

Investigating EFL Students' Self-Efficacy in Teaching Practicum

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Abstract

This research is designed to explore students' self-efficacy level during teaching practicum as well as the factors that affect the ratings. The researchers implemented mix method by combining quantitative and qualitative to address the inquiry. The participants consisted 33 EFL students from one of private universities in west Kalimantan. The results demonstrate that EFL students' self-efficacy level during teaching practicum is in the moderately high to very high category. It is indicated by the results of the questionnaire, which shows that the strength dimension has the highest score of 3.60 (very high), the generality dimension with a score of 3.40 (slightly high), and the magnitude dimension with a score of 3.0 (slightly high). Additionally, the elements influencing students' self-efficacy include mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and psychological arousal.

Keywords: EFL Students; Self-Efficacy; Teaching Practicum

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization teachers are required to demonstrate professionalism in their roles. However, before becoming a professional teachers, they must undergo practice in the school environment as an obligation of teacher education (Liu & Chen, 2022). According to Farrel as cited in Gan (2013); García-Noblejas et al. (2023); Weerakoon & Careemdeen (2023) teaching practice has been acknowledged as one of the most crucial components of the teacher education program. Through teaching practicum in the school environment, EFL students can apply the theory learned in real-life situations and gain teaching experience (Li et al., 2023); Suhandra & Ariawan, 2023). The school environment significantly impacts EFL students' practicum experiences, such as interacting with students and other fellow teachers and knowing the rules in school. As EFL students participating in teaching practicum, they are expected to not only achieve proficiency in English but also possess high self-efficacy as aspiring English teachers. Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to demonstrate greater determination and persistence in overcoming obstacles that may hinder their teaching effectiveness (Mehmood, 2019). In contrast, teachers with low self-efficacy often feel unsure of their abilities and may give up more easily when obstacles arise, struggling to motivate their students or handle classroom issues effectively (Dolgun & Caner, 2018). Therefore, it can be concluded that self-efficacy is a key in helping students succeed during their teaching practicum. In this study the researchers conducted preliminary observation on several EFL students at a private university in West Kalimantan who had teaching practicums in the school environment. The results showed that many EFL students admitted to experiencing pressure and anxiety when undergoing teaching practicum in the school environment. EFL students tend to worry easily and fear making mistakes while teaching. This situation can lead to feelings of inferiority, ultimately diminishing their self-efficacy. In light of the issues identified, the researcher is interested in examining the level of students' self-efficacy during their teaching practicum, as well as the various factors that influence the ratings they give themselves regarding their own self-efficacy. The level of the self-efficacy will be measured using Bandura's theory,

specifically focusing on the dimensions of magnitude, generality, and strength. Multiple studies have indeed been conducted in the same context concerning self-efficacy but most of these studies have primarily focused on measuring or assessing the level of self-efficacy. The initial study by Nugroho (2017) revealed that EFL pre-service teachers exhibited self-efficacy at an intermediate level during their teaching practicum. While they experienced some anxiety, they felt prepared for their teaching practice. Additionally, research conducted by Cania, Kusriandi, and Dwiniasih (2024) indicated that the self-efficacy of EFL pre-service teachers during their practicum also fell within the intermediate range. They demonstrated greater effectiveness in developing suitable learning methods for their students. To perform effectively as EFL teachers, pre-service teachers need to enhance their skills in classroom management, student engagement, and teaching strategies.

METHOD

This research used a mixed method with an explanatory sequential design. According to Almeida (2018), mixed methods combine quantitative and qualitative techniques in one study to provide a broader understanding of the problem. The use of mixed methods was appropriate for this research, as its goal was to assess the self-efficacy of EFL students based on their teaching practicum experiences, as well as to identify the factors influencing their self-efficacy ratings. The researchers applied Bandura theory to measure the level of students self-efficacy which encompasses three dimensions: magnitude, generality, and strength.

The researchers employed purposive sampling to select 33 EFL students from the PBI 20A and PBI 20B classes of the 2020 cohort as the participants for this study. Two data collection instruments were used: a questionnaire and an interview. The questionnaire consisted of statements designed to assess the self-efficacy level experienced by EFL students during their teaching practicum at school. The responses were measured using a 4-point Likert scale, with the following ratings: 4 - Always (very high self-efficacy), 3 - Sometimes (slightly high self-efficacy), 2 - Rarely (low self-efficacy), and 1 - Never (very low self-efficacy). Meanwhile, the interviews were conducted to identify the factors that influenced the students' self-efficacy. The students chosen for the interviews were selected based on their questionnaire responses, which indicated the highest levels of self-efficacy across the dimensions of magnitude, generality, and strength.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

As previously mentioned, the researchers developed a set of questions based on Bandura's theory to evaluate the level of students' self-efficacy during their teaching practicum, focusing on the three dimensions: magnitude, generality, and strength.

Table 1. Magnitude Dimension

Item	Mean	Interpretation
1. I can teach well with easy material.	3.72	Always
2. I can teach well regarding difficult material.	2.84	Sometimes
3. I prefer difficult material to easy material in teaching practice.	2.42	Rarely
4. I don't avoid difficult material in the teaching practice.	3.0	Sometimes
5. I can teach difficult material without decreasing my level of self-efficacy.	3.0	Sometimes

Mean	3.0	Sometimes
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Table 1 illustrates that the level of the magnitude dimension of the EFL students' self-efficacy is considered slightly high.

Table 2. Generality Dimension

Item	Mean	Interpretation
1. I am interested in teaching at all grade levels.	3.33	Sometimes
2. I can teach English at different grade levels.	3.18	Sometimes
3. I am confident that I can teach in various classes at different levels.	3.18	Sometimes
4. I diligently teach English in all the classes I teach.	3.54	Always
5. I always want to continue learning and increasing my knowledge so that I can teach well.	3.78	Always
Mean	3.40	Sometimes

Table 2 indicates that the level of the generality dimension of the EFL students' self-efficacy is at a slightly high level.

Table 3. Strength Dimension

Item	Mean	Interpretation
1. I don't give up easily if there are difficulties when teaching English.	3.27	Sometimes
2. I can teach well even though I have failed.	3.54	Always
3. I always motivate myself when I fail.	3.69	Always
4. I am always looking for solutions to correct my failures.	3.72	Always
5. The teaching experience I gained during the practicum affected my self-efficacy.	3.75	Always
Mean	3.60	Always

Table 3 shows that the strength dimension of the EFL students' self-efficacy is at a very high level

After assessing the self-efficacy levels of EFL students, the researchers conducted interviews with several students who exhibited the highest levels of self-efficacy. The interview results revealed that four key sources were influencing these students' self-efficacy. The first source is mastery experiences, which are the most powerful way to enhance self-efficacy, as they are based on past successes. Accomplishing tasks successfully fosters positive experiences, establishing a strong foundation for future successes. In this regard, the active participation of EFL students in teaching tasks and activities results in the acquisition of valuable teaching skills. With these past successes, EFL students gain greater confidence in their ability to engage in and excel in similar tasks moving forward. According to the interview, participant BB shared that her teaching experience helped her learn how to manage a classroom and interact with students effectively. This experience has built her confidence, assuring her that she can handle similar situations in the future, particularly during her teaching practicum.

BB: "The teaching activities I have carried out have greatly increased my confidence. My teaching experience taught me many things, including how to manage a class and deal with students. After learning from this experience, I became confident that I could face similar teaching situations during my teaching practicum."

The second source is vicarious experience, which involves gaining knowledge by observing the successes of others. Individuals gain insights into their own abilities by observing others, particularly peers who are comparable to them. Witnessing people similar to themselves succeed through hard work fosters the belief that they can master the same skill. In the context of EFL students, they observe teachers or lecturers who offer a model of effective teaching, motivating them to adopt similar strategies and approaches in their own teaching practicum. In the interview, participant KVO shared that vicarious experience enhances her self-efficacy by watching teachers or lecturers conduct lessons in the classroom. Observing her instructors provides her with a clear understanding and inspiration on how to manage a class, deliver content effectively, and handle challenging situations in teaching. This observation boosts her confidence and belief that she can also succeed in teaching by applying the strategies and techniques she learned during these observations when carrying out her teaching practicum.

KVO: "Observing a teacher or a lecturer is very helpful in increasing my self-efficacy because it gives an overview of how to manage the classroom and keep students active in learning. I can also see the situation in the classroom when the teacher comes in. So, I learned from their teaching experience that I could then apply when I pursue teaching practicum."

The third source is verbal persuasion, which plays a key role in boosting self-efficacy by providing feedback and evaluations from others. Communication and evaluative feedback are key ways to provide individuals with information about their performance. Positive feedback, in particular, can strengthen self-efficacy in EFL students. When participating in teaching activities, EFL students who receive verbal encouragement, praise, or constructive feedback will feel more confident in their ability to engage in teaching activities during their practicum. In the interview, participant TY mentioned that receiving positive feedback, including praise and constructive suggestions, has played a key role in boosting her confidence and motivation to improve her teaching during the teaching practice program at school. She believes this feedback has encouraged her to perform better and refine her teaching skills.

TY: "When I was involved in teaching activities, I got positive feedback from my teacher and friends. The feedback was in the form of praise regarding my effective ways of making students active in class. This positive feedback makes me confident and motivated that I can teach when carrying out teaching practicum."

The last source of self-efficacy is the physiological, emotional, and mood states that individuals experience while engaging in a task. This refers to the emotional and psychological feedback a person receives as they engage in an activity. Negative emotions, such as anxiety, stress, and tension, can create feelings of doubt and make individuals feel less capable of succeeding at a task. In contrast, positive emotions lead to a calmer state of mind, helping individuals approach new challenges with greater confidence and a stronger belief in their abilities. As Bandura (1997) notes, mood plays a significant role in shaping how people assess their own efficacy. For EFL students, maintaining a positive emotional state while teaching can enhance their self-confidence and belief in their teaching capabilities. Participant TY emphasized the importance of maintaining a positive emotional state while teaching. She noted that feeling happy and at ease during lessons created a more comfortable classroom atmosphere and boosted her confidence in delivering the material. By managing her nervousness, she was able to enhance her self-assurance, which in turn contributed to her success in the teaching practicum.

TY: "Positive feelings are the main capital for being able to teach well. It cannot be denied that at the beginning of teaching, I felt nervous, but I had to fight this feeling. These feelings indeed affect my self-confidence when teaching. Therefore, I always feel joy when teaching because the atmosphere will be more enjoyable and comfortable. That way, I feel more confident in delivering learning material."

Discussion

The results demonstrate that EFL students' self-efficacy during their teaching practicum is at an intermediate level, with an average score of 3.33, indicating slightly high self-confidence. This suggests that EFL students generally possess good self-confidence while teaching. While most students are able to manage the challenges they face during the practicum, they may still encounter difficulties in certain areas. In the magnitude dimension, EFL students' self-efficacy is at 3.0, indicating that students have slightly high level of self-efficacy, and there are variations in their confidence in their ability to teach material with different difficulty levels. Most EFL students felt confident when teaching easy material. However, their self-efficacy decreased when faced with more complicated or unfamiliar material, suggesting that although EFL students generally have good self-efficacy, more significant challenges may reduce their confidence in their teaching abilities. This decrease was insignificant, and most students still felt capable of facing the challenges presented. In the generality dimension, EFL students exhibit relatively high self-efficacy, with an average score of 3.40, indicating slightly high self-confidence. This suggests that, overall, students feel fairly confident in handling various teaching contexts, even those of varying difficulty levels. However, the researcher observed that while some students are confident when facing specific teaching situations, others may still experience doubt and a lack of confidence, particularly when confronted with unfamiliar areas or challenges. In the strength dimension, EFL students demonstrated a high level of self-efficacy, with an average score of 3.60. This dimension emphasizes an individual's resilience and their conviction not to give up easily. The results suggest that EFL students possess strong beliefs in their abilities and demonstrate perseverance when confronted with challenges in the teaching process. This reflects their robust mental resilience during teaching practicum, which is crucial in helping them overcome obstacles and succeed in the learning process.

Furthermore, the high self-efficacy of EFL students during their teaching practicum is shaped by several key sources, including mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and psychological arousal. According to interviews with three EFL students, mastery experiences were identified as the most influential factor in enhancing their self-efficacy. Through their hands-on teaching activities, these students were able to build their skills and, as a result, gained confidence in their ability to teach effectively during the practicum. This finding is consistent with Bandura's (1997) theory, which posits that mastery experiences are the most powerful means of strengthening self-efficacy, as they provide concrete evidence of a person's competence and abilities. Vicarious experience also plays a role in enhancing EFL students' self-efficacy, although its influence is not as strong as that of mastery experiences. EFL students reported that observing their teachers or lecturers provided them with a clear model of how to manage a classroom, deliver lessons, and handle challenging situations in teaching. The success of these role models boosts their self-confidence, reinforcing the belief that they can also perform well during their teaching practicum. This finding aligns with Mehmood (2019) research, which suggests that witnessing the success of others encourages individuals to believe they can achieve similar success themselves. Verbal persuasion is another crucial factor in influencing EFL students' self-efficacy. Encouragement and constructive feedback from teachers, lecturers, and peers can significantly boost students' confidence in their teaching abilities. Positive reinforcement, whether in the form of praise or helpful suggestions, encourages students to believe in their potential and motivates them to improve their performance during the teaching practicum. Many students noted that receiving affirmations and specific feedback about their strengths and areas for improvement made them feel more capable and eager to succeed. This aligns with the findings of Sari & Krismiyati (2021) who highlight that external encouragement and guidance play a key role in enhancing self-efficacy, helping students feel more equipped to handle difficult tasks and challenges with

greater confidence. Lastly, psychological arousal, which involves emotional responses like anxiety, stress, or excitement, is a key factor in shaping self-efficacy. EFL students who were able to manage their emotional states positively, or reinterpret their feelings of arousal as excitement rather than anxiety, tended to display higher levels of self-efficacy. These students viewed their physiological reactions as signs of motivation or readiness, which boosted their confidence during teaching. In contrast, students who struggled to cope with negative emotional states, such as anxiety or fear, often experienced lower self-efficacy. This finding reflects Bandura's (1997) assertion that how individuals perceive and regulate their physiological and emotional responses can greatly affect their self-efficacy. A positive interpretation of emotional arousal can enhance confidence, while a negative one can diminish it, influencing overall performance and motivation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this research, the self-efficacy levels of EFL students during their teaching practicum fall within the slightly high to very high category. The results from the questionnaire reveal that the strength dimension has the highest average score compared to the magnitude and generality dimensions. In the magnitude dimension, the average score of 3.0 indicates slightly high self-efficacy, suggesting that EFL students felt confident when teaching less complex material. However, their self-efficacy decreased when faced with more challenging content during the practicum. Similarly, the generality dimension showed a relatively high level of self-efficacy, with an average score of 3.40 indicates slightly high self-efficacy, reflecting that EFL students felt comfortable in various teaching contexts and across different difficulty levels. On the other hand, the strength dimension received the highest score, with an average of 3.60 indicates very high self-efficacy, showing that EFL students possess a strong sense of self-efficacy, especially in persevering through challenges and not easily giving up during their teaching practicum. Furthermore, the interview results revealed several factors that contribute to the high self-efficacy of EFL students. Mastery experience emerged as the most significant factor in enhancing their self-efficacy. By drawing on previous teaching experiences, students develop key teaching skills, which help them feel confident and prepared to teach effectively during their practicum. Vicarious experience also plays a crucial role, as students observe their teachers and lecturers in the classroom. Watching these role models successfully manage lessons and engage with students boosts their confidence and strengthens their belief that they can also succeed in similar situations. Additionally, verbal persuasion contributes to self-efficacy by providing positive feedback, such as praise and constructive advice from teachers, lecturers, and peers. This encouragement reinforces students' belief in their abilities and motivates them to continue improving. Lastly, psychological arousal enhances self-efficacy by fostering positive emotions during teaching. When students experience excitement or enthusiasm about their teaching, their confidence increases, allowing them to approach their practicum with greater assurance. Together, these factors work to build a strong sense of self-efficacy, empowering EFL students to approach their teaching tasks with confidence and effectiveness.

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