



# International Journal of Early Childhood Education & Parenting

Journal homepage: <https://ejournal.upi.edu/index.php/ECEPA/>



## Teacher's Perception of Personality Competence: "Is it Really Important?"

Rita Tri Ananda\*, Asti Bhawika Adwitiya, Khoiriyah

Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember, Indonesia

\*Correspondence: E-mail: [rita.triananda777888@gmail.com](mailto:rita.triananda777888@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

Ideally, teachers possess four competencies: professional, pedagogical, social, and personality. One of the competencies that did not get much attention is personality competency. This research employed a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to understanding the teachers' experiences and how they value and implement personality competence in their daily teaching practices. Interviews and observations of the teacher and headmaster inside and outside the class were conducted to obtain the data. The result suggested that the teachers have implemented it in their daily lives as teachers, despite having a limited understanding of the complex terminology in the concept of personality competency.

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Submitted/Received 16 May 2024

First Revised 25 Jun 2024

Accepted 01 Jul 2024

First Available online 01 Aug 2024

#### Keyword:

Teachers, Personality competencies, Early childhood education

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ideally, teachers in Indonesia have four competencies under The Teacher and Lecturer Law and the following regulations. Teachers ideally have 4 competencies, namely pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competence ([Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2014](#); [UU No. 14 Tahun 2005 tentang Guru dan Dosen, 2005](#); [Zola and Mudjiran, 2020](#)). Each competence consists of unique skills and traits that teachers need to master.

Pedagogical competence is usually considered the most important competence. [Akbar \(2021\)](#) implied the importance of pedagogical competence because it could differentiate teachers from any other profession. Based on [The Ministry of Education and Culture No. 137 \(2014\)](#), pedagogical competence mostly manages the teacher's competence about the teaching and learning practices which are appropriate to the students' characteristics. This competence is like professional competence which is mostly concerned with the development of the content, structure, and concept related to ECE. Teachers with professional competence should be able to develop materials, design various developmental activities, and develop personal professionalism through reflection.

Meanwhile, social competence focuses on the multicultural aspect of education and teachers' ability to adapt and act inclusively. They need to communicate effectively with students, other school members, parents, and society. In social competence, teachers need to build communication with their professional community.

Those three competencies are supported by personality competence. In personality competence, teachers should be able to act and present their good qualities in accordance with the norms, religion, law, and culture. This helps teachers to fulfil their social competence better. Meanwhile, the other aspects of personality competence such as good work ethics, responsibility, confidence, and pride as a teacher could help them fulfil the pedagogical and professional competence.

The benefit of personality competence is important, especially for early childhood education teachers. Personality competence is said to be able to affect teachers to their performance ([Wardoyo, 2015](#)) and effectiveness ([Kim et al., 2019](#)) as teachers, and to their students. Teachers' personality competence was said to affect children's independence ([Anggraeni, 2017](#)) and learning outcomes ([Lubis, 2016](#)). A good teacher's personality profile is also known for preventing negative side-effects of their job, such as burnout ([Kim et al., 2019](#)). This is especially important since in an early childhood education setting, the teachers are prone to burnout which sometimes can lead to a high turnover rate and low quality of education for the child ([Ng et al., 2023](#)).

There are some critics of the concept of personality and the measurement of personality competence ([Andina, 2018](#)). The concept of personality is widely known as a stable configuration of traits and behaviour that construct how an individual uniquely adjusts themselves to their life ([American Psychological Association, 2024](#)). Personality includes the major traits, interests, values, drives, self-concept, abilities, and the pattern of emotion of an individual ([American Psychological Association, 2024](#)). Several studies mentioned that the personality traits of an individual are the factors that affect their competencies as the teacher ([Aydin et al., 2013](#)). Therefore, conceptually personality is the unique trait of an individual and not the teacher's competency itself ([Andina, 2018](#)).

Apart from the existing critics, the four teacher competencies are used based on the existing act. Unfortunately, a preliminary study conducted in a Kindergarten in Banyuwangi Regency stated that some teachers don't quite understand what personality competence is. Most teachers think it is the pedagogical and professional competencies that the teacher needs to have. A similar case was also found in [Akbar \(2021\)](#)'s study where it was stated that pedagogical competence is the competence that differentiates teachers from other professions.

This lack of attention to personality competence raised some questions. Is personality competence not that important? If so, since personality is something that exists in every individual, how do the teachers perceive this competence and how do they put their personality into their daily practice as early childhood education teachers? This study aims to explore the teachers' perception of personality competence, what is the meaning of personality competence for them and how it manifests into their daily practice as teachers.

## **2. METHOD**

This research employs a qualitative method. The researcher sees and obtains from the facts of the original phenomenon being studied. This study involved two teachers from Genteng District in Banyuwangi Regency, East Java, Indonesia. Teacher A (52 years old, female) posed as the headmaster of the kindergarten, while Teacher B (24 years old, female) was one of the teachers who taught in the level B class of that kindergarten. In-depth interviews and observations were conducted for about three months, from October until December 2023. The collected data was analysed using Miles and Huberman technique which consists of four steps: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The data was validated using data triangulation and inter-researcher triangulation.

## **3. RESULTS**

This research aimed to explore teachers' perception of personality competence. Three main themes emerge from the data. Those are (1) the perceived importance of personality competence by the teachers, (2) how the teachers make meaning of personality competence, and (3) how they implement personality competence in their daily practice. The details are as follows.

### **3.1 Perceived Importance on Personality Competence**

Based on the interview with the teachers, both of them stated that they don't understand what is personality competence as mentioned by The Ministry of Education and Culture Act No. 137 (2014). In the first interview, the teachers stated that they never heard of the concept of personality competence that was described in the Ministry of Education's Act No. 137 (2014). Exposure to the existing Act made the teachers ponder on the importance of personality competence.

Teacher B explained that the reason that she doesn't understand that the teacher should have the four competencies is because she previously did not study ECE. She studied

Elementary School Teacher Education instead. The course of life made her teach in kindergarten.

The teachers have a pre-existing understanding of the concept of personality. They perceived personality as a private area that should be managed by each teacher personally. There is a perceived unwritten rule that every teacher must act good, kind, and wise despite what is happening inside their mind and feelings. Teachers are supposed to be a good role model for their students, so they need to act according to the rules and norms.

Because personality competence is believed to be a private matter, it is considered as the competence that does not have a big contribution to their profession as teachers. Teacher A stated that the most important competence for an early education teacher must have been pedagogical and professional competence that could help the teachers perform as they are supposed to their class.

*"I admit that this personality competence is still considered not too important. From those four competencies, in my opinion, the most important ones are pedagogical and professional competence."*

– Teacher A, 52 years old, translated interview from Indonesian language on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### 3.2. Perceived Meaning of Personality Competence

Personality competence is being perceived as something that exists in a private area. Personality competence is supposed to lead the teachers to act like an ideal teacher. The one presented in the Ministry of Education's Act No. 137 (2014) is very general and normative which people tend to brush off as 'another usual norm' that they need to abide.

In the teachers' mind, they have the notion that teachers are supposed to have a good personality and act as role models for the students. This is in line with the one stated in the Ministry of Education's Act No. 137 (2014) where teachers with good personality competence are supposed to (1) act according to the norm, religion, law, social and national culture of Indonesia (2) present oneself as a honest, have noble character, and be a role model for the early child and general citizen; (3) Present oneself as a bold, stable, mature, wise, astute, and respected; (4) demonstrate work ethics, high responsibility, confidence, and pride to be a teacher; (5) Uphold the teachers' code of ethic.

These normative images of teachers with good personality competence leave no room for teachers to be 'imperfect'. Teacher A, who supports the notion of personality competence described in the act sometimes feels that it was difficult for her to do so because she just feels like she couldn't meet that standard. This has sparked some guilt in the teacher's heart.

*"...because it is indeed very difficult to show ourselves as a good teacher for a role model of the students because sometimes... I still made some mistakes too in class..... turns out, it could be a bad example for the kids..."*

– Teacher B, 24 years old, translated interview from Indonesian language on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Despite the weight of being a teacher based on the Act, the teachers understood that it is their duty to understand and implement the so-called personality competence. As a teacher it is their obligation to always be nice and polite whatever emotion they may feel at the time. They believe that it is the teacher's duty to be a role model for their students and the "face" of their school.

*“...Teacher must always show a nice and polite attitude even though their real condition is turning upside down.”*

*– Teacher A, 52 years old, translated interview from Indonesian language on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023*

### **3.3. Implementation of Personality Competence**

Even though the teachers' knowledge of personality competence is not deep, the observed practice in school showed otherwise. The teacher could implement the principle of personality competence in their daily practice at school, mostly because it is related to the school values. The implementation of personality competence is described below

#### **1) Act according to Indonesian national norms, religion, law, society, and culture**

This competence was observed in how the teachers performed the opening and closing activities in the classroom every day. The teacher always greeted the students in their Islamic greeting commonly used in Indonesia, “*Assalamualaikum*” which means “may peace be upon you”. Before and after they start the learning session in school, they pray in their religious prayer. The teacher guides the students, sometimes asking the students in rotation to lead the prayers. Besides the regular prayer before and after the class, the teacher sometimes also led the children to perform *Ṣalat Duha*, a voluntary prayer that is usually performed by Muslims in the morning. The time varied from when the sun rose until noon.

The teachers also present themselves physically neat in accordance with Indonesian culture and Islamic law. They use *hijab* (clothes to cover themselves) to cover their *aurat* (body parts that must be covered according to Islamic teaching) at school while they are doing their duty as teachers. They abide by the school regulations regarding their uniform as a teacher in the school.

#### **2) Present oneself as an honest person, who has a noble character, and is a role model for young children and society**

A teacher's honesty and noble character are difficult things to measure because no one knows what happens to the heart. Based on the observable signs the teachers show, they can condition their students to be an honest person. In Kindergarten B, there is a system called the “*kotak barang*” or ‘item box’. This is a system where the members of the school, whether it is the teachers or the students, put missing things that they found inside a box. Later the teachers will announce that they found something and the owner of the thing can claim it.

The teacher also provides a role model for the students to be responsible for their actions, such as modelling to put on their stuff after being used, and throwing away the garbage in their respectable trash bin. They also model how to act properly while eating and drinking. They also model how to solve a conflict and share what they have with others. The school has charity events involving the locals living around the school, hoping these activities will help the teachers to develop compassion in their students' hearts.

#### **3) Present oneself as a person who is steady, stable, mature, wise and authoritative.**

The teachers were able to present themselves as a steady, mature, wise, and authoritative figure when they interacted with the children and the parents or guardians. With the children, they can make wise decisions and authoritative attitude. This was shown when the teacher was presented with a conflict involving 2 children. They debate whether a toy is theirs or not. The teacher can splendidly manage to make a good decision where both of the kids are satisfied with the result.

The teachers can also present themselves as steady, stable, and mature when they meet the parents to give the students report cards. They can calmly explain what happened to their students during the semester to the parents without giving harsh judgment to the child or the parents.

#### **4) Demonstrates work ethic, high responsibility, self-confidence, and pride in being a teacher**

The teachers have the responsibility to plan, do, and evaluate the teaching and learning process so that they can increase its quality in the next cycle. The teachers have done their work such as making lesson plans, preparing the media, delivering the materials to the children, and evaluating individual achievement. This indicates a good work ethic and responsibility for their duty as a teacher.

When delivering their materials in the classroom, the teacher also showed some self-confidence that helped them to gain the children's attention better. They stated that they are proud to be able to complete their duty as a teacher and gain the people's trust. They assume the enrollment rate in their school is the indicator of people's trust in them.

#### **5) Uphold the teacher's code of ethics**

When asked about the Teacher's Ethical Code, the teachers stated that the school doesn't have a written ethical code. But they abide by the norms, religion, law, and culture to guide them when acting as a teacher.

### **4. DISCUSSION**

The research result has shown that personality competence is perceived as 'not really important' compared to other competencies, especially pedagogical and professional competence. Lack of exposure to this personality competence might explain why the teacher did not consider this competence as an important one. Based on the Teacher and Lecturer Law (2005), teachers at every educational level without exception should master the four competencies. If the teacher stated that she didn't receive it because she didn't study in an ECE major before, then that reason should not be valid. This might be an indication of the lack of attention on teacher competence at an individual level or might be on the higher education level, especially in higher education with teacher training programs. Further research is needed to address this topic.

Another factor that makes personality competence less important is the assumption that a teacher should naturally have a set of personalities that match the needs of a teacher. Not much research talks about how to be a personally competent teacher, but they describe the demand to be a good teacher instead. No wonder, the teachers in this research somehow

feel obliged to be personally competent teachers, while they also feel the pressure underneath.

There are several versions of personalities that a teacher should have. It varies according to the used references. Previous research mostly explains what personality competence a teacher should have, whether it is based on the mandatory personality competence regulated by the government (Anggraeni, 2017; Wardoyo, 2015), personality competence based on religious scripture (Lase and Hulu, 2020; Lubis, 2016; Ni'mah, 2014), and personality competence based on the teachers own perception (Lukman *et al.*, 2021).

The concept of personality competence seems to be emerging only in Indonesia. In another country, personality is viewed as an individual's unique traits, not competence (Aydin *et al.*, 2013; Potolea and Toma, 2022). This critique toward personality competence is also stated by Andina (2018) who stated that theoretically, personality should not be viewed as a competence.

Several other studies see personality as a neutral trait that is not right or wrong, just unique. Some research used the big five personality traits to measure the aspect of teacher's personalities to their performance (Aydin *et al.*, 2013; Gonzales and Rosales, 2022; Kim *et al.*, 2019). This way, the teacher's personality could easily be measured and identified. There are many things expected when teachers can implement their personality competencies well. According to Rahman in Nuryovi *et al.* (2017), personal competence is an ability that a teacher must have as a role model for his students and the community around him. With good personality competence, students will respect and idolize their teachers. According to Sutrisna and Artajaya (2022), a teacher's personality competence is perceived to determine the personality or morals of children, meaning that teachers who have a good personality will give personality back to their students. Good morality means that the teacher must show a commendable attitude or behaviour, display manners and manners that do not show disgraceful behaviour, the teacher must have a moral and exemplary personality and not conflict with his or her essence and dignity as a teacher (Sutrisna and Artajaya, 2022).

This study is just an exploration of a case related to personality competence in early childhood education. Future studies could address personality competence, in relation, to its proper measurement. Increasing the number of participants or using different research approaches that relate to personality competence in early childhood education can help to see this topic from different points of view.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that personality competence was perceived as less important compared to other teacher competencies. Lack of exposure and the existing assumption that personality is a private matter might explain the lack of perceived importance of personality competence. The teacher mostly agreed with the value described in personality competence, even though they feel it is sometimes tough for them to act that way. The implementation of personality competence was done adequately even though the teachers did not have enough exposure to personality competence due to some similarities in the school's religious and socio-cultural norms.

## 6. AUTHORS' NOTE

There is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. We confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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