

## **TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY AS A MEDIATOR OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE AND PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' COMMITMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Background and Purpose:** Since preschool education is the cornerstone of change and overall development of children, it is a very important phase that prepares them before they enter the school world. Thus, the development and expansion of preschool programs need to be given further attention and improvement of the quality of services to the community. Teachers' emotional competence and self-efficacy are closely related to teacher commitment. Therefore, it is important for us to identify the relationship between preschool teachers' emotional competence and teachers' commitment as well as to investigate the mediating effect of teachers' self-efficacy to perform their role toward developing children's potential holistically. This study aims to examine the mediating effect of teachers' self-efficacy between the relationship of emotional competence and self-efficacy of teachers with the commitment of preschool teachers in the state of Selangor, Malaysia. This study was based on the Emotional Competency Theory developed by Goleman (2001), the Self-Efficacy Model by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) as well as the Teacher Commitment Model by Thien et al. (2014).

**Methodology:** The methodology used was a survey study involving 428 preschool teachers in the state of Selangor who were selected through cluster sampling and convenient sampling to answer a set of questionnaire through Google Forms. The instrument was validated by six experts and a pilot study was conducted on 75 samples of preschool teachers in the Klang district. Data collected were analyzed quantitatively using IBM SPSS V23.0 & Smart-PLS 3.0.

**Findings:** The results of structural model analysis showed that the relationship between emotional competence, self-efficacy and commitment was positively significant and teacher self-efficacy served as a partially mediating effect in the relationship between emotional competence and teacher commitment.

**Contributions:** The previous studies of emotional competence, self-efficacy, and commitment were in the field of education in general and did not focus on preschool education. Based on the issues and long-term implications of the quality of preschool education, this study provided an improved new model to fill the research gap in the field of early childhood education to improve the quality of continuing education.

**Keywords:** Commitment, early childhood education, emotional competence, mediator, preschool teacher, self-efficacy.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The emotional formation of teachers is particularly important because the expressions and behaviors resulting from low emotional competence of teachers will affect the emotional competence of preschool students (Yahya et al., 2015; Zhang, Yu, & Jiang, 2020). According to the studies of Agbaria (2021) and Zhang et al. (2020), preschool children often experience emotional self-awareness, so they are very sensitive to the praise and criticism of others. If children are often praised, they will feel confident and proud of their own abilities. However, if children are often scolded for misbehavior, then they will feel guilty even if the offense was an unintentional accident. Teachers of high emotional competence are contributors to the emotional construction and formation of preschool students (Agbaria, 2021; Farah et al., 2018; Darling-Hammond, 2007).

Teachers with high emotional competence are able to increase their level of self-efficacy in delivering their teaching to students (Agbaria, 2021; Hughes, Abbott Chapman, & Williamson, 2001; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Yahya et al., 2015). The efforts of these effective teachers are more confident about teaching methods and processes to improve children achievement and change in children (Lee & Jonson-Reid, 2016; Shafinaz, 2017; Yahya et al., 2015) and achieve teaching satisfaction (Yin, 2015). This is because teachers with high

emotional competence and effectiveness are believed to be able to carry out tasks responsibly and with high commitment (Cheng & Gan, 2020; Ramana, 2013; Shafinaz, 2017; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).

According to the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025), the Ministry of Education has set a target of 92 % of children in the country getting early childhood education nationwide by the years of 2025 before entering primary school. Therefore, teachers need to equip themselves with various skills to be able to perform tasks effectively to achieve the national target. Teachers with high teacher emotional competence and self-efficacy are able to perform their commitment and role as quality preschool teachers (Agbaria, 2021; Collin, 2001; Farah et al., 2018; Cheng & Gan, 2020).

This study aims to examine the mediating effect of teachers' self-efficacy between the relationship of emotional competence and self-efficacy of teachers with the commitment of preschool teachers in the state of Selangor, Malaysia. The rationale of this study is to provide an overview of teachers' emotional competence, self-efficacy, and commitment of preschool teachers to the Malaysian Ministry of Education to improve the quality of preschool teachers in the country.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Relationship between Emotional Competence, Self-Efficacy and Commitment**

The high level of emotional competence of teachers is assessed by the ability of teachers to understand the weaknesses and shortcomings of students and be able to manage their own emotions and the emotions of others, able to absorb the spirit of teamwork, be optimistic, able to work together (George, 2000), involved in groups and make decisions together, be tolerant (Lee & Jonson-Reid, 2016; Shafinaz, 2017), and be able to respond quickly to a variety of organizational situations (Lee & Jonson-Reid, 2016; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000; Shafinaz, 2017). Moreover, emotional competence at a higher level refers to someone who is more alert, empathetic, sincere (Lee & Jonson-Reid, 2016; Shafinaz, 2017; Yahya et al, 2015), understands the emotional importance of teachers (Beatty, 2001; Shafinaz, 2017), and dare to face challenges (Agbaria, 2021; Lee et al., 2017; Shafinaz, 2017; Yalcin, 2016).

Various studies have demonstrated that teacher self-efficacy is highly correlated with teacher behaviors capable of fostering student performance (Infurna, Riter, & Schultz, 2018; Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000; Ramana, 2013). This is due to high self-efficacy teachers being more enthusiastic and highly committed to organizational planning and willing to deal with students' behavior (Zhang et al., 2020; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). This also proves that

self-efficacy is very important to be improved because it is able to influence the feelings and thoughts and behaviors of teachers while performing their responsibilities to educate and shape the personality of students (Agbaria, 2021; Zhang et al., 2020).

Highly committed teachers are considered as an asset in any school. Thus, commitment has become an important aspect to be developed and nurtured among school teachers (Thien, Nordin, & Ramayah, 2014). Researchers' interest in exploring teacher commitment is growing because of strong psychological relationships with the school, students, and area subjects. In addition, teachers who work hard and show effort to promote high quality teaching can optimize student outcomes (Thien et al., 2014). The seriousness of their efforts and involvement of teachers in promoting quality teaching reflected by their commitment to work, school, students, and profession is important in educational outcomes (Thien et al., 2014; Cheng & Gan, 2020).

### ***2.1.1 Interrelationships between Emotional Competence, Self-Efficacy and Commitment***

Previous studies showed that the variable of emotional intelligence with work commitment has a significant positive relationship (Anari, 2012; Khalili, 2011; Infurna et al., 2018; Noorhafeza & Ferlis, 2010; Sarboland, 2012; Shafinaz, 2017; Yahzanon & Yusof, 2011). In other words, the level of emotional intelligence of an individual has a direct relationship with work commitment, that is, when the level of emotional intelligence of a person is high, then his commitment to work will also be high. The results of previous studies are in line with the findings of several other early researchers such as Goleman (1998) and Meyer, Allen, and Topolnytsky (1998).

Fletcher (2007) says that commitment to the organization is higher when emotional intelligence is high, whereas commitment to the organization will decrease when emotional intelligence is low. The study of Fletcher (2007) also found that there is a significant relationship between the level of emotional intelligence with a commitment to a career among counseling teachers. This statement is supported by Asliza (2004) who conducted a study of the relationship between the level of emotional intelligence with the level of job satisfaction and career commitment of counseling teachers in secondary schools in the district of Johor Bahru, Johor State, Malaysia. He also found that there was a significant positive relationship between the level of emotional intelligence with a commitment to a career.

Moreover, in the study of Petrides and Furnham (2000), the level of emotional intelligence also proved the existence of a significant relationship between job satisfaction with commitment to the organization. In addition, teachers with high emotional psychology are said

to be highly committed in their work because the teachers understand the feelings and emotions of themselves and others as well as able to maintain friendly relationships with various relevant parties in the world of education or school people themselves involving students, parents and surrounding communities (Cheng & Gan, 2020). Preschool teachers with high emotional psychology work more enthusiastically and effectively to complete their tasks, and those with a high level of commitment can help to improve early standards of children's education and care (Lee et al., 2017). In the study of Infurna et al. (2018), the findings showed that the relationship of teacher self-efficacy with teacher commitment and teaching effectiveness was significant. Therefore, a study to show the relationship between emotions and teacher effectiveness needs to be done.

## **2.2 Self-Efficacy as a Mediator**

In the study of Chan et al. (2008), there is a touch on the role of teacher self-efficacy as a mediator between causal background and teacher commitment. In this study, teacher self-efficacy and sense of familiarity with the school are predicted to play a mediating role between the relationship of one background i.e. teaching experience, and two organizational backgrounds, i.e. political organization and reflective dialogue to teacher commitment. Multi-group structural equation modeling was used to test and validate the mediator model between teaching experience and political organization and the organization of reflective dialogue with teacher commitment through two separate groups of sample teachers. Political organization was found to show a negative influence on teachers' commitment, whereas the reflective dialogue of experience showed a positive influence. Teacher effectiveness and teachers' identification with the schools were found to fully mediate the relationship between the three backgrounds and teachers' commitment. Although the findings of their study did not show a clear mediator relationship, the researchers suggested that further studies should be done to re-test such predictions.

Lee, Zhang, and Yin (2011) through their study analyzed the relationship between professional learning community (PLC), faculty trust in colleagues, teachers collective efficacy, and their commitment to students. Results from a sample of 480 Hong Kong teachers from 33 primary and secondary schools showed that two PLC dimensions including collective learning and application (dimension), and supportive conditions - structure (dimension), and faculty trust in colleagues and the collective teacher showed a significant and positive relationship of teachers commitment and students in the school.

From the above literature, it was found that the study of emotional competence, self-efficacy, and commitment of teachers, in general, is in the field of education but did not focus on preschool education. Based on the issues and long-term implications of the quality of preschool education, this study needs to be implemented to improve the quality of continuing education. Since preschool education is the cornerstone of the change and overall development of children which is very important before they enter the school world, the development and expansion of preschool programs need to be given attention and improved the quality of services to the community.

### **2.3 Theory and the Model of the Related Study**

Based on the description above in 2.1 and 2.2, it can be concluded that the self-efficacy of individual teachers is proven to affect the quality of teaching and learning. Therefore, stakeholders need to emphasize efforts to improve the self-efficacy of preschool teachers as a whole self-efficacy has proven to be influential in efforts to improve the quality of preschool education under the state education system.

In looking at the relationship between emotional competence and teacher self-efficacy with preschool teacher commitment, the theories and model used by the researcher are emotional intelligence theory (Goleman, 2001), the teacher self-efficacy model by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), and teacher commitment model by Thien et al. (2014) to examine teachers' emotions in an effort to produce convincing and quality preschool teaching.

The theory of emotional intelligence developed by Goleman (1998, 2001) discusses emotional intelligence in four main dimensions namely self-awareness, self-management social awareness, and social relationship management were selected to be the reference of this study as it has its advantages and role. The rationale for this theory was chosen because these four dimensions put forward by Goleman (2001) are particularly necessary to be practiced by preschool teachers and their relationship with the individuals around them (Ramana, 2013; Yin, 2015; Zhang et al., 2020). Preschool teachers need the cooperation of superiors, assistants, children and parents to ensure a quality teaching and education process in preschool. Thus, the emotional stability and strength of preschool teachers are important for controlling the behavioral diversity of self, children and parents (Ramana, 2013; Zhang et al., 2020). In addition, the ability of a preschool teacher to be aware of and manage the feelings of children and preschoolers is also important to ensure that the teaching and learning process can be carried out effectively. Teachers who are able to handle their feelings of self and the feelings

of children, especially successfully are teachers who are effective in ensuring quality education (Agbaria, 2021).

For this study, the self-efficacy model referred by the researcher is the self-efficacy model constructed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) as a theory that underpins the study as an independent variable (in addition as a mediator). In this regard, the researcher examines the relationship between emotional competence and teacher self-efficacy that is measured through three dimensions, namely, teaching strategies, classroom management and student involvement with preschool teacher commitment which is related to teaching practice dimensions teachers in carrying out their commitments in the classroom.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) stated that teacher self-efficacy is a teacher's belief in his or her ability to perform teaching tasks and motivate students regardless of the ability and socioeconomics of his students' families. They also stated that teachers' self-efficacy allows teachers to believe they are capable of organizing and executing a series of teaching task actions in a specific context perfectly. Self-efficacy has much to do with a teacher's proactive actions and behaviors. For them, in order to be an effective teacher, knowledge related to the curriculum syllabus and pedagogical approach alone is insufficient because the confidence and ability of teachers to carry out teaching tasks has a strong influence in determining the success of the teaching task.

Therefore, to measure the level of self-efficacy of teachers, evaluation of teaching tasks and content is highly desirable in addition to the strengths and weaknesses of the individual teacher. The cycle of the environment (cyclical nature) is one of the properties that can enhance the self-efficacy of teachers. With a high level of teacher self-efficacy, the individual will persevere and produce successful efforts to make a teacher more successful (Ahmad Johari & Zaitun, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). On the other hand, teachers with low levels of self-efficacy only produce limited efforts and are happy to admit defeat, thus affecting the teaching and disrupting the effective learning of their students. Teaching achievement is actually the result of perseverance and hard work that greatly influences the individual self-efficacy of the teacher. That achievement will ultimately be a reference to teachers' confidence.

In teacher commitment model by Thien et al. (2014), the conceptualization of teacher commitment is synthesized as a multidimensional construct that is reflected in four dimensions. Therefore, the commitment of teachers has been developed according to four main dimensions, namely commitment to (i) Students, (ii) Teaching, (iii) School, and (iv) Profession.

In this Model, teachers' commitment to the profession is conceptualized as teachers' passion and motivational strength to serve by improving professional teaching skills,

knowledge, and abilities. Thein et al (2014) state that professional commitment as an individual's attitude towards an individual's profession or career. In addition, commitment to the profession is also seen as progress towards individual goals, driving and related commitment to achieve those goals. Consistent with the study of Musliza, Siti Noor, and Anis Salwa (2020) state that teacher commitment to a profession involves effective participation in a profession or occupation, which is associated with self-identification and self-satisfaction as a teacher. Teachers' commitment to the profession is important because it enables individuals to develop the skills and relationships needed to achieve a successful career regardless of the organization in which they are engaged (Cheng & Gan 2020; Infurna et al., 2018).

The main focus of this study was to investigate the relationship of teachers' emotional competence and teachers' self-efficacy with teacher commitment. Self-efficacy was chosen as a mediator because previous studies have shown these social background factors can be identified self-efficacy that may influence the independent variables that is emotional competence (Gill & Sankulkar, 2017) that can provide an effect on dependent variables that is teachers' commitment (Mohd Khairuddin, 2017).

Based on the literature review above and the focus of this study, the research question has been constructed as below:

Research question 1: Is there a significant relationship between teachers' emotional competence and preschool teachers' commitment in the state of Selangor?

Research question 2: Is there a significant relationship between teachers' emotional competence and self-efficacy of preschool teachers in the state of Selangor?

Research question 3: Is there a significant relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and the commitment of preschool teachers in the state of Selangor?

Research question 4: Is there an effect of teachers' self-efficacy as a mediator between teachers' emotional competence and the commitment of preschool teachers in the state of Selangor?

Based on the above research questions, there are previous studies by Agbaria (2021) showed that emotional intelligence has a significant relationship with commitment among preschool teachers. Besides that, in the study of Infurna et al. (2018), the findings showed that the relationship of teacher self-efficacy with teacher commitment and teaching effectiveness was



significant. In study of Yahya et al. (2015), the findings show that there is relationship of emotional competence with self-efficacy among preschool teachers. In the study of Chan et al. (2008), there is a touch on the role of teacher self-efficacy as a mediator between causal background and teacher commitment. Therefore, the following hypotheses have been constructed as below:

- Ha<sup>1</sup>: There is a significant relationship between the emotional competencies of teachers with the commitment of preschool teachers in the state of Selangor.
- Ha<sup>2</sup>: There is a significant relationship between teachers' emotional competence and self-efficacy of preschool teachers in the state of Selangor.
- Ha<sup>3</sup>: There is a significant relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and the commitment of preschool teachers in the state of Selangor.
- Ha<sup>4</sup>: Teachers' self-efficacy plays a role as a mediator between teachers' emotional competence and the commitment of preschool teachers in the state of Selangor.

### **3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study is a quantitative study with a survey approach to investigate the relationship between emotional competence and teacher commitment in preschools in the state of Selangor and the effect of teachers' self-efficacy as a mediator in this relationship. Cluster sampling and random sampling techniques have been implemented using google forms in the study. Due to the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO), the data collection was conducted in the Selangor Education Department involving 10 districts. A total of 555 preschool teachers have been selected as the sample and 428 teachers had responded to the questionnaire that form the final sample size.

#### **3.1 Instrument**

In this study, the researcher used a questionnaire as an instrument. According to Chua (2016), an instrument is a measurement tool specially designed to collect study data. This form of instrument is considered most appropriate to obtain information related to emotional competence, teacher self-efficacy and commitment of preschool teachers because the questionnaire can help researchers collect data more accurately in this study. The questionnaire of this study consists of four parts as below:

- (a) Part A: Demographics of the respondents consisted of 3 items;
- (b) Part B: Emotional competence adapted from ECI-V2 from Hoy Group contained 72 items;
- (c) Part C: Self-efficacy adapted from the “TSES” instrument Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) contained 24 items; and
- (d) Part D: Teacher commitment adapted from the Teacher Commitment Scale instrument by Thien et al. (2014) contained 13 items.

For part B (emotional competence), several changes were made to the items to achieve more robust measurements in the study. Among the most notable recommendations is the use of the word “people” was changed to “children” because this study focused on early childhood education. Therefore, there are sentences that need to be modified to suit the context of early childhood education. There were 27 items out of a total of 72 items that changed.

For example,

Item 19: “I always build good relationships with people from a variety of backgrounds” had change to “I always build good relationships with children from a variety of backgrounds”.

Item 25: “I practice leadership through example” had change to “I become an example to children”

For Part C, which is a teacher self-efficacy instrument, 18 items out of a total of 24 items were changed from the general context to the context of children's education to facilitate teachers' understanding when answering questions. This is because a focused statement gives a clearer picture to the respondent when answering the question accurately.

For example,

Item 3: “I can control disruptive behavior in class” was changed to “I was able to control disruptive children’s behavior in the classroom”.

Item 18: “I can use a variety of evaluation strategies” was changed to “I can use a variety of assessment strategies”.

In part D, which is the teacher commitment instrument, there were 2 items out of a total of 13 items that were modified. Among them, the first item which is item 7 required change because

the statement focuses on general students and needs to be adapted to and changed into the context of children. In addition, item 8 also dropped the word ‘often’ so that the statement is more robust. For example,

Item 7: “All students can succeed and this is my mission to ensure their success” was changed to “All children can succeed and this is my mission to ensure their success”.

A summary of the questionnaire is as follows.

Table 1: Summary of questionnaire items

Sections	Description of Item	Total Item
A	Teacher Demography	3
B1	Teacher Emotional Competence- Self-awareness	12
B2	Teacher Emotional Competence Self-management	24
B3	Teacher Emotional Competence Social-awareness	12
B4	Teacher Emotional Competence-Social-management	24
C1	Teacher Self-efficacy -Teaching strategy	8
C2	Teacher Self-efficacy -Classroom management	8
C3	Teacher Self-efficacy -Student involvement	8
D1	Commitment to student	3
D2	Commitment to teaching	3
D3	Commitment to school	3
D4	Commitment to profession	4
TOTAL ITEM		112

### 3.2 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Validity of the content and language of the instrument was performed using experts reference methods. In this study, the researchers have validated the questionnaire by obtaining opinions and evaluations from six experts in the field of early childhood education and educational psychology who are well experienced and serving in local public and private universities, the Ministry of Education (MOE), and private preschools.

After corrections were made based on the experts’ recommendations, the researchers conducted a pilot test on 75 preschool teachers in Selangor. Smart-PLS 3 software was used to analyze the data of this pilot study to identify item reliability values and construct validity. It

is important to identify the items of the adapted questionnaire that have high-reliability values and are appropriate for the actual study.

Measurement model analysis is a method of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to confirm the indicators that are items that determine the variables that should be measured and at the same time ensure the reliability of the instrument. In this process, three things are taken into account which are factor load, composite reliability (CR), and mean of extracted variance (AVE) (Hassan, Mohd Rashid, & Roslinazairimah, 2014). The results of the model measurement analysis after the items were removed were still retained in the construct in question because the CR and AVE values exceeded .5 (Hair et al., 2017). The loading values of other items in excess of .7 are suitable as measuring items of the construct.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

In this study, all data collected were analyzed using SPSS 23.0 and Smart-PLS 3.0 software. With the use of software packages SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and Smart-PLS, SPSS analysis was used for data filtering before SEM-PLS 3.0 software analysis was conducted for the structural model test to determine whether teacher emotional competence variables, teacher self-efficacy showed a significant relationship with preschool teacher commitment or not with HOC formation. This study model is a formative model which tested three main variables that were formed from different sub-constructs. According to Hair et al. (2014), PLS-SEM is suitable for analyzing abnormal data and formative models. Since the study model is a formative model and the data collected are abnormal, PLS-SEM was used in this study to explore the role of self-efficacy as a mediator of the relationship of emotional competence and commitment of preschool teachers.

Researchers used PLS-SEM to test the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. (Hair et al., 2014). PLS-SEM analysis can help researchers describe the relationship between each factor to test each study hypothesis easily and clearly (Hair et al., 2014). In structural model testing, the HOC technique was used. Higher-Order Construct (HOC) is an analytical technique to reduce model complexity especially for expressing and evaluating multidimensional concepts, expected levels of variables and criteria as well as for generalizing study concepts (Akter, Fosso Wamba, & Dewan, 2017; Becker, Klein, & Wetzels, 2012; Edwards, 2001; Wetzels, Odekerken-Schröder, & Van Oppen, 2009). The method of building HOC by using latent variable from the value of latent variable in lower level measurement is the construction of upper level construct model based on lower-level model is to summarize the measurement model and become more parsimony in the study model.

### 3.4 Respondent Background

Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire instrument. The demographic profile of the respondents obtained from the questionnaire is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Respondent's background

Demography	Description	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	406	94.9
	Male	22	5.1
Academic Qualification	Diploma	26	6.1
	Degree	360	84.1
	Master Degree	42	9.8
Option	Pre-school	392	91.6
	Non Preschool	36	8.4
Total		428	100

Table 2 shows that the total number of respondents in the study was 428 teachers. The total respondents consisted of 406 (94.9%) female teachers and 22 (5.1%) male teachers. Majority of respondents are teachers who have a specialization in preschool education which is 392 (91.6%), while only 26 (8.4%) respondents do not specialize in preschool education.

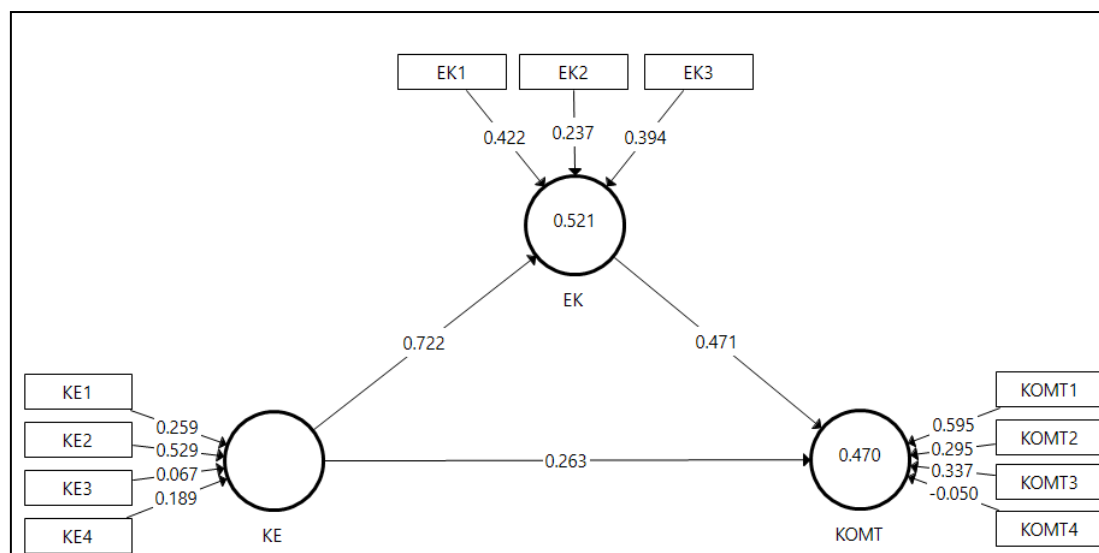
In terms of academic qualifications, majority of respondents have a degree with 360 teachers (84.1%), followed by a master's degree with 42 teachers (9.8%) and certificates / diploma holders who recorded a minority number of 26 teachers (6.1%).

## 4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Relationship between Teachers' Emotional Competence, Self-Efficacy and Preschool Teachers' Commitment

The structural model of the study is known as the inner model which shows the direct relationship of exogenous latent with endogenous latent. The structural model of this study is a high-level hierarchical model (HOC) which uses latent variable values to test and predict the relationship between exogenous latent and endogenous latent. The test of this structural model is to answer all research questions 1, 2, and 3.

The Structural model by using Smart-PLS in Figure 1 and the Table 3 shows the relationship of each exogenous latent with endogenous latent.



\*Note: KE= Emotional competence; EK= Self-efficacy; KOMT= Commitment

Figure 1: Structural model of the study

Table 3: Path coefficient analysis and hypothesis testing

	Path	beta	SD	t Value	p Value	Results
H <sub>1</sub>	KE->KG	.263	.060	4.390	.000*	Significant
H <sub>2</sub>	KE->EK	.722	.025	29.378	.000*	Significant
H <sub>3</sub>	EK->KG	.471	.058	8.055	.000*	Significant

\*Note: Significance ( $p < .05$ ) on the one -tail test

The findings of the study in Figure 1 as well as the results of the path coefficient analysis in Table 3 were the results of bootstrapping calculations with 5000 repeated samples in smart-PLS software. Hypothesis tests H<sup>1</sup> to H<sup>3</sup> explained the significance with  $t > 1.645$ ,  $p < .05$ .

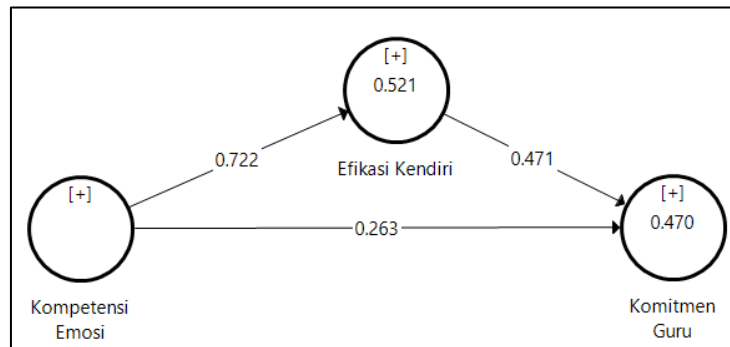
The findings of the analysis of the study showed that there was a significant direct positive relationship between emotional competence ( $\beta = .263$ ,  $p < .05$ ) with teacher commitment. In addition, it was found that the relationship of emotional competence with self-efficacy also showed a significant direct positive relationship with value ( $\beta = .722$ ,  $p < .05$ ). For the relationship between self-efficacy and commitment, the value ( $\beta = .471$ ,  $p < .05$ ) also showed a significant positive relationship. Therefore, hypotheses Ha<sup>1</sup>, Ha<sup>2</sup> and Ha<sup>3</sup> were accepted.

In summary, emotional competence and self-efficacy showed a significant positive relationship with commitment. This meant that the higher the level of emotional competence of the teacher, the higher the commitment of the teacher; the higher the emotional competence,

the higher the self-efficacy; the higher the self-efficacy, the greater the teacher commitment because there was a significant relationship.

#### 4.2 Self-Efficacy Model as a Mediator Between the Relationship of Emotional Competence and Commitment

Mediation tests were conducted to answer research question 4:



\*Note: *Kompetensi Emosi*= Emotional Competence; *Efikasi Kendiri*= Self-efficacy; *Komitmen Guru*= Teacher Commitment

Figure 2: Self-efficacy model between the relationship of emotional competence and teachers' commitment

Table 4: Analysis of self-efficacy intermediate model between the relationship on emotional competence and commitment

Path	Beta	SD	t Value	p Value	CI 95%		Results	Effects
					LL 2.5%	UL 97.5%		
KE->EF								(partial
a	.722	.024	30.082	.000*	.656	.756	Significant	mediation)
EF->KG								*positive
b	.471	.060	7.897	.000*	.359	.581	Significant	
KE->KG								
c'	.263	.060	4.404	.000*	.135	.370	Significant	
KE->EF->KG								
a x b	.340	.045	7.488	.000*	.255	.424	Significant	

\*Note: Significant ( $p < .05$ ) on the two tail test

The findings of the study showed that the indirect mediating effect in Figure 2 and Table 4 showed that the direct effect ( $\beta = .722. = 471. = .263.$ ) and the indirect effect was significant ( $\beta = .340. p > .05, 95\% CI: 255: .424$ ) and 95% confidence intervals included zero (0). These findings indicated that self-efficacy significantly played a mediating role that affected the relationship of emotional competence with the commitment of preschool teachers in Selangor. In total, the effect of emotional competence on teacher commitment has increased with the existence of self-efficacy as a mediating role from  $\beta = .263$  to  $\beta = .603$  (direct effect  $\beta = .263$  + indirect effect  $\beta = .340$ ). Thus, H<sup>4</sup> was accepted based on findings that self-efficacy had an indirect effect between emotional competence and commitment of preschool teachers in Selangor.

### **4.3 Discussion of the Relationship of Emotional Competence, Self-Efficacy and Teachers' Commitment**

The results of this study proved that the emotional competence of teachers with the commitment of preschool teachers in the state of Selangor showed a positive relationship. This means that the higher emotional competence, the higher the likeness that preschool teachers in the state of Selangor will commit to their duties. Thus, preschool teachers with high levels of emotional competence caused them to feel higher satisfaction and be willing to work hard in their careers (Agbaria, 2021; Yin, 2015; Zhang et al., 2020). According to Goleman's theory (1998, 2001), emotional competence is the factor that distinguishes an excellent leader from a non-excellent one. In the context of preschool teachers, emotional competence is the source that distinguishes between excellent and non-excellent preschool teachers (Agbaria, 2021; Zhang et al., 2020; Farah et al., 2018; Valente & Lourenço, 2020). The effectiveness of emotional competence should not be underestimated in the workplace because emotional competence is also associated with leadership effectiveness, job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

These findings are in line with several previous studies showing that there is a significant positive relationship between emotional competence and work commitment (Anari, 2012; Khalili, 2011; Noorhafa & Ferlis, 2010; Sarboland, 2012; Shafinaz, 2017; Siti Balqis et al., 2014; Mohd Khairuddin, 2017; Noorhafa & Ferlis, 2010; Yahzanon & Yusof, 2011; Bar-On, 1997; Meyer et al., 1998; Goleman, 1998; Hidayat, 2014). That is, when the level of emotional competence of an individual is higher, then the commitment to work and career will be higher. However, the results of this study contradicted the results of the study of Wan Anor



et al. (2012) that showed emotional competence constructs with organizational commitment had no significant relationship.

Therefore, preschool teachers in the state of Selangor who have emotional competence issues need to be improved so that they can carry out their duties professionally and not emotionally, as well as to be more committed to their careers. Besides that, they can be more committed to student welfare, children's learning, caring for the image of the school and the teaching profession so that the quality of early childhood education is guaranteed.

Numerous studies have shown that individuals who possess positive emotions cause their self-efficacy to increase on a particular thing or activity they engage in (Agbaria, 2021). The statement was in line with the view of Sutton and Wheatley (2003), who stated that the increase in teachers' self-efficacy is due to the teachers' own emotions. Therefore, the factor of increasing the level of self-efficacy of teachers is still a critical question (Gua et al., 2011), especially among teachers. The results of the study showed that the relationship between emotional competence and self-efficacy of preschool teachers in the state of Selangor was a significant direct positive relationship with the value ( $\beta = .722, p < .05$ ). These results reflected that the higher the level of emotional competence of Selangor preschool teachers, the higher their self-efficacy in the dimensions of teaching strategies, classroom management and student involvement in preschool children's learning.

The results of this study were in line with the findings of Shafinaz (2017). In Shafinaz's (2017) study, there was a statistically significant positive and moderately strong relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher self-efficacy. In addition, Bandura (1997) stated that there is a positive relationship between emotions and self-efficacy causing teachers' self-efficacy to increase in the things or activities that they engage in. The results of this study showed similar findings to previous studies either in Malaysia or overseas. This indicated that preschool teachers in Selangor who are highly emotionally competent will have confidence and self-confidence in performing their duties with excellence because of their high effectiveness.

In general, emotional competence and self-efficacy play important roles in education. The findings of the study show that the emotional competence and self-efficacy of Selangor preschool teachers have a significant relationship, which means that preschool teachers in Selangor who have high emotional competence believe that they are able to teach in effective teaching situations. Thus, they dare to place higher targets on students, want to try new techniques in teaching, and dare to accept ideas for the sake of school and high resilience in pursuit of new and challenging tasks (Agbaria, 2021). Emotional competencies that influence

the self-efficacy of preschool teachers enable them to be committed in the execution of their increasingly challenging tasks to become quality teachers (Yahya et al., 2015).

Typically, teachers with high self-efficacy are said to be more committed and more enthusiastic in performing teaching tasks (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Ng, Nicholas, & Alan, 2010), they are positive when faced with problems (Milner & Hoy, 2003), their job satisfaction are higher (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014) and they have higher competitiveness (Milner & Hoy, 2003). Therefore, the findings of the study on the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and commitment of preschool teachers in the state of Selangor were significant.

The findings also showed a positive significant relationship between self-efficacy and commitment with a value of  $\beta = .471, p < .05$ . These findings reflected that the higher the self-efficacy of preschool teachers in the state of Selangor, the higher their commitment in performing their duties. The finding of the study was in line with many previous research that have demonstrated how teachers' self-efficacy has a positive and significant relationship with student performance and teacher teaching.

The study of Agbaria (2021) proved the relationship between teachers' emotional competence and self-efficacy with student performance as well as the improvement of teaching and learning tasks of students in the classroom is significant because teachers are committed to their role. Such achievement improvements include teacher behavior in the classroom, effort, trying new methods, commitment, and interest in teaching and learning (Bandura, 1997; Richardson, 2011; Azizuddin, Fleva, & Qazi, 2015). In addition, the findings of the study are also in line with the study of Norita (2012), which proved that the relationship of self-efficacy with teacher commitment is significant and positive.

#### **4.4 Discussion of the Role of Self-Efficacy as a Mediator on the Relationship Between Emotional Competence and Commitment**

Self-efficacy is playing a mediating role in the relationship of background with commitment (Chan et al., 2008). In this study, researchers predicted self-efficacy was proven to play a mediating role in the relationship of emotional competence with the commitment of preschool teachers in the state of Selangor. The findings of the study have proven the effect of self-efficacy on the relationship of emotional competence with the commitment of preschool teachers in Selangor because there were significant indirect effects and indirect effects and a 95% confidence interval includes zero (0). These findings showed that self-efficacy was a mediating factor (mediation effect) that affected the relationship between emotional competence and commitment of preschool teachers in Selangor with the total effect  $\beta = .603$

(indirect effect of the relationship between emotional competence and teacher commitment  $\beta = .340$  + direct effect of the relationship of emotional competence with teacher commitment  $\beta = .263$ ). In other words, the self-efficacy factor increased the effect of emotional competence on the commitment of preschool teachers in Selangor by 34%. to increase the commitment of preschool teachers. Therefore, MOE not only needs to increase the emotional competence of preschool teachers but more importantly, increase their efforts to heighten the self-efficacy of preschool teachers.

These findings were in line with a study conducted by Chan et al. (2008) who explored the predictive models and mediators of teachers' commitment. In their study, self-efficacy is predicted to play a role as a mediator between the relationship of teaching experience and the organizational background, that is political organization and reflective dialogue with teacher commitment. Self-efficacy was found to be entirely a mediator of the relationship between the three backstories with teacher commitment (Chan et al., 2008).

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that the self-efficacy factor not only can increase teachers' commitment, but also increase the relationship between teachers' emotional competence and their commitment. In total, the findings showed that self-efficacy has an indirect effect between the relationship of emotional competence and the commitment of preschool teachers in Selangor as mediators. Therefore, various programs and activities related to teacher self-efficacy need to be increased because self-efficacy has a direct and indirect impact on teachers' commitment so that the quality of teachers can be improved. This is because preschool teachers with high self-efficacy are able to work harder when performing their duties. Thus, they will be more committed than teachers with less self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Shafinaz, 2017; Yahya et al., 2015).

Since the relationship between emotional competence and self-efficacy with commitment has shown a significant positive relationship in addition to the role of self-efficacy is also significant as a mediator for the relationship then the researcher can form a final model as an additional finding in early childhood education research.

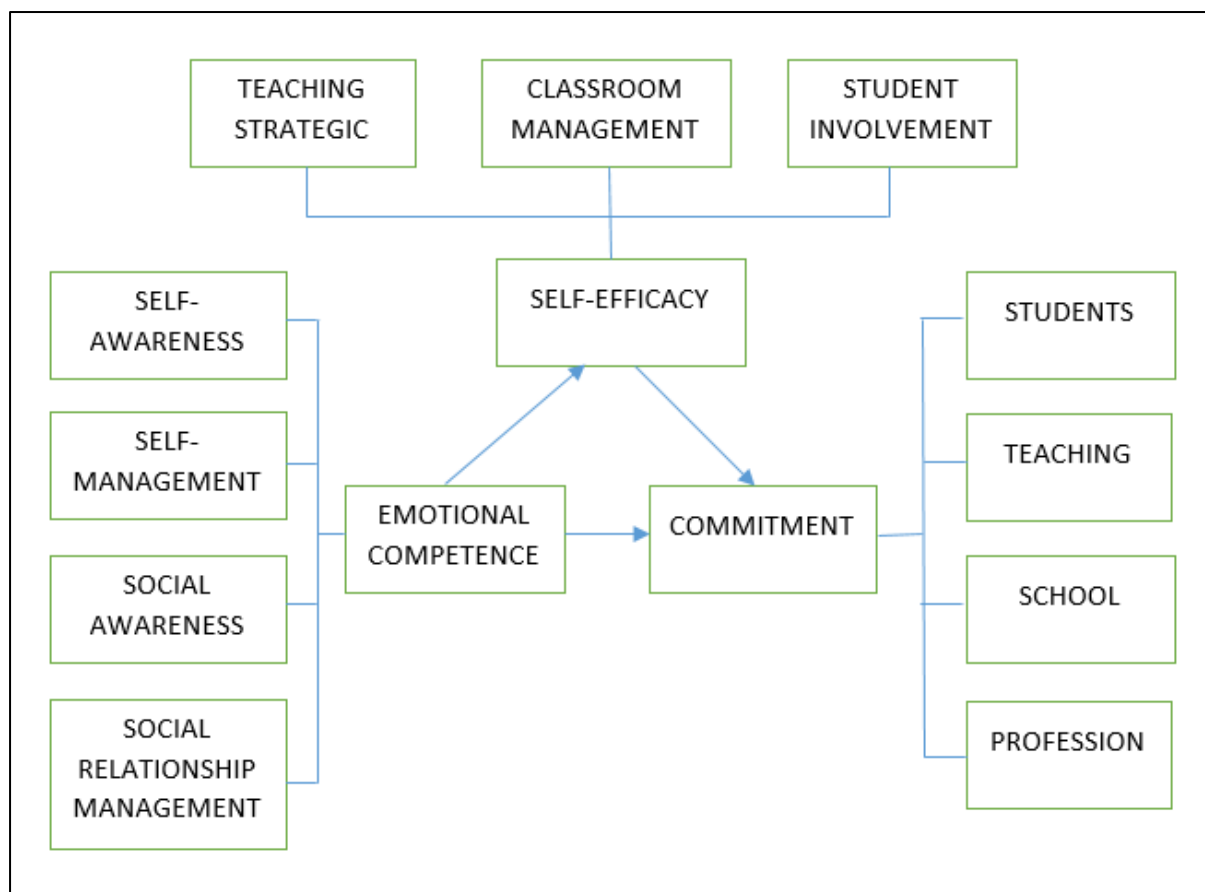


Figure 3: Final study model

In reference to Figure 3, this final model is a combination of the emotional competence theory by Goleman (2001), the self-efficacy model by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), and the teacher commitment model by Thien et al. (2014) shows that the relationship between emotional competence, self-efficacy, and teacher commitment. Self-efficacy also plays a mediator in the relationship between emotional competence with teacher commitment. Each construct summarizes its respective dimensions as in the figure above. Thus, this final model can be named the model of emotional competence, self-efficacy, and commitment of preschool teachers.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

### 5.1 Conclusion

By using the emotional competence theory (Goleman, 2001), teacher self-efficacy model (Tschannen-Maron & Hoy, 2001) and teacher commitment model (Thien et al., 2014) in the study, it can be concluded that emotional competence and effective self-efficacy positively influenced the commitment of preschool teachers in the state of Selangor. Self-efficacy as a

mediating factor can increase the commitment of preschool teachers. Since the results of the study showed that emotional competence and self-efficacy have positive effects on the commitment of preschool teachers, these two factors need to be considered in policy formulation and matters on the management of early childhood education to increase teacher commitment so that the quality of early childhood education of Malaysian children can be improved. The implication of the study has proven that all three theories and model can be combined because there is a significant relationship between the three variables. In terms of methodology, the use of PLS-SEM is seen to be suitable for the formative model and abnormal data in this study. In a practical aspect, to increase the commitment of preschool teachers, the stakeholder needs to improve the emotional competence and self-efficacy of preschool teachers because the teachers' self-efficacy plays a role in mediating effect in this study.

## **5.2 Suggestions for Further Studies**

Since this study was only conducted in the state of Selangor, this study is proposed to be implemented in other states throughout Malaysia to look at the state of emotional competence, self-efficacy, and commitment of preschool teachers as a whole. Since this study only focuses on government preschool teachers, future studies are proposed to be implemented on private preschool teachers because their large number will affect the quality of early childhood education in the country as well. Besides that, in this study, the data collected was based on quantitative data without taking into account the quantitative data that is outside the scope of the study. Therefore, further research can be implemented using a qualitative method to obtain a more comprehensive picture in this field of study.

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