



Information Literacy Skills and Self-Efficacy of Pre-Service Islamic Primary Teachers Based on Engagement with Children's Literature

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abstract

Background: Engagement with children's literature has been recognized as an important factor in supporting literacy development and professional growth among pre-service teachers. However, limited empirical evidence is available regarding its contribution to information literacy skills and self-efficacy in teacher education contexts.

Aims: This study aimed to analyze the effect of pre-service teachers' engagement with children's literature on information literacy skills and self-efficacy.

Methods: A quantitative correlational design was employed. The participants were 38 students enrolled in the Primary Islamic Teacher Education Program during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year at a higher education institution in Makassar, Indonesia. Participants were selected using total sampling. Data were collected through an information literacy test, a children's literature engagement questionnaire, and a self-efficacy questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression with a bootstrap procedure (5,000 resamples; 95% BCa confidence interval).

Results: The findings revealed that engagement with children's literature had a positive and significant effect on information literacy skills ($B = 0.226$, $p = .011$, 95% BCa CI [0.005, 0.375]), explaining 18.2% of the variance ($R^2 = .182$). Engagement with children's literature also had a positive and significant effect on self-efficacy ($B = 0.959$, $p < .001$, 95% BCa CI [0.630, 1.251]), explaining 61.6% of the variance ($R^2 = .616$). The findings indicate a stronger effect on self-efficacy than on information literacy skills.

Conclusions: Engagement with children's literature contributes significantly to the development of pre-service teachers' information literacy skills and self-efficacy. Integrating children's literature into teacher education programs may serve as a sustainable strategy for strengthening both cognitive and affective competencies that support future teaching practice.

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1. Introduction

Literacy is a fundamental competency that students must possess in today's knowledge era. According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (2025), literacy is defined as "the ability to read and write," meaning the ability to read and write as a basic literacy skill. This skill relates not only to general reading and writing skills but also to the ability to think critically and process information effectively for academic and professional purposes (Budianto & Adriani, 2025; Sinulingga et al., 2025; Yani, 2024). Universities, as institutions of higher education, have a significant responsibility to equip their students with strong literacy skills so they can meet increasingly complex academic demands and navigate the flood of information available from various digital sources (Ashiq et al., 2025; Mercado-sierra & Northam, 2023). Students' literacy skills are closely related to their success in learning, evaluating information sources, and solving problems creatively and critically in both academic and life contexts. The literature shows that limited literacy skills, particularly information literacy, make it difficult for students to access, evaluate, and use information sources, including digital sources and e-resources, effectively and efficiently for academic purposes (Mercado-sierra & Northam, 2023; Sakinah et al., 2021). This impacts the quality of their learning and research in college.

In line with the importance of literacy in general, information literacy is becoming an increasingly crucial aspect in higher education environments. The American Library Association (1989) defines information literacy as the ability to recognize when information is needed and the skills to locate, assess, and utilize the required information appropriately. This definition is reinforced by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (2000, 2015) which emphasizes that information literacy encompasses not only technical skills in accessing information but also critical thinking skills in evaluating the quality and relevance of information before use. Information literacy is understood as a contextual and reflective competency integrated into the learning process, enabling students to access, evaluate, and use information critically and ethically in an academic context (Bernard, 2024; Taylor & Digiacomio, 2023). Thus, information literacy is an essential competency for students in higher education, serving not only to support academic success but also to equip them with critical, reflective, and ethical thinking skills in dealing with the complexity and abundance of information in the digital age.

Students' information literacy skills are measured, among others, by referring to the ACRL standards and the Project SAILS (Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills) assessment framework. Information literacy is understood as a set of abilities that include determining information needs, namely students' ability to identify problems and formulate the information needed; accessing information effectively and efficiently through selecting search strategies and utilizing relevant academic information sources; evaluating information and sources critically by assessing the credibility, relevance, and reliability of information; and using information effectively and ethically in an academic context, including integrating information into scientific work and applying ethical principles and correct citation (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2015; Connor et al., 2001; Head & Eisenberg, 2010; Radcliff et al., 2015). These four indicators serve as the basis for developing a measurement instrument for student information literacy and represent essential competencies for successful learning in higher education.

In the context of pre-service teacher education, information literacy serves not only as an academic skill but also as a professional foundation. Pre-service teachers are required to select appropriate learning resources, assess the accuracy of learning materials, and integrate various information sources into their teaching practices. Research shows that these skills include identifying information needs, selecting and evaluating sources, and synthesizing information for pedagogical purposes (Tang & Jong, 2014). Furthermore, information retrieval and evaluation literacy play a crucial role in supporting pre-service teachers' professional competence and confidence in teaching (Peciuliauskiene et al., 2022), and in providing essential tools for the appropriate application of information in teaching practices (Bates et al., 2017). Therefore, information literacy skills contribute to pedagogical readiness and the quality of the learning they will design in the future.

In addition to cognitive competence, affective factors such as self-efficacy also play an important role in the education of pre-service teachers, as they influence teachers' beliefs, motivation, and readiness in implement learning (Fives & Buehl, 2011; Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). The concept of teacher self-efficacy is rooted in the self-efficacy theory proposed by Bandura (1977, 1986, 1997), which was then developed specifically in the educational context as teacher efficacy (Gibson & Dembo, 1984) and further formulated more comprehensively as teacher self-efficacy by Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001), namely teachers' beliefs in their abilities to manage learning, influence student learning outcomes, and face professional challenges effectively. Previous research has shown that self-efficacy is closely related to pre-service teachers' ability to effectively manage learning tasks and face professional challenges (Sonsupap et al., 2025), as well as to design and implement meaningful learning experiences (Ribeirinha & Correia, 2025). Furthermore, high self-efficacy in pre-service teachers correlates with their readiness to use various instructional strategies and active engagement in learning practices (Khusniyah et al., 2023).

Information literacy and self-efficacy do not develop separately, but are interconnected. Previous research has shown that the ability to access, evaluate, and process information effectively can increase students' confidence in utilizing learning resources, and high self-efficacy encourages active engagement in information search and use (Lawanda & Ulfa, 2021; Medaille et al., 2021; Pečiuliauskienė, 2025). This relationship becomes even more relevant in the context of student teachers, who are required to make independent and reflective pedagogical decisions. Furthermore, several studies have shown that information literacy skills are closely related to reading habits, learning motivation, and individual interest in accessing and utilizing reading materials (Salam et al., 2025). Consistent reading activities contribute to students' ability to understand texts, interpret information, and critically evaluate the quality of sources (Dalilan, 2021; Napa-Rodríguez, 2025). Therefore, engagement in reading activities is an important factor worthy of study in relation to students' information literacy skills.

One form of reading activity relevant to pre-service teacher education is engagement with children's literature, which requires not only an understanding of text content but also the ability to select, interpret, and critically evaluate information. Previous research has shown that exploring children's literature in pre-service teacher education can foster a critical perspective on texts and their social contexts (Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Flores et al.,

2019), help pre-service teachers understand diverse cultural perspectives through reading (Iwai, 2015), and support their readiness to select and use texts as meaningful learning resources in their teaching practices (Escamilla & Nathenson-Mejía, 2003).

Pre-service teacher student engagement with children's literature can provide a meaningful context for developing information literacy and self-efficacy. Children's literature serves not only as reading material but also as a learning resource that requires skills in selecting, interpreting, and evaluating texts. Research shows that engaging with children's literature can help pre-service teachers develop deeper critical literacy and interpretive skills (Lee, 2016; Weippert et al., 2018), expand their professional knowledge of children's literature (Farrar & Simpson, 2024), and strengthen their reading dispositions and pedagogical readiness for using literature in the classroom (Flores et al., 2019; Poulton & Brosseuk, 2025). Through active engagement with children's literature, students have the opportunity to hone their information literacy skills while building confidence in designing creative and contextualized learning.

Recent studies have demonstrated that engagement with children's literature promotes critical literacy and interpretive reading skills among pre-service teachers (Farrar & Simpson, 2024; Flores et al., 2019). Other studies have reported positive effects on pedagogical readiness, professional knowledge of literature, and reading dispositions (Colton & Forrest, 2025; Poulton & Brosseuk, 2025). Furthermore, reading engagement has been associated with improved literacy development and self-efficacy through meaningful interactions with texts (Green, 2025; Peura et al., 2021).

Recent studies have demonstrated that engagement with children's literature promotes critical literacy, interpretive reading skills, and positive reading dispositions among pre-service teachers (Flores et al., 2019; Farrar & Simpson, 2024). Research has also reported positive contributions to pedagogical readiness, professional knowledge of literature, literacy development, and self-efficacy through meaningful interactions with texts (Colton & Forrest, 2025; Green, 2025; Peura et al., 2021; Poulton & Brosseuk, 2025). These findings suggest that children's literature engagement plays an important role in supporting both cognitive and affective aspects of teacher education.

Despite these contributions, several gaps remain in the literature. Previous studies have primarily focused on reading motivation, literacy achievement, critical literacy, or pedagogical knowledge, while the relationship between engagement with children's literature and information literacy has received limited attention. Moreover, studies rarely examine its contribution to self-efficacy among pre-service teachers, and information literacy and self-efficacy are generally investigated as separate constructs. Furthermore, empirical evidence from Indonesia remains scarce. Therefore, further research is needed to examine how engagement with children's literature contributes to both information literacy and self-efficacy among pre-service teachers.

Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on reading outcomes, literacy achievement, or pedagogical knowledge, this study investigates the contribution of engagement with children's literature to both information literacy and self-efficacy among pre-service teachers. By examining these two competencies simultaneously, the study offers a more comprehensive understanding of how children's literature engagement contributes to the academic and

professional development of future teachers. Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of engagement with children's literature on pre-service teachers' information literacy skills and self-efficacy.

2. Methods

2.1 Research design

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational research design. The study aimed to examine the influence of engagement with children's literature on pre-service teachers' information literacy skills and self-efficacy. Because the study investigated naturally occurring variables without manipulation or treatment, it was conducted using an ex post facto correlational design. The independent variable was engagement with children's literature, while the dependent variables were information literacy skills and self-efficacy of pre-service teachers.

2.2 Research procedures

The research was conducted during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The study began with the development of research instruments based on established theoretical frameworks and previous studies. Subsequently, the instruments were subjected to content validation and reliability testing before being administered to participants. After obtaining permission from the study program, eligible participants were identified according to the predetermined inclusion criteria. Data collection was then conducted through an information literacy test and questionnaires measuring engagement with children's literature and self-efficacy. The collected data were checked for completeness and subsequently analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

2.3 Participants

The population consisted of 38 students enrolled in the Elementary Madrasah Teacher Education (PGMI) Study Program during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year at a university in Makassar City, South Sulawesi Province. The population was selected because PGMI students possess characteristics relevant to literacy studies, particularly information literacy and children's literature, which are important competencies for prospective elementary school teachers.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria were: (1) students enrolled in the PGMI study program, (2) students who had completed the Children's Literature course, and (3) students who were willing to participate voluntarily in the study. Based on these criteria, 38 students were selected as research participants. The use of purposive sampling was intended to ensure that participants had sufficient experience and exposure to children's literature and shared relatively similar academic backgrounds relevant to the variables under investigation.

2.4 Data collection

Data were collected using an information literacy test and two questionnaires measuring self-efficacy and engagement with children's literature. The information literacy test was developed based on the ACRL Framework and the Project SAILS (Standardized Assessment

of Information Literacy Skills) assessment framework. The instrument measured four aspects of information literacy: determining information needs, accessing information effectively, evaluating information and sources critically, and using information ethically and effectively (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2015; Connor et al., 2001; Radcliff et al., 2015).

Self-efficacy was measured using a questionnaire adapted from the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001). The instrument assessed four domains: student engagement, instructional strategies, classroom management, and assessment and feedback. The additional assessment and feedback domain was included to obtain a more comprehensive measure of pre-service teachers' teaching self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Krasniqi & Ismajli, 2022).

Engagement with children's literature was measured using a questionnaire adapted from reading engagement and literary response frameworks. The instrument included indicators related to the frequency of interaction with children's literature, interest and appreciation toward literary works, and reflection on meanings and values derived from children's literature (Burton & Rosenblatt, 1968; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2016).

The validity of the instruments was assessed using Pearson Product-Moment correlations between item scores and total scores. For the information literacy skills instrument, the item-total correlation coefficients ranged from 0.338 to 0.754, exceeding the critical value of 0.320, indicating that all retained 18 items were valid; two items (TLI17 and TLI19) were removed due to insufficient validity in the initial testing phase. The children's literature engagement instrument showed item-total correlation coefficients ranging from 0.692 to 0.922, while the self-efficacy instrument ranged from 0.704 to 0.919. All items in both instruments were statistically significant ($p < .05$), confirming their validity for subsequent analyses.

Instrument reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. The information literacy skills, children's literature engagement, and self-efficacy instruments obtained Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.916, 0.973, and 0.976, respectively, indicating excellent internal consistency. Following the criteria of Nunnally and Bernstein, all alpha values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, demonstrating that the instruments were highly reliable and suitable for measuring the intended constructs.

2.5 Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two stages: descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participants' information literacy skills, self-efficacy, and engagement with children's literature. Score calculations, categorization, and descriptive summaries were performed using SPSS version 26.0. The final information literacy scores were grouped into several categories based on the mean ($\bar{X}$) and standard deviation (SD), in accordance with the categorization guidelines proposed by Arikunto (2013). The information literacy scores were grouped into three categories: high, medium, and low. Self-efficacy and engagement scores for children's literature were grouped into five categories: very high, high, medium, low, and very low (Azwar, 2012; Bandura, 1997; Brindley & Laframboise, 2002; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2016).

Prior to hypothesis testing, data normality was examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The results indicated that the data were not normally distributed. Therefore, inferential analysis

was performed using simple linear regression with a bootstrap approach. The use of simple linear regression was based on the presence of one independent variable (engagement with children's literature) and one dependent variable in each model (information literacy skills and self-efficacy).

Bootstrap analysis was conducted using 5,000 resamples and a 95% Bias-Corrected and Accelerated (BCa) confidence interval to obtain more robust parameter estimates (Efron, 1987; Efron & Tibshirani, 1994; Field et al., 2012). The significance of the regression coefficients was determined based on a significance value of less than .05 and a BCa confidence interval that did not include zero (Efron & Tibshirani, 1994; Ghazali, 2021; Hayes, 2018). In addition to testing the significance of the regression coefficients, the explanatory power of the model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2), which indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by engagement with children's literature. This approach was selected because bootstrap procedures are nonparametric and do not require the assumption of normal data distribution, making them suitable for the characteristics of the present data.

3. Results

This section presents the results of data analysis in a study aimed at determining the effect of student engagement in children's literature on the information literacy skills and self-efficacy of student teachers. Data analysis was conducted descriptively to describe the level of information literacy, self-efficacy, and student engagement in children's literature. Data analysis was also conducted inferentially using simple linear regression analysis with a bootstrap approach to test the significance of the influence of engagement in children's literature on the two dependent variables.

Before analyzing the effect of student engagement in children's literature on the information literacy skills and self-efficacy of student teachers, the results of the descriptive statistical analysis are first presented to provide an overview of the distribution of the data across the three research variables. A summary of the descriptive statistics for information literacy skills, self-efficacy, and student engagement in children's literature is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Information Literacy, Self-Efficacy, and Engagement in Children's Literature Test Results

Statistic	Information Literacy Skills	Self-Efficacy	Engagement in Children's Literature
Minimum	1	15	15
Maximum	18	74	71
Mean	12.29	56.84	56.66
Median	13.50	59.50	60.00
Mode	18	60	60
Std. Deviation	5.281	12.182	9.974
Variance	27.887	148.407	99.474

The criteria and categorization results for information literacy are presented in Table 2, pre-service teachers self-efficacy in Table 3, and engagement in children's literature in Table 4.

Table 2. Categorization of Students' Information Literacy Skills

Category	Interval	Frequency
High	17.57 – 18	8
Moderate	7.01 – 17.57	23
Low	1 – 7.01	7

Students' information literacy skills ranged from 1 to 18, with a mean of 12.29 and a standard deviation of 5.281. This value indicates that, in general, students' information literacy skills were in the moderate category, with quite diverse variations in abilities among respondents. A variance of 20.887 indicated a relatively sufficient difference in information literacy skills among students. Based on the category grouping as shown in Table 2, the majority of students were in the moderate category, namely 23 students. Meanwhile, 8 students were in the high category and 7 in the low category. These findings indicate that most students had sufficient information literacy skills, though some needed improvement.

Table 3. Categorization of Self-Efficacy of Pre-Service Teachers

Category	Interval	Frequency
Very High	4.21 – 5.00	8
High	3.41 – 4.20	22
Moderate	2.61 – 3.40	6
Low	1.81 – 2.60	0
Very Low	1.00 – 1.80	2

The self-efficacy of student teachers ranged from 15 to 74, with an average of 56.84 and a standard deviation of 12.182. This average value indicates that student self-efficacy is generally in the high category. A variance of 148.407 indicates a diversity of self-efficacy levels among respondents. The grouping of self-efficacy categories in Table 3 shows that 8 students are in the very high category, 22 in the high category, and 6 in the moderate category. There are no students in the low category, but 2 in the very low category. Overall, these findings indicate that the majority of student teachers have good self-efficacy in terms of academic ability and pedagogical ability as pre-service teachers.

Table 4. Categorization of Student Engagement in Children's Literature

Category	Interval	Frequency
Very High	4.21 – 5.00	6
High	3.41 – 4.20	24
Moderate	2.61 – 3.40	7
Low	1.81 – 2.60	0
Very Low	1.00 – 1.80	1

Student engagement with children's literature ranged from 15 to 71, with a mean of 56.66 and a standard deviation of 9.974. This mean score indicates that students' engagement with children's literature is in the high category. The variance of 99.474 indicates variation in

engagement levels among respondents, though it is lower than that of the self-efficacy variable. Based on the category groupings in Table 4, 6 students were in the very high category, 24 in the high category, and 7 in the moderate category. There were no students in the low category, while 1 student was in the very low category. These results indicate that students generally have a fairly good engagement with children's literature, both in the form of reading and other forms of consumption.

Inferential analysis was conducted using linear regression with bootstrapping techniques to obtain more robust parameter estimates, given that the research data did not fully meet the assumption of normality. The regression results provide an overview of the extent to which students' engagement with children's literature contributes to their ability to access, evaluate, and use information effectively, as well as to their self-confidence in carrying out their academic and professional roles as pre-service teachers. The research results are then discussed in more depth for each dependent variable, as shown in Tables 5 and 6 below.

Table 5. Linear Regression Results of Engagement in Children's Literature on Information Literacy Skills of Pre-Service Teachers

Variable	B	Std. Error	Sig.	BCa 95% CI	R ²
Information Literacy Skills	0.226	0.092	0.011	[-0.005 ; 0.420]	0.182

Based on the results of the linear regression analysis, as shown in Table 5, The bootstrap regression analysis revealed that engagement with children's literature significantly predicted pre-service teachers' information literacy skills ($B = 0.226$, $SE = 0.092$, $p = .011$). The BCa 95% confidence interval ranged from 0.005 to 0.375 and did not include zero, indicating a statistically significant positive effect. The model explained 18.2% of the variance in information literacy skills ($R^2 = .182$), suggesting that engagement with children's literature contributed moderately to the development of information literacy skills among pre-service teachers.

Table 6. Linear Regression Results of Engagement in Children's Literature on Self-Efficacy of Pre-Service Teachers

Variable	B	Std. Error	Sig.	BCa 95% CI	R ²
Self-Efficacy	0.959	0.126	< 0.001	[0.630 ; 1.251]	0.616

The results of a simple linear regression analysis using the bootstrap approach, as shown in Table 6, also indicate that engagement with children's literature significantly predicted pre-service teachers' self-efficacy ($B = 0.959$, $SE = 0.171$, $p < .001$). The BCa 95% confidence interval ranged from 0.630 to 1.251 and did not include zero, confirming the significance of the relationship. The regression model accounted for 61.6% of the variance in self-efficacy ($R^2 = .616$), indicating that engagement with children's literature made a substantial contribution to pre-service teachers' self-efficacy.

Based on the results of the inferential analysis, it can be concluded that engagement with children's literature has a positive and significant influence on the information literacy skills and self-efficacy of student teachers. This finding confirms that student engagement with children's literature contributes not only to the cognitive aspect of information literacy but also to the affective aspect of self-efficacy as pre-service teachers.

4. Discussion

4.1 Information Literacy Skills of Pre-Service Teachers Based on Engagement in Children's Literature

The research results show that student teachers' engagement in children's literature has a positive and significant impact on their information literacy skills. This finding indicates that students who engage more frequently and actively in activities related to children's literature, whether through reading, watching, or exploring various forms of children's literature, tend to have better abilities in accessing, evaluating, and utilizing information effectively.

One possible explanation for this finding is that engagement with children's literature exposes pre-service teachers to repeated processes of meaning construction, information selection, and critical interpretation. Unlike reading that focuses primarily on retrieving factual information, children's literature requires readers to connect narrative events, infer implicit messages, evaluate characters' actions, and interpret moral and social issues embedded in the text. Through these activities, students become accustomed to processing information actively rather than passively receiving it. As a result, they develop stronger skills in identifying relevant information, evaluating its meaning, and applying it within different educational contexts. This may explain why students who reported higher engagement with children's literature also demonstrated higher levels of information literacy skills.

Theoretically, engagement with children's literature can be understood as a form of literacy engagement that positions readers as active subjects in constructing meaning through cognitive and reflective processes (Burton & Rosenblatt, 1968; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2016). Therefore, literacy engagement plays a crucial role in improving the quality of information processing. This process aligns with the information literacy framework, which emphasizes an individual's ability to recognize information needs, locate relevant sources, evaluate the reliability of information, and use information appropriately in academic contexts (ALA, 1989; ACRL, 2000, 2015). Students who are highly engaged in children's literature are accustomed to interacting with various forms of text and media, thus sharpening their information management skills. This theoretical perspective helps explain the present finding, suggesting that repeated exposure to literary texts may strengthen students' ability to identify information needs, evaluate information quality, and apply information in educational contexts. Consequently, engagement with children's literature may function as an authentic literacy practice that supports the development of information literacy skills among pre-service teachers.

Children's literature often presents stories with a clear narrative structure, moral values, and a social context relevant to the reader's life (Nikolajeva, 2014; Short, 2012). Students' engagement with children's literature encourages them to select information, understand implicit messages, and critique the story's content. Critical interaction with literary texts allows readers to question the perspectives, values, and ideologies contained within the story, thus developing evaluative and reflective reading skills (Lewison et al., 2002; Vasquez et al., 2013). Research shows that pre-service teachers who actively engage in reading, discussing, and reflecting on children's literature not only develop positive reading dispositions but also enhance their ability to understand, evaluate, and use information meaningfully in pedagogical contexts (Farrar & Simpson, 2024; Green, 2025; Simpson, 2021). Activities involving

children's literature, such as these, indirectly train critical and reflective thinking skills, which are key components of information literacy.

Another reason may be related to the reflective nature of children's literature. Many literary texts present social situations, ethical dilemmas, and multiple perspectives that encourage readers to question, compare, and justify their interpretations. Such experiences require higher-order thinking processes that closely resemble the evaluative dimension of information literacy. For pre-service teachers, engaging with these texts may strengthen their ability to judge the credibility and relevance of information rather than relying solely on surface-level understanding. Consequently, literary engagement may function as an informal training ground for the development of critical information-processing skills.

The magnitude of the relationship also provides additional insight into the role of children's literature engagement in developing information literacy skills. The regression model explained 18.2% of the variance in information literacy skills, indicating a moderate contribution. This finding suggests that although engagement with children's literature plays an important role in fostering information literacy, the development of information literacy skills is also likely influenced by other factors, such as digital literacy experiences, academic reading habits, access to information resources, and information-seeking practices. Therefore, children's literature engagement should be viewed as one meaningful contributor within a broader ecosystem of literacy development.

This interpretation is consistent with previous studies showing that sustained engagement with literary texts contributes to literacy development and information-processing abilities. For example, Ramdhani (2024) reported that literary reading promotes reflective understanding of texts, while Henanggil and Kesha (2025) found that information literacy is strongly associated with the ability to comprehend and analyze complex texts. These studies support the mechanism identified in the present research rather than merely demonstrating a similar statistical relationship.

Therefore, children's literature should be considered a meaningful pedagogical resource that simultaneously supports literacy development and information-processing competencies among pre-service teachers. These findings imply that pre-service teacher education programs need to provide greater space for the integration of children's literature into learning activities, whether through courses, academic assignments, or supporting literacy activities, in order to optimize students' information literacy skills in a sustainable manner.

4.2 Self-Efficacy of Pre-Service Teachers Based on Engagement in Children's Literature

The research results show that student teacher engagement in children's literature has a positive and significant impact on self-efficacy. This finding indicates that the greater the student's engagement in activities related to children's literature, the greater their confidence in their abilities to carry out academic and professional tasks as pre-service teachers.

The positive relationship between engagement with children's literature and self-efficacy may occur because frequent interaction with literary texts provides opportunities for successful learning experiences. When pre-service teachers are able to understand stories, interpret meanings, and participate in discussions about literary texts, they experience a sense of accomplishment that reinforces their confidence in their own academic abilities. Repeated success in completing these literacy-related tasks may gradually strengthen beliefs about their

capability to handle similar learning challenges in the future. Thus, engagement with children's literature may contribute to self-efficacy by providing continuous experiences of competence and achievement.

Theoretically and empirically, self-efficacy is understood as an individual's belief in their ability to organize and carry out actions to achieve specific goals, one of the primary sources of which is mastery experience or success (Bandura, 1997). In line with this concept, active engagement in reading and discussing literature provides meaningful and contextual learning experiences, thereby strengthening students' teacher self-efficacy. Research by Wati & Yanto (2022) shows that intense interaction with texts through literature circles increases students' self-efficacy in reading comprehension, as they experience success in interpreting and discussing the text's content. This finding is supported by Elisa (2024) who found that self-efficacy is positively related to students' reading comprehension skills, as well as by Peura et al. (2021) who emphasized that successful reading experiences consistently shape and enhance literacy self-efficacy. In the context of student teachers, the experience of understanding and reflecting on literary texts, including children's literature, can serve as a mastery experience that strengthens their confidence in processing meaning, linking text content to educational values, and viewing themselves as competent learners and pre-service teachers (Bandura, 1997; Elisa, 2024; Wati & Yanto, 2022).

Another explanation is that children's literature allows pre-service teachers to imagine and reflect on authentic educational situations through narrative experiences. By engaging with stories that involve children, learning challenges, and social interactions, students can mentally rehearse their future professional roles as teachers. This reflective process may strengthen their confidence in dealing with classroom situations and educational responsibilities (Cremin et al., 2009; Johnston, 2023). The process of discussing and interpreting literary texts also encourages student teachers to collaboratively reflect on learning practices and classroom challenges, contributing to the formation of professional identity and increased pedagogical self-efficacy. Thus, engagement in children's literature not only enriches literacy insights but also strengthens students' readiness and confidence in facing various learning challenges as empathetic and reflective pre-service teachers (Cremin et al., 2009; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).

The strength of the relationship observed in this study was notably substantial. Engagement with children's literature explained 61.6% of the variance in self-efficacy, indicating that literary engagement may be particularly influential in shaping affective and motivational dimensions of pre-service teachers' development. Compared with information literacy skills, self-efficacy appears to be more directly enhanced through successful experiences of understanding texts, participating in literary discussions, and reflecting on educational values. These experiences may provide repeated mastery experiences that strengthen beliefs about personal competence, which Bandura (1997) identified as the most influential source of self-efficacy.

The present finding is also supported by previous studies indicating that engagement with children's literature contributes to the development of pedagogical understanding, reader identity, and professional competence among pre-service teachers (Colton & Forrest, 2025; Farrar & Simpson, 2024). Rather than serving solely as a literacy activity, engagement with

literary texts appears to foster psychological resources that enhance confidence and readiness for future teaching responsibilities.

In summary, engagement with children's literature enhances pre-service teachers' self-efficacy through successful experiences in understanding texts, reflection on pedagogical values, and strengthening their professional identity as pre-service teachers. Thus, engagement with children's literature has significant implications for developing pre-service teachers' self-efficacy. The findings of this study have several important implications for teacher education programs. First, children's literature should not be viewed solely as a medium for developing reading habits but also as a pedagogical resource that supports the development of information literacy skills and self-efficacy among pre-service teachers. Integrating children's literature into teacher education courses may provide opportunities for students to engage in critical reading, reflection, information evaluation, and meaning-making processes that are essential for their future professional practice. Second, the substantial influence of children's literature engagement on self-efficacy suggests that literature-based activities, such as reflective reading, literature discussions, and text-based collaborative learning, can be strategically utilized to strengthen pre-service teachers' confidence in their academic and professional capabilities. Finally, teacher education institutions may consider incorporating structured children's literature engagement into literacy and pedagogy courses to foster both cognitive and affective competencies required in contemporary educational settings.

5. Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study involved a relatively small sample of 38 pre-service teachers from a single institution, which may limit the generalizability of the results to broader populations of teacher education students. Second, the research employed a cross-sectional ex post facto design, preventing causal conclusions from being drawn regarding the relationships among children's literature engagement, information literacy skills, and self-efficacy. Third, the data were collected using self-report questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias and social desirability effects. Finally, information literacy skills were measured through a questionnaire rather than performance-based assessments, which may not fully capture participants' actual information literacy competencies. Future studies are recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples, employ longitudinal or experimental designs, and utilize performance-based measures to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of children's literature engagement in teacher education.

6. Conclusion

This study concludes that engagement with children's literature positively and significantly predicts both information literacy skills and self-efficacy among pre-service teachers. The findings suggest that students who actively engage in children's literature tend to demonstrate stronger abilities in accessing, evaluating, and utilizing information, as well as greater confidence in their academic and professional capabilities. The results indicate that children's literature engagement contributes moderately to the development of information

literacy skills and substantially to the enhancement of self-efficacy. These findings can be explained by the opportunities provided through literary engagement for critical interpretation, reflective thinking, meaning construction, and successful learning experiences, all of which support cognitive and affective development. Therefore, children's literature should be regarded not only as a literacy resource but also as a meaningful pedagogical tool that can strengthen essential competencies among pre-service teachers. Integrating children's literature into teacher education programs may provide a valuable strategy for fostering both information literacy and self-efficacy in preparation for future professional practice.

Author Contributions

Andi Hasrianti conceived the study, developed the research design, conducted the literature review, and drafted the manuscript. Ridwan Andi Mattoliang supervised the research process, contributed to the methodological framework, validated the data analysis, and critically reviewed and revised the manuscript. Both authors contributed to the interpretation of the findings, approved the final version of the manuscript, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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