The Effect of Storytelling on Elementary Students' Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of storytelling on the self-efficacy of students. The research method was quasi-experimental along with pretest-posttest. The statistical population consisted of two elementary fourth grades with 21 students in each class. One of them was selected as the test group and the other as the control. Before the beginning of the course, a pretest was performed for all students (42 students). The self-efficacy questionnaire (SEQ-C) (Muris) was used for data collection and its validity and reliability were confirmed. Data were analyzed using SPSS software with covariance test after checking the homogeneity of variance and regression. The results showed that there is a significant difference between the control and experimental groups. This means that storytelling had a positive effect on the three dimensions (social, educational and emotional) of students' self-efficacy.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Story, Storytelling.

Introduction

Achievement and advancement in education, the acquisition of human, moral and social skills, the growth and development of the abilities to face problems and overcome barriers and motivation for trying to build an ideal future are considered by all teachers and students' parents. Almost half of the total number of students in Iran are studying in the primary schools. Students at this age group, because of their particular developmental period, need to find solutions to overcome educational and social problems and have a positive relationship with environmental issues that can be achieved through the proper education at school.

Their success in acquiring skills, achieving solutions and successfully confronting the challenges of this period, depends on their self-efficacy (Tahmassian, Jazayeri, Mohammadkhani & Ghazi Tabatabaie, 2006, p:115). As the foundation of education starts from primary school, the acquisition of such skills should be institutionalized from the beginning of education.

Forty years ago, Bandura introduced the concept of self-efficacy and its seven dimensions for the first time. However, Muris (2001) considered three domains—social self-efficacy, educational self-efficacy, and emotional self-efficacy—and developed the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ–C) (Tan and Chellappan, 2018, p:3). Bandura defined self-efficacy as the motive, desire and belief of a person in his ability to organize activities necessary to deal with problems in particular situations (Bandura,

1995, p:2 & 2012, p. 15). Zheng, Dong, Huang, Chang & Kumar Bhagat (2018, p: 2), conducted a research and mentioned that self-efficacy is considered as one of the primary factors of interpreting students' experiences learning science. Self-efficacy is considered a crucial aspect of interpreting students' perceptions of learning science (Liem, Lau, & Nie, 2008; Printrich & Schunk, 2002). Bandura (2001) studied the results of 96 studies and showed that the self-efficacy of individuals in the groups is stronger and its performance and achievements are more effective. In addition, he claims that collective efficacy (group) leads to greater motivation, higher group goals, and stronger flexibility during obstacles, challenges, and other problems. (Cave, Evans, Dewey, and Hartshorn, 2017 p:2). Altunkaya (2017) also believes that self-efficacy is a balancing factor and those with low self-efficacy beliefs tend to consider the tasks and situations harder than they really are, leading to increased levels of stress and subjective beliefs.

The results of the studies show that high self-efficacy individuals are more confident and less skeptical about those who have little self-efficacy (Schultz & Schultz, 2018). They are challenging for themselves, even in difficult and stressful situations, they are sustained to achieve their goals, they quickly rise up after failure even in the face of the conditions that a typical person's destroyer looks like and see threatening situations as situations they can control. In contrast, those who have low self-efficacy feel that they are unable to control the events of life. When they encounter obstacles, if their early attempts to deal with the problems are unsuccessful, they will immediately stop hoping. These people are skeptical about their abilities and avoid doing difficult tasks. Low self-efficacy can mitigate motivation, reduce appetite, interfere with cognitive abilities, and adversely affect physical health (Karimi & Karimpoor, 2017, p:2). Murphy and Mc Kenzie introduce the school environment as a way to grow students' self-efficacy (Murphy & Mc Kenzie, 2015). Literature indicates that children gain self-efficacy in school not only through interpreting their own performance as successful (mastery) and observing others' successful performance (vicarious experience), but also by responding positively to verbal and social persuasion from an authority figure (Bardhoshi, Duncan & Erford, 2018,p:13). Tan and Chellappan (2018, p:2), believe that self-efficacy is vital in realizing lifestyle changes.

As mentioned, Muris' self-efficacy has three dimensions: social self-efficacy refers to the children's perceived capacity to deal with peer relationship and social challenges.

Educational self-efficacy is concerned with the children's perceived capacity to master educational affairs, manage their own learning behavior, and fulfill educational prospects. Emotional

self-efficacy measures the children's capacity to cope with negative emotions and to resist peer pressure to engage in high-risk activities (Tan and Chellappan, 2018, p: 3).

One of the important tools for increasing the self-efficacy of children is storytelling (Dorosty & Zarei, 2017, p: 58). Storytelling is an imperative pedagogical approach to effective learning. It plays an important role in developing self-efficacy because students have to accomplish many works. They must collect data, organize their own ideas, shape their own experiences, reflect on how they fit into their society and transform them into a logical sequence of story frames (Liu, Wu, Chen, Tsai & Lin, 2018, p:451).

The first educator scientist, who understood the importance of the story, was "Frobel". He founded the first kindergarten and set up children's education on storytelling. Plato in the third part of "Politeia" book, has written about the importance of story in children education (Ajorloo, Barghi Irani & Ali Akbari, 2016). They put the hero of the story as their own model, or they replicate themselves with them and choose their behavioral patterns (Adams, Gouvousis, Van Lue, & Waldron, 2004). The child forms self-made rules based on the message of the story and generalizes it to his real life, which changes his behavior. Through stories and myths, children are introduced to the facts and experiences of life. The influence of storytelling characters, enhancement of the power of understanding and expression, creativity, language teaching and the enhancement of the vocabulary of children are also among the educational effects of storytelling (Monjazi, 2014). The child in the safe environment of the story achieves insight and self-awareness (Roshan Chesli, 2013) which can increase his/her self-efficacy. U.S. Department of Education in the twenty-ninth annual report to Congress individuals with disabilities education in 2010 declared that "Storytelling is effective in children's social and emotional development".

Rajabpour Farkhani & Jahanshahi (2012) conducted a study entitled "The Effectiveness of Story Therapy in Reducing Behavioral Disorders in Elementary Schoolchildren" and showed that storytelling could be used to reduce behavioral disorders in elementary school students. Behnam Vashani, Hekmati Pour, Vaghee & Asghari Nekah (2015), in a research on children with thalassemia, found that storytelling is one of the factors affecting children's self-efficacy. Sadeghi Sayyah (2012) conducted a study on students with learning disabilities and showed that art therapy had a significant effect on their social, educational and emotional adaptability.

Ajorloo, Barghi Irani & Ali Akbari (2016) revealed that the story therapy reduced the anxiety of children. Storytelling also reduces aggression and social incompatibility (Haji Naghi Tehrani, 2014), shyness (Askari, 2015), and increases student

learning (Zamzam, Ghodrati & Dindar, 2016), social skills (Withers, 2011), self-esteem, positive emotions, verbal communication, self-acceptance (Bełtkiewicz, 2013), motivation, interest in reading, educational self-efficacy (Nair, Mohd Yusof & Chooi Hong, 2014), social self-efficacy (such as: broadening their perspectives, enabling them to think about the reasons rather than the result, showing them different lifestyles, providing them with a comparison between their own culture and other cultures)(Ceylan, 2016), development of ethical and social values (Watts, Ness, Steele , Mumford, 2017), emotional skills (decreasing the inappropriate behavior of children with autism) (Khantreejitranon, 2018) and their liveliness (Parhizgari & Khazaei, 2016). Positive effects of high self-efficacy on academic achievement, both direct and indirect, are well established (Pajares 2003; Schunk 2003; Klassen 2007; Gustafsson et al. 2010; Kitsantas, Cheema, and Ware 2011).

Story and storytelling have an old history in Iran. Despite the existence of the tremendous informative treasures of fictional books, parents and educators devote most of their time to teach children, and students also spend much time learning at home and school with suffering from difficulty of the course for the score. Imordino Yang (2016) writes in a book entitled Emotions, Learning and Brain: "we only think about things that matter to us." So when children are only focused on the score, they unconsciously allocate all their energy instead of learning the message of the text, move toward a score. In other words, they are studying for a grade and not for the learning of skills and values. Schunk (2003) states values refer to students' beliefs about the importance of learning which affect on their behaviors, achievement and efforts. From the point of Schunk's view, self-efficacy is one of the most important students' personal beliefs about their capabilities to learn deeply. But, most parents and educators unknowingly destroy creativity, innovation and efficiency in children. Many studies have been conducted on the effect of fiction on the self-efficacy of children with behavioral disorders. They have shown the effect of the story on one aspect of self-efficacy. However, no research has been done on the effect of storytelling on the three dimensions of self-efficacy of ordinary students. Because of the importance of storytelling in educating children and the special attention of parents and educators in their training, this study aimed to investigate the effect of storytelling on the self-efficacy of fourth-grade elementary students.

Research hypotheses

Main hypothesis: It was hypothesized that storytelling has a significant effect on students' self-efficacy.

***Subsidiary hypotheses*:**

H1: It was hypothesized that storytelling has a significant effect on students' social self-efficacy.

H2: It was hypothesized that storytelling has a significant effect on students' educational self-efficacy.

H3: It was hypothesized that storytelling has a significant effect on students' emotional self-efficacy.

Methodology

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of storytelling on elementary students' self-efficacy. This research was conducted at Shahid Akbarabadi Elementary School in Qavar. The research method was semi-experimental and the statistical population consisted of two elementary fourth- grade classes each including 21 students. Both classes were almost identical in terms of gender, age group, class base and social and cultural environment. One of them was selected as the test group and the other as the control.

One of the classes was selected as the experimental group and the other as the control group. Muris' (2003) self-efficacy questionnaire (SEQ-C) was used for data collection. He examined the validity and reliability of the instrument in a sample group of 330 young adolescents between 14 and 17 years old. His findings emphasized the relevance of the SEQ–C with a satisfactory internal consistency, producing a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 for the total self-efficacy scale and between 0.85 and 0.88 for the subscale scores (Tan & Chellappan, 2018, p:3). Recently, in Iran, Habibi, Tahmassian, and Ferrer-Wreder (2014) translated the SEQ–C into Persian and tested it in a sample of 946 Iranian students. The results supported Muris's (2002) findings and noted that the Persian version of the SEQ–C was found to be a valid and reliable measure of self-efficacy among the Iranian students, therefore suggesting that the SEQ–C can be used cross-culturally. Vashani et al (2015) examined the validity and reliability of the instrument in a sample group of 60 children with ages ranging from 8 to 12 years old. Their findings emphasized the relevance of the SEQ–C with a satisfactory internal consistency, producing a Cronbach's alpha of 0.74 for the total self-efficacy scale. It contains 23 items and three components including social self-efficacy (Qs 1-8), educational self-efficacy (Qs 9-16) and emotional self-efficacy (Qs 17-23) on a 5-point Likert scale (1'not at all' to 5 'very much') with greater scores reflecting greater self-efficacy. The range of grades for social and academic self-efficacy is from 8 to 40, for emotional self-efficacy is from 7 to 35 and for total self- efficacy is 23 to 115. The social self-efficacy subscales test the ability to establish relationships with peers, decisiveness and social indicators. The educational self-efficacy subscales examine the ability to manage learning behaviors, domination of course subjects and

fulfill educational expectations. The emotional self-efficacy subscales test one's ability to control negative emotions. In the present study, its validity was verified using factor analysis and its reliability was calculated by Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84 for the total self-efficacy scale and between 0.81 and 0.86 for the subscale scores (as shown in Table NO 1).

Table 1: The Cronbach's alpha coefficients

Variable	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
sociol self-efficacy	0.81
academic self-efficacy	0.86
emotional self-efficacy	0.82
entire questionnaire	0.84

Before the beginning of the course, a pretest was performed for all students (42 students). In order to understand the effect of storytelling on students' self-efficacy, three storybooks were given to three students every Saturday and Monday. This means that 6 students received the story books each week. In the early days, students were called to receive the book by the teacher. But at subsequent sessions, students volunteered to receive the books.Students who received the storybooks should read it at home and express what they have understood from the storybook in the next meeting in the classroom. This was done twice a week for 7 weeks. Storybooks are usually selected from champions of Shahnameh, religious, friendship with nature and animals and successful people. At the first and second sessions, the volunteer students were seldom, but from the third session, they increased.

Findings

Before analyzing the covariance test, it is necessary to examine the statistical assumptions for covariance analysis. The most important statistical assumptions for analyzing covariance are as follows:

1- No difference between the pre-test scores of the two groups.

2- Existence of a relationship between pre-test and post-test scores.

3- Homogeneity of variance test.

4- Homogeneity of regression test.

5- Existence of a linear relationship between pre-test and post-test scores in experimental and control groups and the slope of this line is equal.

The existence of a linear relationship between pre-test and post-test scores in experimental and control groups, the homogeneity of variance and regression test and the linear relationship between pre-test and post-test in two groups are reported in table 2 by using data scatter graph.

Table 2: The homogeneity of variance and regression test

Variable	homogeneity of variance		homogeneity of slopes	
	significance level	F	significance level	F
Social self-efficacy	0.266	1.274	0.354	3.339
educational self-efficacy	0.111	2.653	0.236	1.381
emotional self-efficacy	0.171	1.941	0.159	1.374
self-efficacy	0.263	1.289	0.064	3.707

As shown in Table 2, the difference between the gradients of regression lines is not significant in any of these cases, which means that the assumption of homogeneity of regression is confirmed. The homogeneity assumptions for variances are also confirmed as reported in the table.

The scatter graphs (numbers 1 to 4) show the relationship between variables in the pre-test and post-test (by control and test groups). As shown in the graphs, all relations are linear and therefore the assumption of covariance analysis is confirmed.

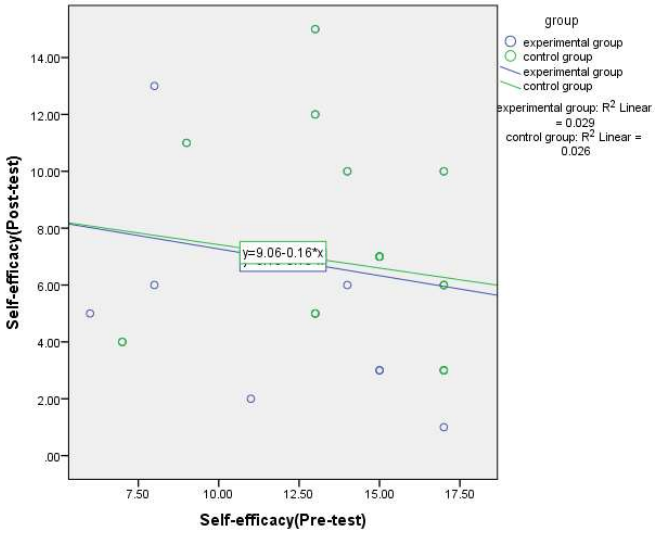

Diagram 1: Self-efficacy (pre-test and post-test)

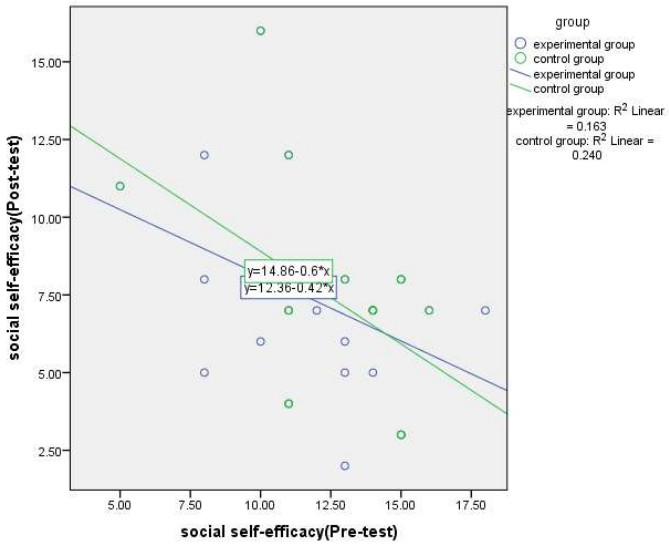

Diagram 2: Social self-efficacy (pre-test and post-test)

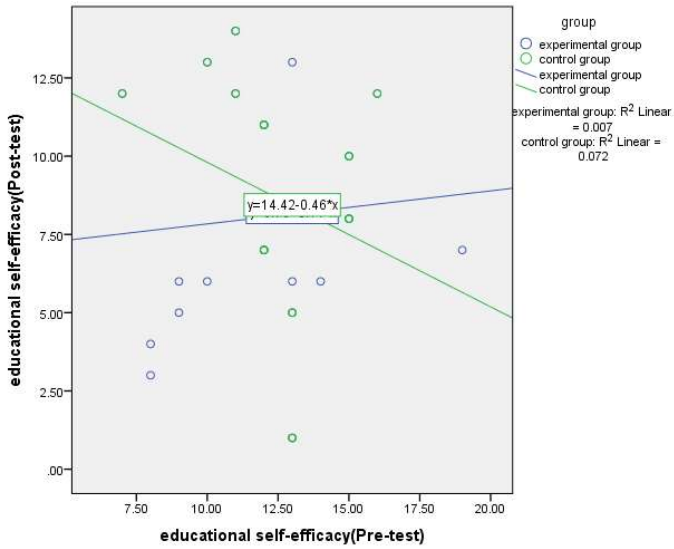

Diagram 3: Educational self-efficacy (pre-test and post-test)

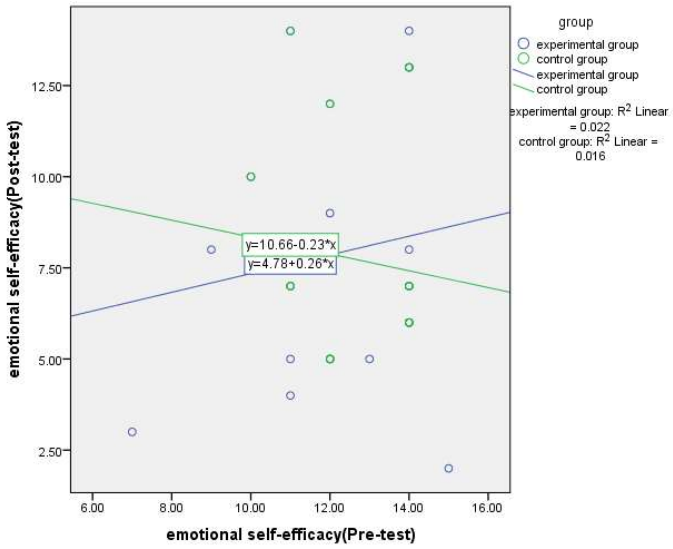

Diagram 4: Emotional self-efficacy (pre-test and post-test)

Statistical analysis of the research hypotheses

Main hypothesis: It was hypothesized that storytelling has a significant effect on students' self-efficacy.

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of self-efficacy of pre-test and post-test by the control and experimental group

Variable	Pre-test		Post-test	
	St. deviation	mean	St. deviation	mean
Experimental group	3.94	43.19	4.82	93.85
Control group	7.07	67.25	4.36	57.99

The mean of each group is equal to the sum of the scores of the answers given to the questionnaire divided into total number of students in each group.

Table 4: Covariance analysis of self-efficacy post-test scores in the control and experimental groups with pre-test control

	df	Average squares	F
Self-efficacy pre-test	1	446.388	5.039
Trial conditions	1	138.013	***1.558
Error	39	3454.850	
Total	42		

***P</001

One-way covariance analysis was used to determine the effect of storytelling on students' self-efficacy. The results show that there is a significant difference between the two experimental and control groups after adjusting the post-test scores by eliminating the

effect of the pre-test (P⟨0/01, F = 1/558).

This means that the experimental group had more self-efficacy compared to the control group.

Subsidiary hypotheses

H1: It was hypothesized that storytelling has a significant effect on students' social self-efficacy.

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation of social self-efficacy of pre-test and post-test by the control and experimental group

Variable	Pre-test		Post-test	
	St. deviation	mean	St. deviation	mean
Experimental group	2.69	17.52	1.78	30.71
Control group	3.37	21.54	3.12	17.06

Table 6: Covariance analysis of social self-efficacy post-test scores in the control and experimental groups with pre-test control

	df	Average squares	F
Social self-efficacy pre-test	1	20.307	3.454
Trial conditions	1	7.336	***1.525
Error	39	544.645	
Total	42		

***P</001

The results of one-way covariance analysis show that there is a significant difference between the two experimental and control groups after the adjustment of post-test scores by eliminating the effect of the pre-test. The moderate mean scores of social self-efficacy suggest that the experimental group had more social self-efficacy than the control group (P⟨0/01, F = 1/525).

H2: It was hypothesized that storytelling has a significant effect on students' educational self-efficacy.

Table 7: Mean and standard deviation of educational self-efficacy of pre-test and post-test by the control and experimental group

Variable	Pre-test		Post-test	
	SD	mean	SD	mean
Experimental group	3.05	13.04	2.54	34.85
Control group	2.65	19.11	1.59	17.53

Table 8: Covariance analysis of educational self-efficacy post-test scores in the control and experimental groups with pre-test control

	df	Average squares	F
Educational self-efficacy pre-test	1	10.589	1.560
Trial conditions	1	37.654	***1.993
Error	39	736.935	
Total	42		

***P</001

The results of one-way covariance analysis show that there is a significant difference between the two experimental and control groups. The experimental group had more educational self-efficacy than the control group (P⟨0/01, F = 1/993).

H3: It was hypothesized that storytelling has a significant effect on students' emotional self-efficacy.

Table 9: Mean and standard deviation of emotional self-efficacy of pre-test and post-test by the control and experimental group

Variable	Pre-test		Post-test	
	SD	mean	SD	mean
Experimental group	2.25	12.61	2.00	28.28
Control group	2.26	26.60	1.84	23.40

Table 10: Covariance analysis of emotional self-efficacy post-test scores in the control and experimental groups with pre-test control

	df	Average squares	F
Emotional self-efficacy pre-test	1	243.693	26.631
Trial conditions	1	18.871	***2.062
Error	39	356.878	
Total	42		

***P</001

The results of one-way covariance analysis show that there is a significant difference between the two experimental and control groups. The experimental group had more emotional self-efficacy than the control group (P⟨0/01, F = 2/062).

Discussion and Conclusion

Storytelling has become an imperative pedagogical approach to effective learning. While telling a story students not only have to initiate new ideas but to shape their own experiences, reflect how they fit into their society and construct meaning for themselves (Liu, Wu, Chen, Tsait & Lin, 2013, p: 450). The result of the main hypothesis of the research showed that storytelling has a significant effect on the self-efficacy of the fourth-grade students of Shahid Akbarabadi primary school. As shown in Tables 3 and 4, the mean scores of the post-test experimental group is higher than the mean scores of the control group. This

means that the overall self-efficacy of the experimental group was increased. Possessing all sources of self-efficacy is probably related to higher self-efficacy beliefs (Hampton and Mason, 2003). This is in line with studies carried out by Behnam Vashani et al (2015) and Sadeghi Sayyah (2012). As we mentioned in the theoretical basis, Bandura defined self-efficacy as an important aspect of individual control and one's beliefs and prejudices about his/her abilities to perform assignments. In fact, this result indicates that storytelling has increased students' beliefs in their abilities and upgraded their control power over their behavior. The results of hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant difference between the two experimental and control groups. The moderate mean scores of social self-efficacy suggest that the experimental group had more social self-efficacy than the control group. This means storytelling has a significant direct effect on social self-efficacy of the experimental group. This finding is in line with the finding of Withers, (2011) and Ceylan, (2016). According to Muris, the social self-efficacy indicates the ability to establish relationships with peers. The results of the second hypothesis show that storytelling has a significant direct effect on students' educational self-efficacy. The experimental group had more educational self-efficacy than the control group. This finding is consistent with the results of the studies done by Nair et al, 2014 and Zamzam et al, 2016. The results of hypothesis one revealed that storytelling has a significant effect on students' emotional self-efficacy which is consistent with the finding of Khantreejitranon (2018). According to Muris' view, the educational self-efficacy means the ability to manage learning behaviors and fulfill educational expectations.

People who have high self-efficacy see threatening situations as which they can control (Karimi and Karimipoor, 2017). Self-efficacy beliefs are vital to all students (Haegele and Hodge 2016). A teacher who promotes high student's self-efficacy can have a positive impact on students' motivation and behavior (Usher and Pajares 2008). In order to succeed in school activities, students need to be able to regulate their behavior, exercise control over their learning, and manage their learning environment. The factor with the highest predictive power in relation to school outcomes is self-efficacy (Bertills, Granlund, Dahlström & Augustine, 2018). Vashani et al (2015) maintained that Storytelling can increase self- efficacy in children. Stories can be effective in terms of social, emotional, and ethical education, and they will pass many regulations, social norms and living instructions. Stories play an effective role in how children behave. Listening to story is more pleasant than reading it alone. This is where the role of school and reading is raised collectively (Momjazi, 2014). Considering the importance of the effect of storytelling on reducing inappropriate behaviors and

increasing the students' self-efficacy, it is suggested to teachers to read stories in the classroom for students, encourage them to read stories at home and give the storybook to the students as a gift or award. Education in Iran today, more than ever, requires the development of research-based. It is expected that experts and educational planners pay attention to the role of the story in writing and reading lesson books and recognize the great necessity of setting a time for storytelling in the class as soon as possible. In the end, the authors would like to thank Mrs. Fatemeh Farahmand, the teacher of fourth-grade experimental group.

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