

# The Effects of Creative Drama on Self-Awareness Intelligence in Preschool Children

Jiaxin Chen<sup>a</sup> and Loy Chee Luen<sup>b\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Faculty of Human Development, Sultan Idris Education University, Perak, Malaysia,

<sup>a</sup>Sanming University, China, <sup>b\*</sup>Faculty of Human Development, Sultan Idris Education University, Perak, Malaysia

Corresponding Author Email: [loy.cl@fpm.upsi.edu.my](mailto:loy.cl@fpm.upsi.edu.my)

DOI Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v15-i1/27637>

**Published Online:** 16 March 2026

## Abstract

With the continuous development of modern education, self-awareness intelligence has become an important foundation for children's social adaptation and lifelong learning. Early childhood is a critical period for the formation of self-awareness, emotional understanding and self-regulation. Creative drama, as an experiential and interactive teaching method, provides children with opportunities to explore themselves through role-playing, improvisation and situational interaction. In creative theatre activities, teachers guide children to express their emotions, reflect on their experiences, and understand their relationships with others, thus promoting the development of children's self-awareness intelligence in a natural and fun way. This study explored how creative theatre can be used with preschool children to enhance their self-awareness development. 44 preschool children participated in a 16-week intervention designed to enhance their development in four domains encompassing Appearance Cognition, Self-Esteem, Reflection, and Emotional Cognition. One group received an educational theatre curriculum based on life education theory (n=22), while the other group received a standard teaching curriculum (n=22). The study suggests that creative theatre teaching is an effective educational approach to promote the development of self-awareness intelligence in young children. Therefore, this study concludes that in creative drama activities, young children use cooperative learning and peer interaction as the main ways to explore themselves and understand others through role experience and contextual construction, and gradually develop an understanding of their own emotions, behaviors and abilities through expression and reflection. This not only helps to improve children's self-knowledge, but also promotes the comprehensive development of their social and emotional abilities.

**Keywords:** Creative Drama, Self-Awareness Intelligence, Experimental Research, Preschool

## Introduction

In the context of rapid social transformation and increasing educational demands in the twenty-first century, early childhood education is expected to move beyond traditional knowledge transmission toward fostering holistic development, creativity, emotional intelligence, and self-awareness. International educational frameworks, such as UNESCO's

Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow, emphasize that education should cultivate creativity, autonomy, critical thinking, and lifelong learning capacities through experience-based and interactive pedagogical approaches (UNESCO, 1972). Within this broader educational paradigm, creative and experiential learning models have gained growing attention across educational research and practice.

Creative drama, defined by the American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE) as a process-centered, improvisational, and non-performance-based form of drama, provides a dynamic pedagogical framework in which learners engage in role-playing, imaginative exploration, and reflective dialogue under the guidance of a facilitator (McCaslin, 2006). Unlike traditional didactic instruction, creative drama emphasizes participatory learning, experiential engagement, and learner autonomy, prioritizing the learning process over final outcomes (Ataee, 2024). Through dramatic play and embodied interaction, children actively construct meaning, negotiate social relationships, and explore emotional expression, thereby promoting deeper cognitive and socio-emotional development. A growing body of empirical research has demonstrated the effectiveness of creative drama in enhancing young children's social competence, emotional understanding, empathy, and interpersonal communication skills (Stephenson, 2023; Liu, 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, the development of self-awareness constitutes a central dimension of early childhood learning and psychological growth. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences identifies intrapersonal intelligence—also referred to as self-knowledge or self-intellect—as a fundamental capacity that enables individuals to understand their emotions, motivations, personality traits, and internal needs, thereby regulating behavior and constructing a coherent self-concept (Gardner, 1999, 2006). Gardner further emphasizes the critical role of contextualized and experiential learning environments in facilitating this developmental process. Similarly, Campbell (2006) argues that self-awareness emerges through sustained interaction between individuals and their social environments, underscoring the importance of emotionally meaningful and context-rich educational settings in fostering reflective awareness and identity formation.

In recent years, creative drama has increasingly been recognized as a powerful pedagogical approach capable of supporting multiple domains of early childhood development, including cognitive, emotional, social, and linguistic competencies (Gao et al., 2022). Empirical studies suggest that role-playing, symbolic interaction, and reflective discussion inherent in creative drama activities significantly contribute to children's emotional regulation, empathy development, and self-awareness (Özcan & İvrendi, 2024; Koç & Sungurtekin, 2023). These findings resonate strongly with contemporary debates in the social sciences regarding the role of experiential learning, embodied cognition, and emotional literacy in promoting holistic child development.

However, despite the growing scholarly attention to creative drama, existing research remains fragmented and limited in scope. Most studies have examined isolated dimensions of development, such as emotional identification or behavioral adjustment, often relying on short-term intervention designs. There remains a notable lack of comprehensive empirical investigations exploring how structured creative drama interventions embedded within preschool curricula can systematically influence children's multidimensional self-awareness,

including self-awareness, self-esteem, reflective ability, and emotional regulation. In particular, insufficient attention has been paid to the mechanisms through which symbolic play, role internalization, and guided reflection jointly contribute to the development of children's self-concept and emotional competence across multiple domains (Arias et al., 2023).

Addressing this research gap, the present study aims to examine the effects of a curriculum-integrated creative drama intervention on preschool children's self-awareness and emotional development. By situating creative drama within a structured educational framework and adopting a multidimensional analytical perspective, this research seeks to contribute to current theoretical debates on experiential pedagogy and early childhood socio-emotional learning, while providing empirical evidence to inform educational practice and curriculum design.

## Research Design

### *Subjects of the Study*

The subjects of this study were drawn from two toddler classes at a preschool in China's Sanming City. Each class consisted of 22 children, randomly selected for the experimental class and the control class. The demographic characteristics of the experimental and control subjects are presented in the following tables:

Table 1

### *Basic information about the research subjects*

Group	Grade	Boy	Girl
Experimental Class	Senior Kindergarten	10	12
Control Class	Senior Kindergarten	11	11

### *Research Tools*

The present study employed the "Early Childhood Self-Awareness: A Situational Context Assessment," a scale developed by Zheng (2021), to assess the developmental level of self-awareness in preschool children. The scale's reliability coefficient was found to be 0.768. To ensure the applicability of the scale in the present study's sample, an additional reliability analysis was conducted. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was determined to be 0.83, indicating the scale's internal consistency and reliability in the present study.

The scale's assessment included four core competencies: self-appearance awareness, self-esteem, emotional awareness, and self-reflection. The participants were instructed to respond to questions and draw their self-portraits. Each participant completed the self-portrait drawing task independently. The researcher then calculated the participant's score based on the scale's evaluation criteria.

## Research Process

### *Intervention Plan*

The present study is based on the development of "self-awareness" and has selected four books that cover the areas of self-appearance, self-esteem, self-reflection, and emotional

identification, among others, as teaching materials (see Table 2). These books are suitable for young learners and are also closely related to their daily lives. In the course design stage, the experimental class teachers first defined the teaching theme and objective of each book, and then wrote a complete teaching plan. The design includes both guided and independent activities, such as drama activities and problem-solving scenarios. The intervention measures were implemented from September to December 2025. During this period, teachers conducted one creative drama lesson per week, using various drama methods to create conflict situations, and guided learners in creating and performing improvisations with their bodies, words, and facial expressions. This process gradually fosters self-awareness.

Table 2  
Creative Drama Plan for the Experimental Class

Dimension	Creative Drama Material	Activity Objectives	Lesson Schedule	Drama Paradigms
Appearance Perception	"I Don't Want to Be a Zebra"	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help children gradually realize they are unique individuals.</li> <li>Understand and appreciate their own appearance.</li> </ol>	4 Lessons	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Mantle of the Expert:</b> Teacher in role as zebra mother asking children for help.</li> <li><b>Teacher in Role:</b> Teaching assistant in role as big bear.</li> <li><b>News Report:</b> Forest broadcast announces all citizens must wear zebra stripes.</li> </ol>
Self-esteem	"Don't Laugh, Joe"	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand one's own strengths and merits, and accept oneself happily.</li> <li>Experience respect from others, the group, and society.</li> </ol>	4 Lessons	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Role Play:</b> Children act out possums playing dead.</li> <li><b>Building Space:</b> Children create the possum's home.</li> <li><b>Still Image/Tableau:</b> Spontaneously depict scenes from the possum's life.</li> <li><b>Image drama/Guess the Story:</b> Speculate on the plot based on images.</li> </ol>
Self-reflection	"Mr. Egg"	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand what one is interested in and be able to explore things one likes.</li> <li>Know what profession one might want in the future, having</li> </ol>	4 Lessons	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Image drama/Guess the Story:</b> Speculate on Mr. Egg's identity based on a portrait.</li> <li><b>Clues/Materials:</b> Pieces of Mr. Egg found in a corner.</li> <li><b>Game:</b> Children experience a day in the life of Mr. Egg following the teacher's instructions.</li> </ol>

<b>Emotional Cognition</b>	<i>"I Am a Fire-Breathing Dragon"</i>	<p>a simple plan for it.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the development of children's emotional awareness, enhancing their introspective ability to recognize emotional states.</li> <li>Establish a cognitive link between emotion-inducing events and personal reactions, learning to regulate and control emotions.</li> </ol>	<p>4 Lessons</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Mantle of the Expert:</b> Teacher in role as villager asking children for help.</li> <li><b>Role on the Wall:</b> Children draw an image of Anguli.</li> <li><b>News Report:</b> Recorded news broadcast to northern residents.</li> <li><b>Building Space:</b> The scene after Anguli's fire-breathing causes a disaster.</li> </ol>
----------------------------	---------------------------------------	---	------------------	---

### Research Process

This study adopts the experimental method to explore the effect of creative theatre teaching on the development of young children's self-awareness intelligence. The creative theatre curriculum was used as the experimental independent variable, and young children's self-awareness intelligence development was used as the experimental dependent variable. The experimental procedures were as follows:

First, two parallel classes in the older class year were selected from a kindergarten in Sanming City, Fujian Province, China, and randomly divided into an experimental class and a control class.

Second, before the beginning of the experiment, all children in the two classes were pre-tested with the Contextualized Assessment of self-awareness intelligence (CASCI) for preschooler to assess their initial self-awareness intelligence development, and the results of the children's initial self-awareness intelligence development were subjected to an independent samples t-test. The results showed that the p-values of the total scores and the scores of the dimensions of the initial self-perceived intelligence development levels of the children in the experimental class and the control class were all greater than 0.05, indicating that there was no significant difference in the initial self-perceived intelligence development levels of the children in the two groups. The development level of self-awareness intelligence of the children in the control class meets the homogeneous prerequisite requirements of

educational intervention research, and the self-awareness intelligence creative theatre teaching intervention can be carried out. (See Table 3 for details).

Table 3

*Differences in the Initial Levels of self-awareness intelligence Between the Experimental Class and the Control Class*

Dimension	Group	N	M ± SD	p	t
<b>Appearance Cognition</b>	Experimental Class	22	2.12 ± 1.27	0.883	-0.15
	Control Class	22	2.19 ± 1.42		
<b>Self-Esteem</b>	Experimental Class	22	1.24 ± 0.44	0.935	-0.08
	Control Class	22	1.25 ± 0.58		
<b>Reflection</b>	Experimental Class	22	1.62 ± 0.65	0.639	-0.43
	Control Class	22	1.72 ± 0.58		
<b>Emotion Cognition</b>	Experimental Class	22	1.57 ± 0.60	0.696	-0.40
	Control Class	22	1.50 ± 0.39		
<b>Total Score</b>	Experimental Class	22	11.29 ± 3.24	0.937	-0.08
	Control Class	22	11.38 ± 2.58		

Third, a 4-month creative theatre teaching of self-awareness intelligence was conducted for the experimental group of children, covering a variety of self-cognitive themes and interactive activities. The children in the control group participated in regular educational activities.

Fourth, at the end of the experiment, the researcher assessed the effectiveness of the intervention by conducting a post-experimental test on each child in both classes using the 'Contextualized Assessment of self-awareness intelligence'.

**Research Findings***(1) Analysis of Differences in self-awareness intelligence and Its Dimensions Between the Experimental Class and the Control Class After the Experiment*

Table 4

*Test of Differences in the Developmental Levels of self-awareness intelligence Between the Experimental Class and the Control Class After the Experiment*

Dimension	Group	N	M ± SD	p	t
<b>Physical Appearance</b>	Experimental Class	22	3.29 ± 1.21	0.029	2.30
	Control Class	22	2.25 ± 1.39		
<b>Self-Esteem</b>	Experimental Class	22	2.35 ± 0.79	0.001	3.98
	Control Class	22	1.38 ± 0.62		
<b>Emotion Cognition</b>	Experimental Class	22	3.14 ± 0.76	0.001	7.39
	Control Class	22	1.58 ± 0.41		
<b>Total Score</b>	Experimental Class	22	25.35 ± 3.26	0.001	12.11
	Control Class	22	12.25 ± 2.96		

In order to determine whether the experimental and control groups exhibited differential levels of self-knowledge and intelligent development after undergoing experimental intervention, an independent sample T-test was conducted on the self-knowledge and intelligent development scores of the experimental and control groups across the four dimensions (refer to Table 4 for details). The results indicated that the p-values for the initial self-knowledge and intelligent development scores of the two groups were both less than 0.05. Additionally, a statistically significant difference was observed in the scores of the appearance cognition dimension [ $t_{(22)}=2.30$ ,  $p<0.05$ ] and the self-esteem dimension [ $t_{(22)}=3.98$ ,  $p<0.001$ ] between the experimental and control groups. Furthermore, a substantial difference was found in the scores of the introspective dimension [ $t_{(22)}=4.68$ ,  $p<0.005$ ] between the experimental and control groups. The mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the external appearance recognition dimension differed significantly ( $t_{(22)}=7.39$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Similarly, the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the general level of self-recognition differed significantly ( $t_{(22)}=12.11$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

The findings indicate the effectiveness of the intervention of the experimental drama program on the development of self-cognizance and intelligence in the test and control groups. The experimental drama program has a significant impact on the development of the experimental group's self-cognizance and intelligence.

*(2) Difference Analysis of the Development Level of Intrapersonal Intelligence Across Dimensions in the Control Class Before and After the Experiment*

Table 5

*Test of Differences in the Development Level of Intrapersonal Intelligence in the Control Class Before and After the Experiment*

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Test Category</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>M ± SD</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>t</b>
Physical Appearance Perception	Pre-test	22	2.19 ± 1.42	0.580	-0.57
	Post-test	22	2.25 ± 1.39		
Self-Esteem	Pre-test	22	1.25 ± 0.58	0.164	-1.46
	Post-test	22	1.38 ± 0.62		
Reflection	Pre-test	22	1.72 ± 0.58	0.089	-1.81
	Post-test	22	1.94 ± 0.81		
Emotion Perception	Pre-test	<b>22</b>	1.50 ± 0.39	0.333	-1.00
	Post-test	<b>22</b>	1.58 ± 0.41		
<b>Total Score</b>	<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11.38 ± 2.58</b>	<b>0.074</b>	<b>-1.92</b>
	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12.25 ± 2.96</b>		

In order to compare whether there is any difference in the scores of the four dimensions of self-conceptual intelligence development between the pre-test and the post-test of the control class after the intervention of the creative theatre experiment, a paired samples t-test was conducted on the scores of the four latitudes of self-conceptual intelligence development between the pre-test and the post-test of the control class (see Table 5 for details). The results showed that there was no significant difference in the scores of the dimensions of self-perception of intelligence development between the pre-test and post-test of the control class. There was no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores on the appearance cognitive dimension [ $t_{(22)}=-0.57$ ,  $p>0.05$ ]; there was no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores on the self-esteem dimension [ $t_{(22)}=-1.46$ ,  $p>0.05$ ]; there was no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores on the reflection dimension [ $t_{(22)}=-1.81$ ,  $p>0.05$ ]; There was no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores on the cognitive dimension of appearance [ $t_{(22)}=-1.00$ ,  $p>0.05$ ]; and there was no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores on the total score of self-awareness intelligence development level [ $t_{(22)}=-1.92$ ,  $p>0.05$ ]. It can be seen from the above that the general teaching in the control class did not significantly improve the children's self-awareness intelligence development level.

(3) *Comparative Analysis of the Developmental Levels of Intrapersonal Intelligence Across Various Dimensions in the Experimental Class Before and After the Experiment*  
Table 6

*Differences in Intrapersonal Intelligence Development Levels Across Dimensions in the Experimental Class Before and After the Experiment*

Dimension	Test Category	N	M ± SD	p	t
Physical Appearance Perception	Pre-test	22	2.12 ± 1.27	0.001	-5.99
	Post-test	22	3.29 ± 1.21		
Self-Esteem	Pre-test	22	1.24 ± 0.44	0.001	-6.62
	Post-test	22	2.35 ± 0.79		
Reflection	Pre-test	22	1.62 ± 0.65	0.001	-7.57
	Post-test	22	3.26 ± 0.81		
Emotional Awareness	Pre-test	22	1.57 ± 0.60	0.001	-6.93
	Post-test	22	3.14 ± 0.76		
Total Score	Pre-test	22	11.29 ± 3.24	0.001	-11.06
	Post-test	22	21.50 ± 4.24		

In order to compare whether there is any difference in the scores of the four dimensions of self-conceptual intelligence development between the pre-test and post-test of the experimental class after the intervention of the creative theatre experiment, paired samples t-tests were conducted on the scores of the four dimensions of self-conceptual intelligence development between the pre-test and post-test of the experimental class (see Table 6 for details). It was found that there was a highly significant difference between the scores of the pre-test and post-test of the experimental class on each dimension of self-perception of intelligence development. There is a highly significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores on the appearance cognition dimension [ $t_{(22)}=-5.99, p<0.001$ ]; there is a highly significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores on the self-esteem dimension [ $t_{(22)}=-6.62, p<0.001$ ]; and there is a highly significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores on the reflective dimension [ $t_{(22)}=-7.57, p<0.001$ ].  $p<0.001$ ]; on the emotional cognition dimension, there is a highly significant difference between the scores of the pre-test and post-test of on the external appearance cognition dimension [ $t_{(22)}=-6.93, p<0.001$ ]; and on the total score of the developmental level of self-perceived intelligence, there is a highly significant difference between the scores of the pre-test and the post-test [ $t_{(22)}=-11.06, p<0.001$ ].

As can be seen from the above, after the implementation of the creative theatre intervention, there are significant differences in the total self-perception intelligence scores and the pre- and post-tests of the four dimensions of appearance perception, self-esteem, reflection and emotion perception, indicating that the implementation of the creative theatre intervention has a certain positive effect on the development of self-perception intelligence of the young children. The mean scores of the pre- and post-tests of self-esteem and emotional awareness are higher than those of the pre- and post-tests of appearance awareness and reflection. This shows that creative theatre education can promote the development of self-esteem and emotional cognition in young children, and can be used as a way to cultivate the development of self-esteem and emotional cognition in young children.

## Discussion

### *The Impact of Creative Drama on the Development Level of Perception of Appearance*

Appearance perception, also known as self-awareness, is the way individuals perceive their external image. The theory of self-awareness includes three core dimensions: material self, spiritual self, and social self. Material self refers to the perception of physical attributes such as body, age, gender, height, weight, physique, and appearance ((Berki, Csányi, & Tóth, 2024).

The material self refers to the way in which children directly perceive their own appearance through their senses, including body shape, gender attributes, and physical characteristics, among other biological elements. Children develop a sense of self through their senses, such as vision and touch. Through repeated experiences and activities, they build a sense of self (Zanlorenci et al., 2024). Cooley (2017) proposed the renowned “looking-glass self” theory to reveal the mechanism by which social environments shape self-perception. This theory posits that young children gradually internalize a self-evaluation system through receiving feedback from others during interpersonal interactions. He argued that children's sense of self is formed as a “looking-glass self” through this “mirroring process.”

It is evident that direct sensory experiences and peer evaluations serve as crucial pathways for young children to develop their perception of physical appearance. Recognizing distinct features of one's own appearance and maintaining a positive self-assessment are key benchmarks in this cognitive process.

Creative drama education relies on narrative scenario construction to promote cognitive development in young children through embodied participation and immersive scenarios. Through social role-playing and perspective-taking during peer interaction and collaboration, children gradually form their own evaluations of others and others' evaluations of themselves. For example, in “I Don't Want to Be a Zebra,” children must draw their self-portraits and submit them to the Forest Committee for review before entering the forest. The self-portrait must meet one requirement: it must allow the chairman to recognize the child. The “Looking in the Mirror” game encourages children to observe themselves and their peers for unique facial features: “I found a mole on my face,” “I found a mosquito bite on my face,” “I found that XX has the biggest eyes in the class,” and so on. Additionally, creative drama enables young children to reconnect with the link between their bodies and emotions, enhancing their physical awareness. For instance, when constructing a forest after a fire, children use their bodies to portray trees snapped by flames, animals on the brink of death, and withered plants. This process gradually shifts their focus from “Do I look good?” to “Can I use my body to convey meaningful content,” reducing self-criticism about appearance.

During construction, children express a tiger's ferocity with open palms, depict a rabbit's ears with fingers, and represent themselves through symbolic elements. This process of externalizing inner qualities prompts children to associate physical appearance with self-identity, transcending mere recognition of physiological features. This perspective aligns with recent findings in developmental psychology and drama education research. For example, Dias Rodrigues et al. (2023) noted that young children spontaneously employ bodily postures and movements to express emotions during dramatic play, forming preliminary awareness of the relationship between bodily sensations and emotional experiences through this expressive process. In the meantime, Bakeer's (2025) empirical study revealed that children

involved in creative dramas obtained significantly higher scores on the "Affective Scale" than the control group. This finding indicates that this educational approach effectively promotes children's understanding of the connection between their physical sensations and emotional states. These studies indicate that creative drama not only serves as a medium of expression but also contributes to the development of children's physical and emotional integration.

#### *The Impact of Creative Drama on the Development Level of Self-Esteem Dimension*

Self-esteem, as part of self-awareness, refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of their overall qualities. Chambah & O'Hanlon (2012) conducted research on the formation of self-esteem, revealing that children's self-esteem levels are influenced by physical appearance, perceived abilities, popularity among peers, and academic performance. Wei (1997) constructed a structural model of self-esteem within the Children's Self-Esteem Scale, incorporating problem-solving abilities and social development (Greco, et al., 2025). Consequently, young children's problem-solving capabilities and social development represent crucial factors influencing self-esteem formation.

Therefore, the problem-solving skills and social development of young children are important factors in the formation of self-esteem.

In creative drama, dramatic conflict is often used to present problems for young children to solve, allowing learners to gain knowledge and experience, self-understanding and knowledge of events in a highly visual role-playing experience. While traditional drama education still requires children to reproduce scripts, creative drama has taken creativity, improvisation, and openness as its core support, allowing children to go beyond the confines of ready-made scripts, to understand multiple perspectives through role swapping, and to complete self-expression in the creation of situations (Su & Zhang, 2025)

In the theatrical production *Don't Laugh, Joe* multiple challenges are presented to the young audience members. For instance, within the forest setting, a large bear is in pursuit of a vole named Joe. How should Joe respond to this situation? The young audience members offered their opinions, demonstrating their ideas through physical actions. Some suggested that Joe could pretend to be dead. Others suggested that Joe could lie on the ground, or rise up, or twitch, as if she were truly deceased. How can Joe effectively deceive the bear? This scenario demonstrates that the creative play allows young audience members to think for themselves and express their ideas. By creating an open-ended situation, the play provides young audience members with the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities and achieve success.

In addition, the creative drama environment fosters a supportive social interaction setting. In the collaborative process, children's creative expressions are recognized and accepted by their peers, thereby reinforcing their self-concept. This perspective has also garnered support from previous studies, as evidenced by the findings of Armesto Arias et al. (2025). Research indicates that children who frequently experience opportunities for creative expression and peer recognition in drama activities exhibit faster development in their self-concept and social self-confidence.

#### *The Impact of Creative Drama on the Development Level of Reflection Dimension*

Reflection, defined as the cognitive processing of experiences, the expression of emotions, or the verbalization of conclusions, involves the real-time processing of information. As posited

by Bellanca & Fogarty (2012), the capacity to engage in reflection can be assessed through observable behaviors, such as verbal expression, motoric behavior, and the formulation of future goals.

The development of reflection capacity is inherently subjective. Dewey's experiential pedagogy underscores the dynamic nature of experiential learning, which occurs through inquiry and hands-on exploration. It emphasizes the practical and proactive nature of learning, where individuals engage in action, experience, and exploration, followed by reflection (Dewey,1998;Sulistiawati, 2024).

Creative drama immerses young children in theatrical scenarios through skillful use of dramatic strategies, enabling them to gain authentic emotions and genuine experiences through “pretend play,” thereby fostering the development of reflective abilities. In “Mr. Egg,” children “role-play” as Mr. Egg to experience his daily routine. Within this scenario, they recognize the relentless cycle of no rest and repetitive drudgery. After gaining this cognitive experience, children adopt the role of “helpers” to assist Mr. Egg in resolving his troubles and planning his future. This multi-layered metacognitive training process—first experiencing, then deconstructing, and finally reconstructing—constitutes the core mechanism by which drama fosters reflection. As Hülya, Seda & Dervişe (2025) noted within their action-reflection theoretical framework, drama activities create a cyclical structure of “action-pause-reflection.” Through role-playing, children naturally step back from the situation to observe their own behaviors, thereby developing preliminary metacognitive abilities and critical thinking tendencies.

#### *The Impact of Creative Drama on the Development Level of Emotional Cognition Dimension*

The term "emotional intelligence" refers to an individual's ability to understand their own and others' emotions. Emotional intelligence encompasses a variety of components, including understanding the causes of emotions, emotional regulation, and the role of emotions in personality development (Roslan.et al.,2022) .

The use of drama activities, such as drama games and performance models, in creative education allows children to engage with the subject matter. By employing appropriate vocal tones, language, and physical gestures, children can empathize with the emotions of others in a role-playing or performance context. This process of empathy involves understanding the emotions, situations, and psychological states of the characters or individuals with whom they interact.

Studies have demonstrated the efficacy of drama activities in promoting children's emotional intelligence. The use of drama in creative education has been shown to facilitate the development of emotional intelligence, as well as to enhance emotional regulation strategies, leading to a symbiotic relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional regulation (Armesto.et al., 2025). Creative drama emphasizes freedom of expression, allowing young children to convey emotional states not only through language but also via body movements, gestures, actions, and even silence. This creative space significantly liberates children's emotions, facilitating their externalization, release, and self-regulation (Liu, 2023). In the initial stages of the "Fire Dragon" project, the instructor employed a combination of the emotions "sorrow," "fear," "joy," and "sadness" with the physical activity "walking" to train

the children to express different emotions using facial expressions and body language in a state of unconsciousness. This method aimed to assess and comprehend their emotional intelligence.

It has been demonstrated that creative drama enables the externalization of emotions, the embodiment of roles and experiences, the exploration of symbols, and the establishment of a sense of safety through dialogue and the construction of meaning. This comprehensive process functions as a laboratory for emotions, offering a secure environment for children to experience and name complex emotions. Additionally, they can engage in empathic play and emotional reasoning from a role perspective, thereby enhancing the accuracy, depth, and creativity of their emotional recognition. Recent research has further substantiated that children who consistently participate in structured creative drama activities exhibit significant progress in the domains of emotional vocabulary, emotional understanding, and emotional regulation strategies. This lays a fundamental psychological foundation for their future social adaptation and academic success. (Koç & Sungurtekin, 2023)

### **Declarations**

#### *Ethical Approval*

All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964

Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

### **Informed Consent**

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

### **References**

- Arias, M., Neira-Piñeiro, M., Pasarín-Lavín, T., & Rodríguez, C. (2024). A drama-based intervention to improve emotional intelligence in early childhood education. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 40*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-024-00906-6>
- Armesto Arias, M., Neira-Piñeiro, M. D. R., Pasarín-Lavín, T., & Rodríguez, C. (2025). A drama-based intervention to improve emotional intelligence in early childhood education. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 40*(1), 13.
- Ataee, S. (2024). *Supporting peer interaction in early childhood education and care through dramatic play*.
- Bakeer, M. (2025). *Parent's play corner: A dramatic play resource for parents of young children*.
- Bellanca, J. A., & Fogarty, R. J. (2012). *How to teach thinking skills within the common core: 7 key student proficiencies of the new national standards*. Solution Tree Press.
- Berki, T., Csányi, T., & Tóth, L. (2024). Associations of physical activity and physical education enjoyment with self-concept domains among Hungarian adolescents. *BMC Psychology, 12*(1), 449.
- Campbell, L. (2006). *Metode praktis pembelajaran berbasis multiple intelligence*. Intuisi Press.
- Chambah, M., & O'Hanlon, B. (2012). *Le coaching des émotions et de l'estime de soi*. Lulu.

- Cooley, C. H. (2017). *Human nature and the social order*. Routledge. (Original work published 1902)
- Dewey, J. (1998). *The essential Dewey, volume 1: Pragmatism, education, democracy* (Vol. 1). Indiana University Press.
- Gao, Q., Hall, A., Linder, S., Leonard, A., & Qian, M. (2022). Promoting Head Start dual language learners' social and emotional development through creative drama. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 50(5), 761–771.
- Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence reframed: Multiple intelligences for the 21st century*. Basic Books.
- Gardner, H. (2006). Project Zero: Nelson Goodman's legacy in arts education. In H. Gardner, *The development and education of the mind* (pp. 24–29). Routledge.
- Greco, A. M., González-Gómez, B., & Cañete-Massé, C. (2025). A COSMIN-based meta-analysis on the psychometric properties of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale for children and adolescents. *Child Indicators Research*, 1–32.
- Hülya, G. O., Seda, S., & Dervişe, A. T. (2025). Play behaviors and self-regulated learning in preschool children. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education*, 19(3).
- Koç, N., & Sungurtekin, Ş. (2023). Promoting preschool children's social-emotional learning skills through creative drama integrated music activities. *International Online Journal of Primary Education*, 12(3), 210–227.
- Liu, Y. (2023). The effects of children's drama on children's cognitive ability and creativity. *Journal of Multidisciplinary in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6(4), 1949–1965.
- McCaslin, N. (2006). *Creative drama in the classroom and beyond* (8th ed.). Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.
- Özcan, Ö., & İvrendi, A. (2024). Relationship between socio-dramatic play and self-regulation skills in early childhood. *Kastamonu Education Journal*, 32(1), 38–50.
- Roslan, F., Selvam, L., Pandian, T., Bin, M. N., Rahman, A., & Motevalli, S. (2022). A systematic review on physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development of preschoolers. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*.
- Stephenson, L. (2023). Collective creativity and wellbeing dispositions: Children's perceptions of learning through drama. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 47, 101188.
- Su, C., & Zhang, Y. (2025). Practical research on integrating educational drama into preschool art courses in universities. *Educational Theory Observation*, 3(6), 60–62.
- Sulistiawati, S. (2024). The relevance of John Dewey's philosophy of education in early childhood development in the digital age. *Journal of Childhood Development*, 4(2), 522–531.
- UNESCO. (1972). *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow*. UNESCO.
- Wei, Y. (1997). The structural model of self-esteem and the development of a self-esteem scale for children. *Psychological Development and Education*, 13(3), 29–36.
- Zanlorenci, S., Gonçalves, L., Moraes, M. S., Santiago, L. N., Pedroso, M. S., & Silva, D. A. S. (2024). Comprehensive scoping review on body image perceptions and influences in children and adolescents. *European Journal of Investigation in Health, Psychology and Education*, 14(10), 2716–2734.
- Zheng, X. A. (2021). *Situational assessment and promotion of young children's intrapersonal intelligence* (Doctoral dissertation, Tianjin Normal University).