

Self-Efficacy and Motivation on the Academic Performance of Early Childhood Pre-Service Teachers

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Abstract— This study aimed to determine the self- efficacy, motivation, and academic performance among early childhood pre-service teachers at the College of Education, Central Mindanao University during the 2024 to 2025 academic year. Using a descriptive- correlational design and total enumeration sampling, self-efficacy was measured with the General Self- Efficacy Scale (GSE), motivation through a researcher- developed instrument emphasizing intrinsic factors, and academic performance by General Weighted Average (GWA). Results showed participants exhibited high self-efficacy, moderate intrinsic motivation, and consistently strong academic performance. Correlational analyses revealed weak, non-significant relationships among the three variables. These findings suggest that while students possess strong self-belief and internal motivation, these traits alone do not significantly impact academic performance. A holistic approach to student support that considers instructional quality, environmental factors, and individualized learning strategies is recommended to enhance academic performance.

Keywords— Academic performance, Motivation, Pre- service teachers, Self-efficacy.

INTRODUCTION

In an educational perspective, the academic performance of pre-service teachers is no longer just about personal achievement; it is a building block for national progress and development. Pre-service teachers play a vital role as future educators and are important contributors to the intellectual and moral development of the coming generations. Their academic performance is not just an indication of individual competence and hard work but also a strong predictor of the quality of education they will ultimately deliver in classrooms. Empirical evidence indicates that pre-service teachers' academic performance has a significant impact on their preparedness for teaching profession and more, generally, on the development of society (Montolio & Taberner, 2021; Whipple & Dimitrova-Grajzl, 2021 as cited in the study of Chiranorawanit & Nittayathamkul, 2024).

High academic performance instills future educators with necessary skills including critical thinking, effective communication, content knowledge, and pedagogy, among other skills crucial for good teaching and student engagement. Such skills not only increase the quality of instruction imparted to young learners but also improved educational outcomes across broader education system. Accordingly, pre-service teachers' academic performance is directly related to the quality of education in the future that generations have, and in

turn, impacts human capital and national productivity development in long term.

In addition, pre-service teacher academic performance has significant long-term consequences for personal development. It determines their job prospects, career paths, incomes, and socioeconomic mobility in general. Evans (2023) also underscores that academic success helps in the comprehensive growth of the learners, enabling them to transition into responsible adulthood. It increases their competence in being able to deal with intricate social and economic settings, thus enhancing the chance their chance for occupational stability and long-term growth.

Recent research has pointed out a number of factors that contribute to academic performance. Commey-Mintah et al. (2023) indicated family involvement, peer support, the quality of instruction, and availability of learning material as primary drivers of the academic performance of pre-service teachers. Yet, the interruptions brought about by the COVID-19 crisis e.g., online learning and decreased hands-on practice teaching have made the internal psychological characteristics, especially motivation and self-efficacy, vital in guaranteeing academic continuity and resilience (Hill, 2021).

In spite of the increasing awareness of such psychological factors, few studies have examined their

precise impacts on early childhood pre-service teachers. Bedel (2015) noted the paucity of research into how academic motivation, self-efficacy, and attitudes towards teaching affect the academic performance of this group conjointly. Although Bandura (1997) has discussed these constructs at length in overall education settings, their operationalization in early childhood teacher education is not investigated thoroughly enough. Closing this gap is essential, particularly as the quality of early childhood education is closely connected to its educators' preparedness, confidence, and internal motivation (Manning et al., 2015).

Self-efficacy and motivation are two terms that are related (Yner, 2020; Kaya, 2017). That is, pre-service teachers who possess the belief that they can do it will be motivated to learn and succeed. Indeed, self-efficacy enhances intrinsic motivation, leading to more engagement and the desire to know more (Yner, 2020). Besides, motivation is a guarantee of academic achievement (Kogei, 2021). This means that motivated students work harder, persevere even when things get tough, and perform better. Surprisingly, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation both result in academic achievement irrespective of intrinsic motivation taking longer to take effect.

In addition, academic achievement is also influenced by self-efficacy (Bamidele, 2023). Hence, pre-service teachers who have higher self-efficacy do better academically. In addition, effort, persistence, and the use of effective learning strategies also influence this relationship.

Given the importance of these psychological factors, the present study seeks to determine the levels of self-efficacy, motivation, and academic performance among early childhood pre-service teachers.

This research focuses on current enrollees in the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education program, conducted at the College of Education, Central Mindanao University, during the academic year 2024–2025.

METHODS

This section describes the methods and procedures used in conducting this study. It contains the research design, the study's locale, respondents, the research instrument, the data-gathering procedure, and the statistical treatment.

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationships among self-efficacy, motivation, and academic performance of early childhood pre-service teachers at Central Mindanao University in the College of Education during the academic year 2024–2025. The descriptive approach is used to determine the self-efficacy, motivation, and academic performance of early childhood pre-service teachers.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Central Mindanao University, a research state university located in University Town, Musuan, Maramag, Bukidnon, Philippines. The study specifically took place within the College of Education, focusing on early childhood pre-service teachers enrolled in the Early Childhood Program. This program has a prescribed duration of three academic years, including students in their first, second, and third year early childhood pre-service teacher.

Respondents

The respondents of the study are first-year, second-year, and third-year early childhood pre-service teachers enrolled in the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education program at Central Mindanao University. Specifically, the study included 42 first-year students, 46 second-year students, and 40 third-year students, totaling 128 respondents.

Sampling Procedure

The study employed total enumeration sampling, which included all first-year, second-year, and third-year early childhood pre-service teachers enrolled in the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education program during the academic year 2024–2025. This comprehensive sampling approach ensured full representation of the population, allowing for an in-depth examination of the relationships among self-efficacy, motivation, and academic performance across different academic levels of early childhood pre-service teachers.

Research Instrument

To assess the self-efficacy of early childhood pre-service teachers, the researchers utilized the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995). This well-validated instrument comprises 10 items rated on a four-point Likert scale

ranging from 1 (Not at all true) to 4 (Exactly true). It measures individuals' perceived ability to cope with various challenging situations. Prior to the main study, the survey was pilot-tested with a sample of this looks complicated 30 third- and fourth-year early childhood pre-service teachers from I.B.A. College of Mindanao Inc. The pilot testing confirmed the reliability of the GSE within this context, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.925, indicating excellent internal consistency.

A researcher-developed Motivation Scale was created to measure the motivation of participants. This scale includes six items focusing primarily on externally regulated or non-autonomous reasons for enrolling in the early childhood education program, such as peer influence, financial constraints, or lack of initial interest. Responses were collected on a four-point Likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, and 4 = Strongly Agree. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 were negatively worded and reverse-coded during data analysis to ensure accuracy in interpretation. Consequently, lower mean scores after reverse coding indicate stronger intrinsic motivation, while higher scores suggest lower motivation. The Motivation Scale underwent expert content validation and was pilot-tested with the same group of 30 early childhood pre-service teachers from

I.B.A. College of Mindanao Inc. This pilot test resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.719, reflecting acceptable internal consistency for this newly developed instrument.

Academic performance was evaluated using the General Weighted Average (GWA). Researchers collected the GWA data from first-, second-, and third-year early childhood pre-service teachers to objectively measure academic performance.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of two main sections: the General Self-Efficacy Scale and a researcher-made Academic Motivation Scale, both of which were content-validated and pilot-tested. The General Weighted Average (GWA) of all early childhood pre-service teachers was collected separately as the basis for measuring their academic performance in the program and was obtained prior to the administration of the structured questionnaire. The finalized questionnaire was printed and distributed face-to-face during non-class hours and designated study periods.

Respondents were informed of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality measures in place. Data collection was conducted over the course of one week, allowing participants sufficient time to complete the questionnaire.

This study adhered to strict ethical standards to protect the respondents' rights and welfare. Prior to data collection, the researcher secured formal approval from the College of Education Dean, the Program Head, and the Research Adviser. The research process was carried out under the guidance and supervision of the Research Adviser to uphold academic rigor and ethical compliance.

Through a comprehensive and clearly written consent form, participants were thoroughly informed about the objectives, scope, and academic nature of the study. They were also informed that their involvement was entirely voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Confidentiality was maintained strictly throughout each step of the research process. Anonymous response was taken, and all information collected were stored securely to prevent unauthorized access.

No personal identifiers were required from the respondents; however, any personal information voluntarily provided was kept confidential and was not disclosed in any part of the research output.

Statistical Treatment

The study utilized a survey questionnaire as the primary research instrument. The questionnaire included the General Self-Efficacy Scale (SE), a standardized tool to assess the self-efficacy levels of early childhood pre-service teachers. A separate Motivation Scale measured the respondents' motivation levels toward their studies and future careers in early childhood education. Additionally, the respondents' General Weighted Average (GWA) was collected to measure their academic performance.

The data collected from these survey instruments were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and ranges, were calculated to provide an overview of self-efficacy, motivation, and academic performance levels. In order to determine the statistical

test to be used to assess the relationships between academic performance, self-efficacy, and motivation among early childhood pre-service teachers, either parametric or non-parametric, the statistician first conducted the normality test for the data on each variable (Self-efficacy and Motivation). The result indicates that both variables do not meet the normal distribution (Shapiro-Wilk = .977 & .962; $p < .05$). Thus,

the non-parametric test (Spearman-rho) is applied in analyzing the data.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This section presents the analyses and interprets the data obtained from the survey. The study's results were discussed based on its objectives.

Self-Efficacy of Early Childhood Pre-Service Teachers

Table 1. Level of Self-Efficacy of Early Childhood Pre- service Teachers

Statements	Mean	Qualitative Interpretation
I can always manage to solve problems if I try hard enough.	3.32	High
If someone opposes me, I can find means and ways to get what I want.	2.87	High
It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	2.96	High
I am confident that I can deal efficiently with unexpected events.	2.86	High
Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	2.95	High
I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary efforts.	3.39	High
I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.	2.96	High
When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.	2.98	High
If I am in a bind, I can usually think of something to do.	2.94	High
No matter what comes my way, I am usually able to handle it.	3.21	High
OVERALL	3.04	High

Legend:

Range	Qualitative Interpretation
3.50 - 4.00	Very High
2.50 - 3.49	High
1.50 - 2.49	Low
1.00 - 1.49	Very Low

The table shows the level of self-efficacy of the pre-service teachers of early childhood education with a general mean score of 3.04, indicating high. This indicates that the participants mostly believe they can cope with challenges and achieve goals through effort and knowledge. Such confidence aligns with Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, which emphasizes the role of personal mastery in building resilience and effectiveness. The high overall self-efficacy could be attributed to supportive academic environments and the cultivation of problem-solving skills through coursework and practical experiences.

The highest mean statement, "I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary efforts," scored 3.39, which is also interpreted as high. This is the respondents' belief in overcoming adversity with enough effort and is reflective of their growth mindset. This finding is consistent with Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that individuals with stronger self-efficacy are better equipped to persist through difficulties and apply creative strategies to problem-solving. Conversely, the lowest mean statement, "I am confident that I can deal efficiently with unexpected events," scored 2.86, yet was still interpreted as high. This suggests a slight hesitation among respondents when faced with

unforeseen situations, indicating areas for improvement in adaptive coping mechanisms.

The findings are aligned with several studies that highlight the importance of practical experiences in enhancing self-efficacy. Menon & Sadler (2016) demonstrate that field experience practices significantly and positively contribute to students' readiness for the teaching role and their self-efficacy levels. Additionally, Mulyati and Sopiah (2023) found that practical teaching

experiences enable pre-service teachers to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts, thereby enhancing their confidence and problem-solving abilities. Collectively, these results suggest that while early childhood pre-service teachers exhibit strong self-efficacy overall, focused interventions to strengthen adaptability in unexpected situations may further enhance their performance and resilience in real-world teaching scenarios.

Motivation of Early Childhood Pre-Service Teachers

Table 2. Level of Motivation of Early Childhood Pre- Service Teachers

STATEMENTS	MEAN	INTERPRETATION
I had no choice but to take early childhood education because I did not know what I wanted to be.	2.16	Moderately Motivated
I had another course as my first choice but ended up taking early childhood education because my first choice was too difficult to pass.	2.66	Low Motivated
My parents chose me to be an early childhood educator because it was the easiest for them.	1.69	Moderately Motivated
Many of my peers are enrolled in early childhood education, and their enthusiasm influenced me.	1.68	Moderately Motivated
The opportunity to go abroad is due to the demand for early childhood educators.	3.20	Moderately Motivated
My parents not being able to afford my desired course suggests that financial and family support can impact my educational choices in early childhood education.	1.93	Moderately Motivated
OVERALL	2.22	Moderately Motivated

Legend:

Mean Score Range

1.00-1.49

1.50-2.49

2.50-3.49

3.50-4.00

Qualitative Interpretation

Highly motivated

Moderately motivated

Low motivated

Not motivated

The information provided in the table showed that pre-service teachers in early childhood possess a moderate level of motivation, as shown by a standard mean score of 2.22 (SD = 0.57). While this score may initially suggest a lower level of agreement on a conventional Likert scale, it is essential to interpret the data within the context of reverse-coded items. Given that the majority of items in the motivation scale were negatively worded, lower mean scores indicate stronger disagreement with externally driven motives, thus reflecting higher levels of intrinsic motivation.

This result indicates that most pre-service teachers are self-directed and intrinsically motivated to pursue early childhood education. Rather than being strongly influenced by external pressures such as financial limitations, peer influence, or familial expectations, the respondents have made intentional and autonomous choices regarding their academic path. These findings align with Huang et al. (2023), who emphasized that pre-service teachers who are intrinsically motivated are driven by a genuine desire to learn and improve their teaching skills. This level of internal motivation is

critical in educational contexts, as it is often associated with greater academic engagement, persistence, and long-term professional commitment.

The statement "I had no choice but to take early childhood education because I did not know what I wanted to be" obtained a mean of 2.16, which was interpreted as moderately motivated after reverse coding. This suggests that many respondents disagreed with the idea that their choice was based on indecision or lack of options, reinforcing the notion of intentionality and personal agency.

The item with the highest mean score, "I had another course as my first choice but ended up taking early childhood education because my first choice was too difficult to pass," scored 2.66, interpreted as low motivation. This reflects that some students may have enrolled in the program due to academic inaccessibility of other programs, indicating the presence of extrinsic motivation. However, this is not the dominant trend across the responses. Other items showed strong evidence of intrinsic motivation.

The statement "My parents chose me to be an early childhood educator because it was the easiest for them" had a low mean of 1.69, while "Many of my peers are enrolled in early childhood education, and their enthusiasm influenced me" had a similar mean of 1.68. Both were interpreted as moderately motivated, suggesting that parental and peer influence were not major determinants in most students' academic decisions. While these findings indicate that social influences had limited impact on initial course selection, it is important to note that social support from peers, mentors, and instructors can still play a significant role in sustaining motivation throughout the academic journey (Chen, 2020).

Interestingly, the statement "The opportunity to go abroad is due to the demand for early childhood educators" had a relatively high mean of 3.20, which is interpreted as moderately motivated based on the original (non-reversed) scoring scale. This suggests that while the prospect of international employment may serve as a motivating factor for some students, it is not necessarily indicative of low intrinsic motivation. Instead, it reflects a practical and career-oriented perspective, wherein students recognize the broader opportunities associated with their chosen field. Although this represents a form of extrinsic motivation, it does not overshadow the more dominant trend of intrinsic drive observed across the other items. Finally, "My parents not being able to afford my desired course suggests that financial and family support can impact my educational choices" had a mean of 1.93, interpreted as moderately motivated. This suggests that financial constraints were not the primary driving factor for most respondents, although it did influence a minority.

These findings indicate that early childhood pre-service teachers generally exhibit moderate motivation, despite acknowledging some extrinsic influences. This bodes well for their future in the field, as intrinsic motivation is associated with deeper learning, greater satisfaction, and stronger commitment to teaching roles. To further support their academic and professional development, educational institutions may consider creating environments that nurture autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are foundational to sustaining intrinsic motivation and are core components of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a psychological framework explaining intrinsic motivation. In line with this belief, independent learning teachers can be autonomy models and facilitators in their students, for intrinsic motivation is often achieved in exercising autonomy in pursuing individual learning objectives (Rovai et al., 2020).

Academic Performance of Early Childhood Pre- Service Teachers

Table 3. Academic Performance of Early Childhood Pre-Service Teachers

Descriptive Statistics	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Academic Performance	128	1.35	2.50	1.7250	.17114
Valid N (listwise)	128				

The table presented the academic performance of early childhood pre-service teachers, which was assessed based on their General Weighted Average (GWA). The

sample consisted of 128 respondents. Their GWAs ranged from a minimum of 1.35 to a maximum of 2.50. The mean GWA was 1.7250 with a standard deviation

of 0.17114, indicating relatively consistent academic performance among the respondents.

- Based on the grading scale, this mean score falls within the "Very Good" category, which interprets a GWA of 1.5–1.75 as "Very Good." The relatively low standard deviation suggests a narrow spread of academic scores, implying a homogeneity in performance among early childhood pre-service teachers.
- These findings are consistent with prior research indicating strong academic performance among students in early childhood education programs. For example, Bartolome et al. (2024) reported a comparable mean GWA of 1.5 among pre-service teachers, suggesting a pattern of high achievement in this student group.
- Highest Scores (1.35–1.47): A small subset of respondents achieved outstanding GWAs, corresponding to the "Excellent" to upper "Very Good" categories. These individuals may possess strong intrinsic motivation, effective study strategies, and robust external support systems. Future research could further explore these contributing factors.
- Middle Range (1.50–1.78): The majority of respondents clustered in this range, which is categorized as "Very Good" to "Good." This suggests a strong baseline of academic achievement across the cohort and reflects consistent teaching quality and curriculum delivery.

- Lowest Scores (2.30–2.50): A few respondents fell into the "Fair" category. These lower scores may point to challenges such as low academic motivation, weaker self-efficacy, or external stressors, including financial or personal difficulties. These findings highlight the importance of targeted interventions for at-risk students.

The relatively narrow range of GWAs is a critical reflection of the equity and differentiation of learning experiences within the program. While the overall consistency in performance may reflect standardized instructional quality and equitable access to educational resources, it also raises questions about how individual learning needs and barriers are addressed. This finding aligns with Bedel (2016), who found a significant positive relationship between academic motivation and self-efficacy among pre-service early childhood teachers. Psychological constructs such as motivation and self-efficacy are central to academic success and merit further examination in relation to performance outcomes.

Furthermore, as noted by Dong (2024), identifying and supporting students at the extremes, both high-performing and underperforming, through mentorship and differentiated support can enhance teacher education outcomes. By addressing these varied needs, early childhood teacher education programs can more effectively prepare future educators for both academic and professional success.

Significant Relationship between Academic Performance in Terms of Self-Efficacy and Motivation

Table 4. Significant Relationship between Academic Performance in Terms of Self-Efficacy and Motivation

Variables		Academic Performance	Self-Efficacy	Motivation
Academic Performance	Spearman's rho	1.000	-.127	.030
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.154	.740
Self-Efficacy	Spearman's rho	-.127	1.000	.147
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.154	.	.099
Motivation	Spearman's rho	.030	.147	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.740	.099	.

The table depicts a negative and insignificant correlation between academic performance and self-efficacy (Spearman's rho = -0.127, $p = 0.154$).

This finding fails to reject the null hypothesis stating that "there is no significant relationship of self-efficacy on

the academic performance of early childhood pre-service teachers".

This implies that while self-efficacy is generally viewed as a positive factor in overcoming challenges, it does not directly impact academic performance in this study. This aligns with the results of Celcima et al. (2022),

which also indicated no significant correlation between academic achievement and self-efficacy. Their study suggested that the average grade does not influence students' beliefs about their skills and abilities to tackle academic tasks. This could imply that other factors, such as study habits or external support systems, might significantly influence academic outcomes.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed a weak and insignificant positive correlation between academic performance and motivation (Spearman's $\rho = 0.030$, $p = 0.740$). This finding fails to reject the second null hypothesis, which posits that "there is no significant relationship of motivation on the academic performance of early childhood pre-service teachers". It suggests that, in this context, motivation does not substantially affect academic performance.

Factors like intrinsic interest in early childhood education or external incentives must be strengthened to observe a meaningful impact on academic success. Additionally, a weak positive correlation was found between self-efficacy and motivation, although this relationship was statistically insignificant (Spearman's $\rho = 0.147$, $p = 0.099$). This suggests that while self-efficacy and motivation may influence one another, their connection in the context of pre-service teachers is limited.

The absence of significant relationships among academic performance, self-efficacy, and motivation highlights academic success's complex and multifaceted nature. This lack of correlation aligns with the study by West and Meier (2019), which found no statistically significant correlation between pre-service teachers' attitudes and their academic performance. Similarly, no correlation was found between their level of self-efficacy and academic performance.

Although these variables are often regarded as crucial for achievement, this study suggests their impact may be context-dependent and influenced by external factors such as teaching quality, curriculum design, or personal circumstances.

The results underscore the significance of a holistic method for understanding academic performance, integrating multiple dimensions beyond self-efficacy and motivation. Future studies might explore whether targeted interventions, such as mentoring or workshops, could enhance the interplay between these variables.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, several key conclusions were drawn:

- Self-efficacy among early childhood pre-service teachers is generally high, indicating confidence in their ability to solve academic challenges. However, lower confidence in handling unexpected events suggests a need for improved adaptability through training in real-world scenarios.
- Participants exhibited moderate, primarily intrinsic motivation, driven by personal interest and internal goals rather than external pressures. This autonomy reflects intentional academic and career decisions, important indicators of long-term professional commitment.
- Academic performance was uniformly high, with most students demonstrating satisfactory results. The slight variation suggests equitable instructional quality, though differentiated academic support is recommended to address both high achievers and those experiencing difficulties.
- No significant relationships were found among self-efficacy, motivation, and academic performance. This highlights the complex and multifactorial nature of academic success, suggesting that other variables such as study habits, teaching quality, and environmental support may exert a greater influence.
- In sum, while the participants display high self-belief and intentional motivation, these traits alone do not predict academic performance. A broader, systemic approach to student support is warranted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

- To maintain and enhance pre-service teachers' high self-efficacy in tackling academic challenges, teacher education programs should provide consistent opportunities for active learning such as project-based tasks, academic competitions, peer-led seminars, and collaborative research that promote critical thinking and real-world application. Additionally, to strengthen adaptability and coping skills, programs should incorporate experiential strategies like simulated teaching, reflective practice, and stress management workshops to prepare students for unexpected classroom situations with confidence and resilience.
- Sustain and deepen intrinsic motivation through autonomy-supportive environments. Institutions

should encourage student-led projects, provide opportunities for goal-setting and self-directed learning, and offer personalized mentorship to maintain engagement.

- Implement tailored academic support systems. Monitoring students' academic progress can help identify both those who excel and those who struggle. Institutions should provide enrichment programs for high performers and remedial support or academic advising for at-risk learners.
- Adopt a holistic approach to academic success. Since self-efficacy and motivation did not significantly correlate with academic performance, broader factors such as learning environments, socioeconomic background, family support, and teacher-student relationships should be addressed through integrated support services and inclusive curriculum planning.

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