers' work. This situation indicates that indicators of independence, as part of self-confidence, have not yet fully emerged in all students (Fransisca, Wulan, & Supena, 2020).

These findings align with teacher interviews, which revealed that although students appeared enthusiastic at the beginning of the lesson, when asked to explain their work in front of the class, some students still showed shyness and lacked courage. Teachers also revealed that poor reading habits and a lack of focus during learning were factors that influenced students' confidence when completing assignments. Interviews with counseling teachers further clarified these findings. Counseling teachers observed that students with low self-confidence tended to be passive, often silent, preoccupied with themselves, and did not give the teacher their full attention. This behavior was evident in minimal eye contact with the teacher and a lack of active engagement during learning. However, counseling teachers also reported that students generally showed readiness when receiving assignments and did not appear more hesitant than in other subjects, as early childhood learning was considered quite interesting for them (Humaida, Munastiwi, Irbah, & Fauziah, 2022).

This situation suggests that the main problem lies not in students' interest in early childhood learning, but rather in their confidence in their abilities when it comes to completing assignments independently or presenting their work to the class. Students tended to feel comfortable participating in learning, but were not fully confident when it came to demonstrating their abilities. The discrepancy in findings becomes even more apparent when compared with the questionnaire results. Based on the questionnaire, most students assessed themselves as having high levels of self-confidence. However, actual behavior observed in class indicates a different outcome. Students still require validation from peers, wait for teacher direction, and are reluctant to perform in front of the class. This indicates a gap between students' self-perceptions and their actual behavior during learning (Faradita & Rahmawati, 2022).

The gap between the self-confidence questionnaire results and the observed results can be understood from the developmental characteristics of kindergarten students. At this age, students' ability to conduct objective self-evaluation has not yet developed optimally. Students tend to evaluate themselves based on momentary feelings, a desire to appear competent, or limited positive experiences, rather than based on in-depth reflection on actual behavior during the learning process. Cognitively, kindergarten students are still at the concrete operational stage of thinking, so self-assessments are often simplistic and do not consider the full context. As a result, when completing the questionnaire, students tend to choose positive answers because they feel they have made an effort, are happy with early childhood learning, or want to provide answers that are considered good. This condition causes the questionnaire results to show a high level of self-confidence, even though the actual behavior observed in class still shows doubt and dependence on others (Downey & Crummy, 2022).

Furthermore, social factors also influence how students evaluate themselves. Early childhood students are still heavily influenced by their environment, including peers and teachers. The desire to be accepted, not appear weak, and the habit of responding according to adult expectations can lead students to evaluate themselves more positively than they actually are. This is known as social desirability, which is the tendency for respondents to provide answers that are considered socially desirable. Therefore, the results of the questionnaire on kindergarten students should be understood as a reflection of self-perception, not an absolute reflection of actual behavior. Therefore, the use of observation and interviews is crucial to complement the questionnaire data, allowing for a more comprehensive and accurate assessment of students' self-confidence (Dahri et al., 2024).

This gap can be explained through cognitive development theory, which emphasizes that understanding is formed through active involvement in learning experiences (Piaget, 1952). When students are not yet confident in their own thinking, the independent thinking process is not optimal because they prefer to rely on others. Furthermore, confidence in their abilities is strongly influenced by students' experiences of success. Students who are not accustomed to completing assignments independently tend to require reassurance from peers or teachers before feeling confident in their answers (Yuliani, Hasna, & Hidayah, 2022). Furthermore, the phenomenon of discrepancies between self-perception and actual behavior can also

be explained through the concept of metacognitive awareness. Metacognitive awareness refers to an individual's ability to understand and activate their own thought processes. In kindergarten-aged students, metacognitive abilities are still developing, so they are not yet fully able to accurately reflect on their own abilities. As a result, when completing questionnaires regarding self-confidence, students tend to provide answers based on feelings or momentary experiences, rather than based on an evaluation of actual learning behavior (Downey & Crummy, 2022).

In addition to cognitive development factors, student behavior is also influenced by social comparison. Early childhood students often assess their abilities by comparing themselves to their peers. When they see that others are experiencing similar difficulties, they can remain confident even if they don't fully understand the assigned task. Conversely, in certain situations, students may hesitate to demonstrate their abilities in front of the class due to fear of making mistakes in front of their peers (Aliyah, Anugrah, & Enjang, 2025).

The difference between self-perception and actual behavior can also be explained through Bandura's concept of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to complete a task or achieve a specific goal. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy develops through successful experiences, social support, and feedback received from the learning environment. Students who have not had much experience successfully completing tasks independently tend to have lower levels of self-efficacy. This causes them to more often seek confirmation from peers or teachers before feeling confident in their own answers (Bouffard et al, 1988).

The findings of this study indicate that building students' self-confidence is not sufficient simply by providing them with opportunities to perform in front of the class (Dewi, T. A., & Widyasari, C. 2022). Teachers need to plan learning experiences that systematically provide students with gradual success experiences. This can be achieved through assignments with gradually increasing levels of difficulty, providing positive feedback on student efforts, and collaborative learning activities that encourage students to support each other. Through these strategies, students not only demonstrate participation in class but also gradually develop a more authentic belief in their own abilities.

Conclusion

This research shows that students' self-confidence in early childhood learning has not developed evenly, as seen from their actual behavior during the learning process. Observation and interview results indicate that some students still show hesitation in completing assignments independently, tend to rely on peers, and lack the courage to present their work in front of the class. This situation indicates that indicators of self-confidence, reflected in independence, courage to try, and the ability to defend answers, have not yet fully developed in all students.

Conversely, questionnaire results indicate that most students assess themselves as having a high level of self-confidence. The discrepancy between the questionnaire results and observations indicates a gap between perceived self-confidence and observed self-confidence during learning. This gap can be understood from the characteristics of early childhood cognitive development, which is not yet fully capable of objective self-evaluation, and the tendency for social desirability to encourage students to provide answers that are considered positive.

These findings suggest that assessing self-confidence in early childhood cannot rely solely on self-perception instruments but needs to be complemented by behavioral observations and interviews to obtain a more comprehensive picture. Therefore, teachers need to create a learning environment that consistently provides opportunities for students to experiment, complete tasks independently, and express ideas without fear of error. Through this habituation, students' self-confidence not only emerges as self-perception but also develops as a tangible ability in the learning process..

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