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Efforts to Enhance Preschool Children's Self-Confidence through Physical-Motor Activities at Anuban Santiwit, Southern Thailand

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe teachers' efforts to enhance children's self-confidence through physical-motor activities at *Anuban Santiwit*, Southern Thailand. This study employed a qualitative descriptive method involving one homeroom teacher and eight playgroup children aged 3–4 years as participants. Observational data were collected using a structured observation sheet covering aspects of courage, independence, self-confidence, and active participation. Data were also gathered through in-depth interviews and documentation, then analyzed through data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing, with validity ensured through source and technique triangulation. The results indicate that children's self-confidence increased, as evidenced by their greater courage in attempting new activities, willingness to perform in front of peers, improved independence, and heightened enthusiasm. This improvement was supported by the teacher's role as a role model, motivator, and evaluator who consistently provided pedagogical and emotional stimulation. The study concludes that structured and repetitive physical-motor activities effectively improve the self-confidence of children aged 3–4 years through the provision of successful experiences, positive reinforcement, and the active role of teachers as facilitators.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is a crucial stage of development as it takes place during the golden age, a period when various aspects of a child's development progress rapidly and require optimal stimulation. At this stage, character development is one of the key factors that determine the quality of an individual's future development (Andini et al., 2025; Salsabillah & Utami, 2023). One trait that needs to be instilled from an early age is self-confidence, as this trait serves as the foundation for children to develop their social, emotional, and academic skills. Self-confidence can be understood as a child's ability to believe in their own potential to complete tasks and achieve specific goals, which in turn influences their readiness to engage in social interactions (Andini et al., 2025; Humaida et al., 2022; Sitorus, 2023). This attitude also enables children to understand and accept their strengths and weaknesses, thereby fostering a positive self-concept (Amelya et al., 2024). Therefore, self-confidence plays a strategic role in supporting children's independence, courage, and ability to express themselves within their surrounding environment.

However, empirical conditions indicate that many young children, particularly in playgroup settings, still do not exhibit optimal levels of self-confidence. This is reflected in passive behaviors, such as a tendency to remain silent, reluctance to participate, and a preference for observing rather than actively engaging in learning activities (Bunga et al., 2025). Low self-confidence is influenced by various factors, including fear of failure, concern about negative evaluation, and a lack of successful experiences in learning activities (Amelya et al., 2024; Apriliana et al., 2023; Humaida et al., 2022). In addition, uncontrolled exposure to technology may encourage children to become more individualistic and less active in social interactions (Sitorus, 2023). Emotional barriers such as anxiety, introverted behavior, and high dependence on adults further reinforce children's low levels of courage and initiative in participating in learning activities (Azzahra et al., 2025).

These issues are also closely related to suboptimal stimulation in educational settings. Learning processes that are still dominated by teacher-centered approaches and excessive use of worksheets tend to limit children's opportunities for exploration and active participation (Humaida et al., 2022; Azizah et al., 2025). On the other hand, environmental factors such as a lack of appreciation, limited opportunities for interaction, and less supportive parenting styles also influence the development of children's self-esteem (Kurniasih et al., 2021; Salma & Veni, 2024). The lack of children's involvement in physical-motor activities is another significant factor, as children do not gain direct experience in developing movement coordination, courage, and environmental exploration (Hafidz et al., 2022; Irmawati & Ibrahim, 2022). Furthermore, limitations in motor development may lead to feelings of shyness, withdrawal tendencies, and difficulties in interacting with peers (Fara & Suyadi, 2022; Hafidz et al., 2022). However, although numerous studies have examined efforts to improve self-confidence in early childhood, most have focused on cognitive and social approaches such as role-playing and storytelling. As a result, studies that position physical-motor activities as the primary intervention remain limited. In addition, research conducted in early childhood education institutions outside Indonesia, particularly in Southern Thailand, is still scarce, highlighting the need for studies that address this gap.

As an alternative solution, the implementation of structured and enjoyable physical-motor activities can serve as an effective approach to improving self-confidence in early childhood. These activities provide opportunities for children to be directly involved in exploring their abilities, thereby fostering courage and active participation. Children's self-confidence develops through successful experiences gained from active engagement in activities

(Kurniasih et al., 2021). In practice, these may include gross motor activities such as walking along a line while carrying a ball, jumping, and lining up with peers, which not only train coordination and balance but also enhance confidence in social interaction. In addition, fine motor activities such as pasting, inserting small objects into containers, and drawing simple lines help develop accuracy, patience, and independence. This is in line with Yunifia & Wardhani (2023) who state that active involvement in activities can enhance self-confidence through successful experiences. Thus, physical-motor activities play a strategic role as they are able to simultaneously integrate physical, social, and emotional aspects (Apriliana et al., 2023; Azizah et al., 2025). These successful experiences also contribute to the development of a sense of mastery that strengthens children's self-confidence (Hafidz et al., 2022; Irmawati & Ibrahim, 2022).

Based on this rationale, this study aims to analyze efforts to improve children's self-confidence in playgroups through physical-motor activities at Anuban Santiwit, Southern Thailand. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on children aged 3–4 years and the implementation of physical-motor activities as an integrated learning strategy to optimize children's social-emotional development holistically.

2. METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the process and changes in children's self-confidence through physical-motor activities within a natural learning context. The research was conducted at Anuban Santiwit, Southern Thailand, involving a homeroom teacher and eight playgroup children aged 3–4 years who exhibited a tendency toward low self-confidence. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with the teacher, and documentation in the form of photos, videos, and developmental records. To ensure a systematic and objective evaluation, the researcher utilized a structured observation instrument. This instrument was designed to measure children's behavioral changes across several psychological and physical aspects during learning activities. The specific indicators and assessment categories are presented in **Table 1** and **Table 2** below.

Table 1. Detailed observation indicators for children's development

Aspect	Indicators	Data Collection Technique
Self-Confidence & Character	Dares to try new activities without hesitation. Able to complete tasks independently. Willing to perform/present in front of others. Enthusiastic and actively participates. Waits for turn patiently	Participatory observation & Interview
Gross Motor Activities	Walks while carrying objects. Jumps in place. Throws and catches a ball. Dances to a rhythm. Imitates gymnastic movements.	Participatory Observation
Fine Motor Activities	Squeezes with five fingers. Hand-eye coordination movements. Inserts small objects into a bottle. Uses simple play tools independently.	Participatory Observation

Tabel 2. Assessment rubric for development categories

Category	Description of Achievement
BB	Child refuses to participate, remains silent, or cries when given a task; shows significant difficulty in physical movements or manual tasks.
BM	Child attempts activities but only with constant teacher encouragement or assistance; movements appear stiff or clumsy.
BSH	Child performs tasks independently with occasional hesitation; shows steady coordination and follows instructions well.
BSB	Child shows high initiative and full confidence; demonstrates mastery, speed, and precise control in all activities.

Note: BB (Not Yet Developed); MB (Still Developing); BSH (Developing as Expected); BSB (Developing Very Well). Assessment categories are based on the Child Development Achievement Standards (STPPA) under Permendikbud No. 146 of 2014. Data analysis in this study was conducted in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Mezmir, 2020). Validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation to maintain the integrity of the findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The implementation of physical-motor activities at Anuban Santiwit, Southern Thailand, involved both gross and fine motor components designed to stimulate the self-confidence of children aged 3–4 years. Data collection focused on comparing children's conditions before and after the intervention, supported by teacher interviews and documentation.

Observational Data

Prior to the intervention, observations indicated that most children exhibited low levels of self-confidence, characterized by passive behavior, hesitancy, and high dependency on teacher support. The quantitative and qualitative shift after the implementation of activities is presented in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Results of observational assessment of children's self-confidence before and after physical-motor activities

No	Assessed Aspect	Before (Initial Stage)	After (Intervention)	Dominant Category (Before)	Dominant Category (After)
1	Courage to try new activities	Most children hesitant, refusing new tasks	Children began attempting without prompting	BB - MB	BSH - BSB
2	Performance in front of peers	Children avoided performing, remained at back	Children voluntarily performed in front of peers	BB - MB	BSH
3	Independence in task completion	High dependency on teacher assistance	Children completed tasks more independently	MB	BSH - BSB
4	Active participation	Passive, minimal engagement	Increased enthusiasm and active engagement	BB - MB	BSH
5	Persistence	Gave up quickly or cried when facing challenges	Showed greater persistence before seeking help	BB	MB - BSH

Note: BB (Not Yet Developed); MB (Still Developing); BSH: (Developing as Expected); BSB (Developing Very Well).

Gross and Fine Motor Implementation

The implementation of physical-motor activities at Anuban Santiwit, Southern Thailand, was carried out through a variety of structured and engaging activities encompassing both gross and fine motor aspects. Gross motor activities included walking along a line while carrying a ball, jumping while naming colors, jumping and dropping a ball, lining up neatly, and participating in morning exercises. As illustrated in **Figure 1**, these activities not only aimed to develop children's balance and coordination but were also designed to foster courage, discipline, and confidence in performing tasks in front of peers. Through repeated engagement, children were gradually encouraged to overcome hesitation and actively participate in group-based learning situations.



Figure 1. Gross Motor Activities

Meanwhile, fine motor activities included coloring, plasticine shaping, and squeezing origami paper, as well as picking up straws to place into a bottle. As shown in **Figure 2**, these activities were designed to enhance hand-eye coordination, concentration, and independence. Furthermore, these tasks provided opportunities for children to experience success in completing activities, which is essential for building a positive self-concept and strengthening self-confidence. Overall, the integration of gross and fine motor activities created a supportive environment that allowed children to develop confidence through direct and meaningful experiences.



Figure 2. Fine Motor Activities

Interview Results

The observational data were further strengthened by in-depth interviews with the homeroom teacher, Teacher Sawatee Abdullah, to obtain a holistic understanding of the children's development. The teacher noted a significant transformation, where the children experienced not only physical progress but also changes in their mental attitude. This was revealed in her statement as follows.

"I usually observe the development of children's self-confidence through their attitude during activities. Previously, they often refused or remained silent, but now they are starting to try, even if gradually. Some children who initially needed constant encouragement now participate on their own initiative. Furthermore, I also followed up with parents to ask if their children have become more talkative or active at home. From there, I can see that the motor activities at school truly help children become more confident, not only during playtime but also in their daily lives".

The above statement indicates that the motor intervention provides a lasting impact on the children, which includes the emergence of personal initiative and improved communication when they are in the home environment.

3.2 Discussion

The data in **Table 2** clearly indicate a positive shift across all assessed aspects: from predominantly BB (Not Yet Developed) and MB (Still Developing) categories to BSH (Developing as Expected) and BSB (Developing Very Well). Interpretatively, this increase occurs when children gain control over their body movements and experience success in completing assigned tasks, forming the basis for self-efficacy. The teacher's roles as a role model, inspirer, motivator, dynamizer, and evaluator were identified as key enabling factors. Positive reinforcement, such as verbal praise and appreciation, played a crucial role in building children's courage. This study offers novelty by emphasizing basic physical-motor activities combined with the comprehensive optimization of the teacher's pedagogical roles, rather than relying solely on arts-based or role-playing approaches.

The findings of this study indicate that physical-motor activities play a significant role in improving children's self-confidence through active engagement in the learning process. Repeated motor activities provide mastery experiences that encourage children to become more courageous, independent, and confident in their own abilities. These findings are consistent with studies emphasizing that physical-motor development serves as a fundamental basis for other developmental aspects, including children's self-confidence and independence (Mayar & Sriandila, 2021). Furthermore, research shows that motor activities directly contribute to the enhancement of social interaction, cooperation, and children's self-confidence through active and contextual learning experiences (Sudaryanti et al., 2024).

Furthermore, these findings reinforce that physical-motor activities not only impact physical development but also make a significant contribution to children's social-emotional development. In the context of early childhood education, activity-based learning has been proven to foster a positive self-concept through the interaction between individual abilities and consistent environmental stimuli. This is supported by research indicating that self-confidence has a strong positive relationship with children's social and emotional development; therefore, appropriate stimulation will directly enhance the quality of children's social interaction and adaptation (Sitorus, 2023).

Interpretatively, the increase in self-confidence occurs when children are able to control their body movements and experience success in completing assigned tasks. These successful experiences form the basis for the development of self-efficacy, which subsequently evolves into self-confidence. This finding is supported by research indicating that children's self-concept is shaped through direct experiences in the learning process, particularly through activities that involve both physical and emotional engagement simultaneously (Wardhani, 2023). Furthermore, teachers play a role as motivators by providing positive reinforcement, such as praise and appreciation. Various studies on early childhood development show that these actions are important factors in improving children's self-confidence.

Compared to previous studies, the findings of this research are consistent with those showing that physical activities such as exercise can improve motor skills while simultaneously fostering children's self-confidence through enjoyable and structured learning experiences (Dewi et al., 2024). In addition, research has also emphasized that movement-based physical activities, such as dancing, are effective in enhancing children's courage, self-expression, and participation in social environments (Kurnia, 2025). However, this study offers novelty by not relying on arts-based or role-playing approaches; instead, it emphasizes basic physical-motor activities along with the optimization of the teacher's role as an agent of children's psychological stimulation.

Thus, this study not only confirms previous findings but also provides a conceptual contribution by demonstrating that the integration of physical-motor activities with the comprehensive pedagogical roles of teachers (as role models, motivators, and evaluators) constitutes an effective and contextual strategy for enhancing self-confidence in early childhood. More broadly, these results affirm that courage developed through physical activities serves as an initial foundation for children's social and emotional courage; therefore, learning that is actively designed, varied, and supportive becomes a key factor in optimizing children's holistic development.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, this study concludes that the implementation of structured and repeated physical-motor activities is effective in enhancing the self-confidence of children aged 3–4 years through active engagement, successful experiences, and positive

reinforcement within a natural learning context. The results and discussion indicate that the improvement in self-confidence is influenced not only by the motor activities themselves but also by the optimization of the teacher's role as a role model, motivator, and evaluator who consistently provides pedagogical and emotional stimulation to children.

The novelty of this study lies in the integration of basic physical-motor activities with the comprehensive pedagogical roles of teachers as a contextual strategy for building children's self-confidence, which differs from previous studies that tend to rely on arts-based or role-playing approaches. However, this study is limited by a relatively small number of participants and a specific research setting, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve a larger sample and combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to obtain more comprehensive results. Practically, these findings can serve as a reference for early childhood educators in designing varied and supportive physical-motor activity-based learning to optimize the holistic development of children's self-confidence.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest related to the publication of this article. The author also affirms that this article is free from plagiarism.

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