

Competence in Teaching Early Childhood Education

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Abstract:

This study examined the competence of early childhood educators across four domains—professionalism, pedagogical, personal, and social competence—while also analyzing differences based on demographic and professional factors such as age, education, income, training, and service length. Findings revealed that teachers generally demonstrated high competence, with personal competence emerging strongest and professionalism receiving the lowest mean score, highlighting an area for institutional support. Most respondents were experienced educators holding bachelor's degrees and actively engaging in training, though few pursued graduate-level educations due to barriers like financial constraints and workload. Statistical analysis showed no significant differences in competence across demographic or professional groups, suggesting that intrinsic motivation, experience, and commitment drive competence more than external factors. Subtle trends, such as higher personal competence among those with fewer trainings or lower incomes, hinted at resilience and motivation as underlying strengths. The study concludes that while early childhood educators are competent, motivated, and committed, limited graduate education and lower professionalism scores underscore the need for structured support. Recommendations include offering accessible training on professionalism, collaborating with higher education institutions to provide affordable graduate programs, fostering reflective practice and mentoring, recognizing consistent professional performance, and ensuring equal access to training, particularly for disadvantaged teachers. Overall, the study emphasizes that strengthening professionalism and supporting academic advancement can further enhance teacher competence, ultimately improving the quality of early childhood education and benefiting learners and the broader educational community.

Keywords: Early childhood education, educator skills, teaching competence

Introduction:

Nature of the Problem

An act institutionalizing the kindergarten education into the basic education system and appropriating funds therefore, also known as Republic Act No. 10157, provides equal opportunities for all children to avail of accessible mandatory and compulsory kindergarten education that effectively promotes physical, social, intellectual, emotional, and skills stimulation and values formation to prepare them for formal elementary schooling sufficiently. This act shall apply to the elementary school system, the first stage of compulsory and mandatory formal education. Thus, kindergarten will now be integral to the country's basic education system. This states that Kindergarten education is vital to the academic and technical development of the Filipino child, for it is the period when the young mind's absorptive capacity for learning is at its sharpest.

Supported by SDG 4-2 states that, "By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education" (United Nations, 2023).

In the Philippines, early childhood education underscores the teaching of emotional, physical, cognitive, and social skills, while highlighting young learners' interests and socialization activities with parents, friends, teachers, and others in their surroundings (Jalongo, 2021).

The researcher observed that teachers demonstrate competence in early childhood education (ECE). However, the school's recent Comprehensive Rapid Literacy Assessment (CRLA) for the current 2024-2025 school year shows that a total of 372 learners in Grades I through III are below full proficiency, described as low ability in reading, and 279 are non-numeric as tested using the standardized E-RUNT (Enhanced Regional Unified Numeracy Test). These results highlight the need to examine the teacher's competence in terms of professionalism, pedagogical, personal, and social, which may significantly impact how they promote early childhood education and development.

These gaps highlighted the need to address and bridge these areas to ensure holistic and effective teaching practices in early childhood education. These gaps motivated the researcher to undertake the study to explore and address the areas requiring improvement, ultimately contributing to enhancing teaching practices in early childhood education. The study also recommended a capacity-building program to improve early childhood education teachers' capability to mold young minds for holistic development.

Objectives

The study aimed to determine the level of competence in teaching early childhood education in a public elementary school in one of the districts in a medium-sized school division in a highly urbanized city, serving as the basis for a capacity-building plan. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions: 1) the level of competence in teaching early childhood education according to the areas of professionalism, pedagogical, personal and social; and 2) the significant difference in the level of competence in teaching early childhood education when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables.

Current State of Knowledge

Teacher professionalism in early childhood education is a multidimensional construct shaped by ethical standards, pedagogical expertise, and lifelong learning. Johnson and Lee (2021) emphasized that moral integrity and accountability underpin professionalism, guiding teachers' relationships with children, parents, and colleagues, while Smith et al. (2022) argued that strong pedagogical knowledge and evidence-based practices enhance learning outcomes. Similarly, Brown and Wilson (2023) highlighted lifelong learning and professional development as essential for staying updated on curriculum and child psychology, and Martinez and Roberts (2023) expanded the scope of professionalism to include advocacy for children's rights and policy influence, stressing that teacher roles extend beyond the classroom. Partnerships with parents, communities, and stakeholders also play a vital role in fostering holistic child development (Huang et al., 2023).

In addition, literature points to the growing importance of emotional intelligence (García et al., 2021), reflective practice (Dewey & Schön, 2022), cultural competence (Lee & Chen, 2023), adaptability (Smith & Taylor, 2025), and communication skills (Martínez et al., 2024) as key attributes of professional educators. Alongside professionalism, pedagogical and social competencies are equally vital in effective early childhood education (ECE). Play-based learning (TeachKloud, n.d.), curriculum integration (Early Education, n.d.), and direct instruction (The Australian, 2023) are widely recognized as approaches that support children's developmental needs. In the Philippine context, Gallego and Caingcoy (2022) found that higher educational attainment correlates with stronger competencies, although Golez (2022) and Antiojo (2017) reported that socio-demographic factors exert limited influence on teachers' instructional and behavioral competence. More importantly, social competence has been identified as critical in shaping children's socio-emotional skills (McClelland et al., 2017; Humphries et al., 2018), with recent studies showing that teacher social-emotional competence enhances classroom management, family engagement, and inclusivity through both verbal and nonverbal communication (Frontiers, 2024; Xu et al., 2024). Collectively, these findings suggest that teacher competence in ECE is driven less by demographic profiles and more by professional development, reflective practice, and intrinsic motivation to foster holistic child growth.

The professionalization of teaching in the Philippines is also strongly anchored in laws, standards, and ethical guidelines that define teacher quality and professionalism. Republic Act No. 10157 (Kindergarten Education Act of 2012) and Republic Act No. 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013) institutionalized early childhood education and emphasized the need for competent, well-trained teachers. Complementing these, the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) provides a national framework highlighting lifelong learning, ethics, and continuous professional development (DepEd, 2017). Earlier measures such as Presidential Decree 1006 and Republic Act 7836 formally established teaching as a licensed profession, ensuring that only qualified individuals could practice in the field (Miranda et al., 2021), while the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers reinforced integrity and accountability in practice (Santos & Reyes, 2022). Together, these measures affirm that teaching in the Philippines is a regulated profession requiring high competence, ethical standards, and sustained growth.

However, recent studies also emphasize that teacher professionalism is dynamic, shaped by policies, training, and evolving educational demands. Continuous professional development through training, workshops, and graduate studies has been found to improve adaptability, instructional quality, and job satisfaction (Dela Cruz & Bautista, 2023). Professionalism further extends to reflective practice, cultural competence, advocacy, and leadership in curriculum innovation (Garcia et al., 2023). At the pedagogical level, play-based and inquiry-based approaches (Teach Kloud, 2020; Amels et al., 2020) enhance holistic development, while innovative strategies such as game-based learning (PMC, 2023) increase engagement. Social competence remains crucial, with studies linking teachers' interpersonal and emotional intelligence to student outcomes (McClelland et al., 2017; Klusmann & Richter, 2020). Similarly, communication skills, classroom management, adaptability, and cultural awareness are identified as core competencies necessary for effective instruction and inclusive learning (Javier, 2020; Sarmiento, 2021). Despite challenges such as inequitable access, financial barriers, and limited postgraduate advancement (Amahido, 2024),

government policies and ongoing reforms continue to strengthen teacher professionalism, ensuring that ECE contributes to holistic child growth and lifelong learning.

International research further underscores the strong link between professional development, reflective practices, emotional intelligence, and teacher professionalism. Oberhuemer et al. (2023) and Lazzari and Vandenbroeck (2022) found that postgraduate training, teaching experience, and reflective inquiry enhance teachers' pedagogical competence and professional identity, while Yoon et al. (2021) demonstrated that emotional intelligence training improves classroom interactions. Sims and Forrest (2023) highlighted the effectiveness of curriculum competency frameworks, and Heikka et al. (2021) emphasized administrative support as crucial for teacher motivation and retention. Findings from large-scale studies, such as OECD's TALIS (2021), reinforced that mentorship and workplace support enhance instructional quality and teacher satisfaction. Studies across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East (Martinez & Gomez, 2022; Smith & Kelly, 2021; Ahmed & Farah, 2023; O'Connor & Flanagan, 2024) also emphasized continuous professional development, leadership opportunities, intercultural training, and professional learning networks in sustaining teacher growth. Mentorship (Brown & Lee, 2020) and digital competence (Muller & Weiss, 2023) have likewise emerged as vital in shaping teacher confidence and adaptability.

Beyond professional development, scholars highlight the significance of personal and social competence in effective teaching. Emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and reflective practices build resilience and professional confidence (Thompson & Richards, 2021; Müller & Stein, 2023; Taylor & Brooks, 2022), while alignment between personal values and institutional culture fosters motivation (Nair & Iyer, 2024). Self-efficacy has been strongly associated with positive classroom engagement (Edwards & Hamilton, 2020). In addition, social competence enhances teamwork, parent partnerships, and child outcomes. International studies across Denmark, South Korea, Canada, Brazil, and the UK (Jensen & Larsen, 2020; Kim & Park, 2021; Smith & Turner, 2022; Oliveira & Santos, 2023; Wilson & Gray, 2024) consistently demonstrate that teachers with strong communication, empathy, and intercultural skills build harmonious classrooms, improve family collaboration, and strengthen institutional trust. Taken together, these findings stress that teacher competence in ECE is multidimensional, requiring sustained development across professional, personal, and social domains to meet the evolving demands of diverse educational contexts.

Studies in the Philippines and abroad further highlight both progress and gaps in teacher professionalism. Evidence suggests that teachers generally demonstrate moderate levels of professionalism, particularly in curriculum planning, ethics, and pedagogical skills, though challenges remain in differentiated instruction, formative assessment, and learner-centered strategies (Soriano & Alcaraz, 2021; Reyes & Gonzales, 2020; Santos & Lim, 2020). Emotional intelligence, motivation, and socio-emotional competence strongly influence teaching effectiveness, with experienced and highly educated teachers often reporting greater self-efficacy and innovation (Dela Cruz, 2022; Santiago, 2020; Villanueva, 2024). However, ethical professionalism is not always consistently practiced, especially in communication and conflict resolution (Enriquez, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic also underscored the importance of adaptability, ICT skills, and digital literacy as emerging domains of professionalism (Ramos & Villanueva, 2022). Although teachers recognize the need for continuous professional development, some studies report mixed perceptions regarding the actual benefits of such training (Gibot, 2020; Crispino & Moyani Jr., 2023).

At the same time, social competence has been shown to significantly shape teaching practices, collaboration, and learning outcomes. Teachers with strong interpersonal and communication skills foster supportive classroom environments, enhance parental involvement, and improve student engagement (Cruz, 2021; Villanueva, 2023; Garcia & Mendoza, 2020). Social-emotional learning (SEL) programs further strengthen empathy, classroom management, and overall social competence (Santos & Ramirez, 2022; Reyes et al., 2023). Yet, research in both local and international contexts indicates that limited teacher preparedness, reliance on traditional lecture-based methods, and lack of adaptive strategies continue to hinder active student learning and classroom cooperation (Ige et al., 2020; Tirol & Bastida, 2021). These findings collectively highlight the necessity of targeted training in reflective practice, SEL, ICT integration, and collaborative learning communities, which together enhance teachers' professional, personal, and social competence to address the evolving demands of early childhood education.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is founded on the Seven Competencies of Teachers in the 21st Century (Model 7C-21), which is found to be a relevant framework associated with the development of pedagogical competence among pre-school teachers. The Model 7C-21 is a framework that delineates seven core competencies necessary for 21st-century teaching: logical-mathematical thinking, verbal reasoning, elementary scientific culture, critical reading-writing, global culture and environment, metacognitive thinking, and vocational guidance orientation (Voogt & Roblin, 2012; Collar & Colín, 2021). Voogt and Roblin (2012) developed this model to address shortcomings in traditional models in preparing educators for modern demands. The seven competencies focus on skills like problem-solving and intercultural understanding to foster 21st-century skills in students.

Logical- mathematical thinking involves numeracy, patterns, and problem-solving skills crucial for early math development (Casey et al., 2013). Verbal reasoning covers oral and written proficiency, emphasizing language development methods (Bowyer-Crane et al., 2008). Elementary scientific culture promotes discovery-based learning

through hands-on experimentation and nature observation (Patrick & French, 2008). The model emphasizes integrating these competencies through diverse field experiences and curriculum integration (Williams & Hierck, 2021). The rationale for selecting the 7C-21 framework is that it provides comprehensive guidance for preschool teacher training programs to enhance pedagogical competence. It also outlines the synergistic application of competencies in varied educational contexts. Therefore, the researcher opted for this model as it equips teachers for modern classrooms through developmentally informed, play-based pedagogies.

Methodology:

This section presents the discussion of the research methodology used, the subjects and respondents of the study, the research instruments used, the validity and reliability of the instruments, the procedure for data gathering, and the statistical tools and procedure for data analysis.

Research Design

A descriptive research design was used in this study. According to Siedlecki (2020), the purpose of descriptive research design is to describe individuals, events, or conditions by studying them as they are in nature, and the researcher does not manipulate any of the variables but only describes the sample or the variables. It is a form of descriptive research that describes the current situation involving early childhood education teachers. This quantitative study will evaluate current conditions using the gathered data. No manipulation of treatments or subjects can occur because the researcher will assess things as they are (McCombes, 2023), which, in this case, is about the competence of early childhood education teachers.

Study Respondents

The respondents of the study were one hundred eleven (111) Key Stage 1 teachers selected from a total population of one hundred fifty-five (155) across seven (7) elementary schools in a district of Bacolod City, Negros Occidental. Using the Cochran Formula to determine the sample size and the Stratified Sampling Technique with the lottery method to ensure fair representation, teachers were proportionally drawn from each school. Of the population, School B contributed the largest number of respondents (30), followed by School C (22), Schools A and E (14 each), Schools D and F (11 each), and School G (9). This approach ensured equal chances of selection, minimized sampling bias, and accurately reflected the population's composition across schools.

Instruments

The researcher utilized a researcher-made survey questionnaire to assess the competence of Key Stage 1 teachers in teaching early childhood education in a district in the central Philippines for the school year 2024–2025 as a basis for a capability-building plan. The instrument consisted of three parts: a letter of consent ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality, a personal profile covering demographic and professional variables (age, educational attainment, length of service, income, and trainings attended), and a 40-item competence assessment rated on a five-point Likert scale across four domains—professional, pedagogical, personal, and social competence. To establish validity, the instrument underwent expert face validation by three PhD holders recognized for their expertise in research and education, resulting in a validity index of 4.66, interpreted as excellent. Reliability was tested through a pilot study involving 30 teachers from another district, with Cronbach's alpha yielding a coefficient of 0.903, also interpreted as excellent, confirming that the instrument was both valid and reliable.

Data Gathering Procedure

After establishing the validity and reliability of the instrument, the researcher sought approval from the Schools Division Superintendent, District Supervisor, and school principals to administer the survey among public elementary school teachers, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality. Upon approval, the survey was administered online via Google Forms, with links distributed through email, Messenger, and Viber, and reminders and technical support provided to maximize response rates. The collected data were coded, tabulated, and analyzed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics and the Mann-Whitney U test to determine significant differences and relationships. A professional statistician validated the analyses to ensure accuracy, and findings were presented through tables and figures, serving as the basis for interpreting teachers' competence in early childhood education and formulating capacity-building initiatives.

Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Objective No. 1 used the descriptive analytical scheme and mean to determine the level of competence in teaching early childhood education in the areas of professionalism, pedagogical, personal, and social.

Objective No. 2 used the comparative analytical scheme and Mann-Whitney U test to determine the significant difference in the level of competence in teaching early childhood education as perceived by teachers when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables.

Ethical Consideration

The study strictly adhered to research ethics protocols in compliance with the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173) to safeguard participants' rights, privacy, and confidentiality. Respondents were informed of the study's purpose and scope, assured of voluntary participation, and provided with an informed consent form outlining their right to withdraw without penalty. No identifying information was collected, and all responses were coded, securely stored, and reported only in aggregate form for academic purposes. To minimize risks, participants could skip sensitive items, and the researcher remained available to address concerns during data collection. The complete research protocol was reviewed and approved by an Institutional Ethics Review Board (IERB), ensuring compliance with ethical principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice.

Results and Discussion

This section deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of data gathered to carry out the objectives of this study. All these were made possible by following certain appropriate procedures so as to give the exact data and solution to each specific problem.

Table 1

Level of Competence in Teaching Early Childhood Education in the Area of Professionalism

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As an Early Childhood Education teacher, I can ...		
1. Assess how early childhood educators demonstrate adherence to professional teaching standards.	4.46	High Level
2. Identify the professional development needs of kindergarten teachers under RA 10157.	4.16	High Level
3. Determine the extent to which teachers engage in continuous learning and training.	3.93	High Level
4. Examine the impact of licensure and qualifications on teaching performance in early childhood education.	3.74	High Level
5. Explore how professional ethics influence decision-making and classroom practices among early childhood educators.	2.70	Moderate Level
6. Evaluate the relationship between teachers' professional competence and student learning outcomes.	4.23	High Level
7. Investigate the challenges teachers face in maintaining professional conduct and responsibilities.	3.29	Moderate Level
8. Analyze how institutional support affects teachers' commitment to professional growth.	2.89	Moderate Level
9. Describe the role of mentoring and peer collaboration in enhancing teacher professionalism.	3.70	High Level
10. Compare the professionalism levels of newly hired and experienced kindergarten teachers.	3.33	Moderate Level
Overall Mean	3.64	High Level

The table on the Level of Competence in Teaching Early Childhood Education in the Area of Professionalism revealed an overall mean of 3.64, interpreted as "High Level". Moreso, area 1 "Assess how early childhood educators demonstrate adherence to professional teaching standards." revealed the highest mean of 4.46, interpreted as "High Level" and the lowest on item 5 "Explore how professional ethics influence decision-making and classroom practices among early childhood educators." with 2.70 interpreted as "Moderate Level".

This means that key stage 1 teachers greatly adhere to professional teaching standards as they perform their daily duties in their respective stations. Still, they pose an issue regarding conflicts of professional ethics, which affect their decision-making and classroom practices as early childhood educators. They may experience difficulties exploring and adhering to professional ethics in everyday practice.

This was supported by the study of Crispino and Moyani Jr. (2023), who found that teachers reported very high professional development needs, particularly in instructional strategies, assessment, and classroom management. Although needs in content knowledge and pedagogy were slightly lower, younger teachers (aged 20–29) showed significantly higher developmental needs across most domains. These findings highlight the importance of targeted

and continuous professional development to strengthen teacher competence and professionalism, especially among early-career educators. The study supports the current research by emphasizing how professional growth directly influences teacher effectiveness and ethical decision-making in educational practice.

Table 2

Level of Competence in Teaching Early Childhood Education in the Pedagogical Area

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As an Early Childhood Education teacher, I can ...		
1. use play-based learning activities to support children's holistic development.	4.18	High Level
2. design my lessons based on the developmental needs and interests of young learners.	4.34	High Level
3. regularly integrate inquiry-based and exploratory activities in my teaching.	2.95	Moderate Level
4. apply various teaching strategies to accommodate different learning styles.	3.20	Moderate Level
5. encourage children's active participation through hands-on and experiential learning.	4.59	Very High Level
6. assess children's progress using observation, portfolios, and other formative tools.	4.20	High Level
7. use storytelling, songs, and games to make lessons more meaningful and engaging.	4.68	Very High Level
8. adjust my teaching strategies based on the individual needs and responses of children.	4.18	High Level
9. integrate social-emotional learning strategies into my daily classroom routines.	4.15	High Level
10. regularly reflect on my teaching practices to improve learning outcomes.	3.86	High Level
Overall Mean	4.03	High Level

The data in Table 2 presents the level of competence among Early Childhood Education teachers in the pedagogical domain. The overall mean score is 4.03, which indicates a "High Level" of competence. Teachers demonstrated "Very High Level" in area 7, using storytelling, songs, and games to make lessons more meaningful and engaging, with a mean of 4.68. However, moderate competence levels were observed in item 3 "Regularly integrate inquiry-based and exploratory activities in my teaching" with a mean of 2.95, indicating potential areas for improvement.

These results suggest that while Early Childhood Education teachers are generally proficient in employing child-centered, engaging, and developmentally appropriate pedagogical strategies, there is a need for professional development in more specialized instructional practices. The moderate scores in inquiry-based learning and differentiation indicate that teachers may benefit from targeted training to enhance their capability to foster exploration and tailor instruction to diverse learners. Addressing these areas could further enrich the learning environment and ensure that all children receive instruction that meets their unique developmental and cognitive needs.

Integrating inquiry-based and exploratory activities in teaching where further supported in a quasi-experimental study by Tirol and Bastida (2021) whose results provide compelling evidence that integrating inquiry-based and exploratory activities in classroom practice can foster both academic achievement and student motivation—supporting the current study's emphasis on such pedagogical strategies.

Table 3

Level of Competence in Teaching Early Childhood Education in the Personal Area

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As an Early Childhood Education teacher, I can ...		
1. remain calm and composed even in challenging classroom situations.	4.31	High Level
2. be patient and understanding when interacting with young children.	4.33	High Level
3. show enthusiasm and passion in my daily teaching practices.	4.36	High Level
4. manage my emotions to maintain a positive classroom atmosphere.	4.48	High Level
5. reflect on my teaching practices to improve my personal growth as an educator.	4.23	High Level
6. teach confidently with my abilities and I can manage young learners.	3.79	High Level
7. actively seek ways to improve my personal effectiveness in the classroom.	3.62	High Level

8. demonstrate resilience in the face of daily teaching challenges.	4.31	High Level
9. maintain a positive attitude toward my students and colleagues.	4.23	High Level
10. take care of my well-being to remain effective and motivated in my profession.	4.51	Very High Level
Overall Mean	4.22	High Level

Table 3 illustrates the level of competence of Early Childhood Education teachers in the personal domain, with an overall mean of 4.22, signifying a "High Level" of competence. The highest-rated item was on item 10, "Take care of my well-being to remain effective and motivated in my profession with a mean of 4.51 interpreted as "Very High Level". All ten indicators were rated at a high or very high level, with the lowest mean of 3.62 on item 7 "Actively seek ways to improve my effectiveness in the classroom".

These findings suggest that Early Childhood Education teachers possess well-developed personal qualities essential for fostering a nurturing and effective learning environment. Their strong emotional regulation, resilience, and self-care practices enhance their ability to handle classroom challenges and support young learners. However, slightly lower ratings in personal confidence and effectiveness improvement areas indicate room for further development through mentorship or reflective practice programs.

Anchored on the study by Dela Cruz and Bautista (2023), who focus on participation in continuous training programs, workshops, and graduate studies, enhancing early childhood educators' competencies. They found that teachers who actively engage in professional development demonstrate greater adaptability to curriculum changes and exhibit improved personal effectiveness.

Table 4

Level of Competence in Teaching Early Childhood Education in the Social Area

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As an Early Childhood Education teacher, I can ...		
1. build positive and respectful relationships with my students.	4.51	Very High Level
2. communicate effectively with parents and guardians to support children's learning.	4.23	High Level
3. collaborate well with my colleagues in planning and implementing classroom activities.	3.84	High Level
4. create an inclusive environment that respects cultural, linguistic, and individual diversity.	3.79	High Level
5. encourage children to interact positively and respectfully with one another.	4.51	Very High Level
6. address conflict or misbehavior in a respectful and constructive manner.	3.20	Moderate Level
7. show empathy and concern when a child is experiencing social or emotional difficulties.	4.23	High Level
8. I facilitate cooperative learning and group work to strengthen peer interaction.	4.15	High Level
9. adjust my communication style to meet the needs of children from diverse backgrounds.	4.13	High Level
10. act as a role model in demonstrating respect, kindness, and cooperation in the classroom.	4.51	Very High Level
Overall Mean	4.11	High Level

Table 4 outlines the level of competence of Early Childhood Education teachers in the social domain, with an overall mean of 4.11, reflecting a "High Level". Teachers have "Very High Level" in items 1 "build positive and respectful relationships with my students" item 5 "encourage children to interact positively and respectfully with one another" and in item 10 "act as a role model in demonstrating respect, kindness, and cooperation in the classroom." However, item 6, "address conflict or misbehavior respectfully and constructively" revealed a "Moderate Level" with a mean of 3.20, indicating this as a notable area for improvement.

The data suggest that Early Childhood Education teachers are socially competent, especially in building strong relationships with students, families, and peers, and creating an inclusive and respectful classroom atmosphere. These strengths are essential for fostering a positive learning environment. However, the moderate rating in handling conflict or misbehavior highlights a critical developmental need. Professional learning opportunities focusing on positive discipline, conflict resolution, and classroom management strategies could enhance teachers' ability to navigate challenging social dynamics and ensure emotionally safe and supportive classrooms.

Supported by Garcia and Mendoza (2020), who examined the role of teachers' social competence in effective classroom management in early childhood education. Their study, published in The Philippine Educational Forum, found that socially competent teachers were more adept at conflict resolution, student motivation, and maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere. The research supports the argument that social competence is a key predictor of a teacher's ability to manage diverse classroom behaviors effectively.

Table 5

Difference in the Level of Competence in Teaching Early Childhood Education in the Area of Professionalism According to Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	56	57.28	1468.50	0.672		Not Significant
	Older	55	54.70				
Length of Service	Shorter	50	60.04	1323.00	0.230		Not Significant
	Longer	61	52.69				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	82	56.41	1155.50	0.821	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	29	54.84				
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower	32	56.45	1249.50	0.925		Not Significant
	Higher	79	55.82				
Number of Trainings Attended	Few	29	56.72	1168.00	0.888		Not Significant
	Many	82	55.74				

Data on Table 5 shows the Difference in the Level of Competence in Teaching Early Childhood Education in the Area Professionalism According to age computed a p-value of 0.672, length of service with a p-value of 0.230, highest educational attainment with a p-value of 0.821, average family monthly income with a p-value of 0.925, and number of trainings attended with a p-value of 0.888. Across all five variables, the p-values are greater than the 0.05 significance level, indicating that none of the differences are statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the level of teaching competence of Early Childhood Education teachers in the area of professionalism is accepted.

The findings suggest that perceived professionalism among early childhood educators is consistent across demographic and professional backgrounds. Regardless of age, experience, educational level, income, or training frequency, teachers demonstrate similar levels of professional competence. This uniformity may reflect a shared baseline of professional standards or institutional expectations. Without addressing diverse pedagogical growth areas, better professional development efforts may not differentiate or enhance competencies significantly, highlighting the need for more targeted, individualized professional growth programs.

This is supported by Gibot (2020), whose study's findings indicate no statistically significant difference in the level of teaching competence among Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers across various demographic and professional variables, particularly in the domain of professionalism. This suggests that age, educational attainment, and teaching experience do not substantially influence teachers' self-perceived professional competence. In ECE, professionalism appears to be consistently perceived across different teacher profiles, implying that intrinsic motivation, personal values, or institutional culture may play a more critical role than measurable external factors.

Table 6

Difference in the Level of Competence in Teaching Early Childhood Education in the Area of Pedagogical Competence According to Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	56	58.38	1407.00	0.430		Not Significant
	Older	55	53.58				
Length of Service	Shorter	50	59.69	1340.50	0.272	0.05	Not Significant
	Longer	61	52.98				
	Lower	82	56.00	1189.00	1.000		Not Significant

Highest Educational Attainment	Higher	29	56.00			
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower	32	59.28	1159.00	0.492	Not Significant
	Higher	79	54.67			
Number of Trainings Attended	Few	29	57.03	1159.00	0.840	Not Significant
	Many	82	55.63			

Data presents the Difference in the Level of Competence in Teaching Early Childhood Education in the Area of Pedagogical Competence According to Variables. When grouped according to age, a p-value of 0.430 was revealed, length of service with a p-value of 0.272, highest educational attainment with a p-value of 1.000, average family monthly income with a p-value of 0.492, and number of trainings attended with a p-value of 0.840. All computed p-values are above the 0.05 significance level, indicating no statistically significant differences in pedagogical competence across these variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the level of teaching competence of Early Childhood Education teachers in the area of pedagogical competence is accepted.

These results imply that pedagogical competence among early childhood educators remains uniform regardless of demographic or professional characteristics. This consistency suggests that teachers, irrespective of their background or training experience, possess comparable teaching skills and strategies suited to young learners. However, the lack of significant difference could also indicate a need for more differentiated or personalized training programs to enhance teachers' pedagogical skills more effectively based on their specific needs, experience levels, or contexts. Institutions may consider evaluating the effectiveness and depth of current professional development offerings to address diverse pedagogical growth areas better.

This was anchored with the study of by Gallego and Caingcoy (2022) examined the competencies of kindergarten teachers in the Philippines and found that while teachers with master's degrees exhibited higher competencies in areas like content knowledge and pedagogy, no significant differences were observed in pedagogical competence when teachers were grouped by age, position, civil status, or years of teaching experience.

Table 7

Difference in the Level of Competence in Teaching Early Childhood Education in the Area of Personal Competence According to Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	56	55.84	1531.00	0.957		Not Significant
	Older	55	56.16				
Length of Service	Shorter	50	59.96	1327.00	0.238		Not Significant
	Longer	61	52.75				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	82	57.88	1034.50	0.297	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	29	50.67				
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower	32	63.25	1032.00	0.129		Not Significant
	Higher	79	53.06				
Number of Trainings Attended	Few	29	64.62	939.00	0.092		Not Significant
	Many	82	52.95				

Table 7 shows the Difference in the Level of Competence in Teaching Early Childhood Education in the Area of Personal Competence According to Variables. Across various variables, age revealed a p-value of 0.957, length of service with a p-value of 0.238, highest educational attainment with a p-value of 0.297, average family monthly income with a p-value of 0.129, and number of trainings attended with a p-value of 0.092. All p-values are above the 0.05 significance level, indicating no statistically significant personal competence difference across any tested variables.

Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the level of teaching competence of Early Childhood Education teachers in the area of Personal Competence is accepted.

The lack of significant differences suggests that personal attributes essential to early childhood teaching—such as patience, resilience, emotional regulation, and enthusiasm—are consistently strong across different demographic and professional profiles. This may point to the intrinsic or universally nurtured nature of these personal traits among educators in the field. However, the relatively lower p-values for income and training attended, although not statistically significant, may hint at emerging patterns worth exploring. Teachers with fewer trainings or lower income levels tend to report slightly higher mean ranks, possibly reflecting self-reliance or intrinsic motivation in developing personal competence. This indicates potential areas for further qualitative investigation or targeted support programs to enhance personal growth among all teachers, ensuring the sustainability of well-being and professional motivation. Supported by Golez (2022), whose results revealed high behavioral competence on core values across the board. However, statistical analysis showed no significant differences in behavioral competence among core values based on socio-demographic characteristics, suggesting that age and teaching experience did not significantly impact their competence.

Table 8

Difference in Level of Competence in Teaching Early Childhood Education in the Area of Social Competence According to Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	56	56.71	1500.50	0.815		Not Significant
	Older	55	55.28				
Length of Service	Shorter	80	61.35	1257.50	0.111		Not Significant
	Longer	94	51.61				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	82	58.53	981.50	0.161	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	29	48.84				
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower	32	62.48	1056.50	0.174		Not Significant
	Higher	79	53.37				
Number of Trainings Attended	Few	29	65.05	926.50	0.076		Not Significant
	Many	82	52.80				

Results in Table 8 present the Difference in Level of Competence in Teaching Early Childhood Education in the Area of Social Competence According to Variables. Based on various demographic and professional variables, data age revealed a p-value of 0.815, length of service with 0.111, highest educational attainment with 0.161, average family monthly income with a p-value of 0.174, and number of trainings attended with a p-value of 0.076. The results show that none of the variables yield a statistically significant difference, as all p-values exceed the 0.05 threshold. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the level of teaching competence of Early Childhood Education teachers in the area of Social Competence is accepted.

This implies that although the differences are statistically non-significant, the data reveal noteworthy trends: that the Number of Trainings Attended, the lowest among all variables, suggesting a potential relationship between training exposure and social competence, Length of Service and Average Family Monthly Income which also show moderately low p-values, suggesting that experience and socio-economic factors may subtly influence social capabilities, though not to a statistically significant extent. These trends imply that social competence is generally uniform across diverse teacher profiles. However, it may be shaped more by personal disposition, cultural environment, and everyday classroom interaction than by demographic background or professional development alone. This points to the importance of embedding social-emotional learning in student curricula and ongoing teacher development programs, especially those focused on peer interaction, collaboration, and inclusive communication practices.

Anchored on a comprehensive meta-analysis by Xu et al. (2024), the findings from 51 studies involving 19,738 early childhood educators revealed that educators' social-emotional competence (SEC) was positively associated with their well-being, classroom management, and implementation of social-emotional learning (SEL) programs. Importantly, these associations were largely invariant across variables such as work experience, educational level, and cultural background, suggesting that these profile characteristics do not significantly influence educators' social competence.

Conclusions:

The study revealed that most early childhood teachers are experienced, bachelor's degree holders actively engaged in professional training, though few pursue graduate-level studies due to possible barriers. Teachers demonstrated a high level of competence across professionalism, pedagogy, personal, and social domains, with the highest in personal competence and the lowest in professionalism. Teaching competence remained consistently high across variables such as age, education, income, training, and service length, with no statistically significant differences, though slightly lower p-values suggested that income, training, and experience may subtly influence personal and social competence. These findings highlight the strong commitment of teachers to professional growth despite limited access to advanced education, pointing to the need for institutional support. To address this, the study recommends providing practical professionalism training, fostering collaborations with higher education institutions for accessible programs, encouraging reflective practice and mentoring, recognizing professional growth efforts, and ensuring equal access to development opportunities for all teachers, particularly those with limited resources.

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