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**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy  
beliefs and their students achievement**

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## **Content**

### **Abstract**

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1. Self efficacy**

##### **1.1.1. Sources of Efficacy**

##### **1.1.2. Effects of Self-efficacy**

#### **1.2. Teacher Self Efficacy**

##### **1.2.1. Teacher efficacy measurement**

### **2. Method**

#### **2.1. Participants**

#### **2.2. Instruments**

##### **2.2.1. The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale**

##### **2.2.2. The Evaluation Form**

#### **2.3. Procedure**

#### **2.4. Data Analysis**

### **3. Results**

#### **3.1. Descriptive statistics**

#### **3.2. Correlation analyses**

### **4. Discussion**

### **5. Conclusion**

**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy beliefs and their students achievement**

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**Abstract**

This study investigates the relationship between English language teachers efficacy beliefs, measured by Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), and their students' achievement. Participants included 168 English language teachers teaching at the urban public schools in Iran. Data were analyzed through Pearson correlation. Findings indicated a low but statistically significant positive correlation between teachers' efficacy beliefs and students' achievement. Results of the study and their pedagogical implications are discussed.

**Keywords:** Teacher efficacy, English language teachers, students' achievement.

**1. Introduction**

Teachers have a very crucial role in the success or failure of each educational system. In fact, "one of the most often-expressed statement about teaching is that nothing is more central to student learning than the quality of teacher" (Galluzzo, 2005, p. 142). Also, according to Sanders and Horn (1998) the teacher effects on students' achievement are "additive and cumulative with little evidence those subsequent effective teachers can offset the effects of ineffective ones" (p. 32). Further, they maintained that "regardless of race, students who are assigned disproportionately to ineffective teachers will be severely academically handicapped relative to students with other teacher assignment patterns" (p. 254). Therefore, they concluded that "educational assessment that does not address

**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy beliefs and their students achievement**  
**by Hossein Navidinai, Iman Mousavi, & Mohsen Shirazizade**

teacher effectiveness is at the very least, seriously limited in its ability to serve its primary purpose" (p. 255).

Teacher efficacy belief is one of the important factors that have proved to be "powerfully related to many meaningful educational outcomes such as teacher persistence, enthusiasm, commitment and instructional behavior, as well as student outcomes such as achievement, motivation, and self efficacy belief" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, p. 783). Further, discussing the significant role of school environment as an agency for cultivating students' cognitive self efficacy, Bandura (1994) maintained that "the task of creating learning environment conducive to the development of cognitive skills rests heavily on the talents and self efficacy of teachers"(p. 11). Teachers who have a strong sense of efficacy about their capabilities can motivate their students and improve their cognitive development. In contrast, those who have a low sense of efficacy favor a "custodial orientation that relies heavily on negative sanctions to get students to study". (p. 11).

While the effects of teacher efficacy on their performance in the classroom have been well documented, few studies in the literature have investigated the relationship between English language teacher efficacy and their students' achievement. The present study is going to address this issue by investigating the relationship among the three facets of teacher efficacy and student achievement.

### **1.1. Self efficacy**

The question of self has always intrigued and confused human beings from the beginning of time, and the studies that have addressed this issue have been increased. According to Bandura (1999), the study of self processes have prevailed different domains of psychology because most external influences do not affect human functioning directly, but through 'intermediary self processes'. Further, he maintained that personal factors are very much involved in "regulating intentional processes, schematic processing of

**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy beliefs and their students achievement**

**by Hossein Navidinai, Iman Mousavi, & Mohsen Shirazizade**

experience, memory representation and reconstruction, cognitively based motivation, emotion activation, psychobiological functioning and the efficacy with which cognitive and behavioral competencies are executed in the transaction of everyday life” (p. 154).

Bandura (1994) has defined Perceived self-efficacy as “people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (p. 2). Also, he believes that through four major processes which are cognitive, motivational, and affective and selection ones, self efficacy determines how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. In 1999, he observed that efficacy beliefs form the foundation of human agency. Because if people do not believe that they can produce desired results by their actions, they will have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties.

**1.1.1. Sources of Efficacy**

According to Bandura (1994, 1999), self-efficacy beliefs are constructed from four main sources of information: The first way of creating a strong sense of efficacy is through “mastery experience”. “This can be achieved by tackling problems in successive, attainable steps. Success builds a robust belief in one’s efficacy. Failures undermine it, especially in earlier phases of self-development” (Bandura, 1999, p. 181). The second beneficial way of developing and strengthening our own efficacy beliefs is what Bandura named it “vicarious experiences”. Seeing others perform a behavior with no adverse effects may lead us to believe in our own capabilities, but observing other people failing to perform a certain course of action despite high effort demotivates us and lowers our perception of our own efficacy (Bandura, 1999). The third way of strengthening people’s belief in their efficacy is “social persuasion”. “if people are persuaded that they have what it takes to succeed, they exert more effort and are more perseverant than if they harbor self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when problems arise” (Bandura, 1999, p. 181). Finally, people rely on their physical and emotional status to judge about

**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy beliefs and their students achievement**  
**by Hossein Navidinai, Iman Mousavi, & Mohsen Shirazizade**

their capabilities. Physical and affective states influence people's belief of self-efficacy, since people rely on these factors to judge their capabilities (Bandura, 1999).

**1.1.2. Effects of Self-efficacy**

Bandura (1993, 1994, 1997, 1999), maintained that personal efficacy beliefs regulate human functioning through cognitive, motivational, emotional and choice processes. As Bandura (1994) puts it "most courses of action are initially organized in thought. People's beliefs in their efficacy shape the types of anticipatory scenarios, they construct and rehearse" (p.4). A success scenario evolves from an optimistic and positive view toward one's efficacy and, in turn, leads to positive guides and supports for performance. Whereas, one who has developed a pessimistic, defeatist, and skeptical view toward the result of his actions mostly visualizes failure scenarios and this cognitive condition serves as a stumbling block to his otherwise achievable goals and accomplishments.

Further, as Bandura (1999) puts it, most human motivation is cognitively generated and efficacy beliefs play a central role in the 'self regulation' of motivation. He mentioned three types of cognitive motivators namely, 'causal attributions', 'outcome expectancies', and 'cognized goals', around which different theories have been built. The corresponding theories to these three motivators are attribution theory, expectancy-value theory, and goal theory, respectively. People who have highly efficacious mostly attribute their failures to either inappropriate circumstances or their insufficient effort while those who harbor a low level of self-efficacy, most of the time; ascribe their failures to their low competence. These causal attributions influence people's motivation and performance mainly through personal efficacy beliefs.

In addition, when people start to take action, their performance is directly controlled by the goals they have set. The more challenging and explicit the goal, the more the motivation is enhanced and sustained. Also, it is partly on the basis of efficacy beliefs

**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy beliefs and their students achievement**  
**by Hossein Navidinai, Iman Mousavi, & Mohsen Shirazizade**

that people select “which goal challenges to undertake, how much efforts to invest and how long to persevere in the face of difficulties” (1999, p. 182).

Furthermore, people's self efficacy beliefs influence how much stress and depression, and anxiety they experience in threatening and difficult situations. Bandura (1999), maintained that efficacy beliefs regulate emotional status “by influencing how threats are cognitively perceived, by supporting coping actions that alter the threats, by exercising control over perturbing thought patterns, and by alleviating aversive affective states” (p. 183).

## **1.2. Teacher Self Efficacy**

The notion of self efficacy holds important implications for the teaching profession. This notion has been defined as teacher's belief about his/her capabilities to bring about positive effects on students learning (Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). Teacher efficacy is comprised of two dimensions: Personal Teacher Efficacy (PTE) which refers to the teacher's belief that he/she can bring about positive effects on students' learning, and General Teacher Efficacy (GTE) which refers to the teachers' belief that the teaching profession in general can bring about student change (Chacon, 2005). This notion has proved to be “powerfully related to many meaningful educational outcomes such as teacher persistence, enthusiasm, commitment and instructional behavior, as well as student outcomes such as achievement, motivation, and self efficacy belief” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, p. 783). Further, talking about the significant role of school environment as an agency for cultivating students' cognitive self efficacy, Bandura (1994) maintained that “the task of creating learning environment conducive to the development of cognitive skills, rests heavily on the talents and self efficacy of teachers”(p. 11). Teachers who have a strong sense of efficacy about their capabilities can motivate their students and improve their cognitive development. However, those who have a low sense

**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy beliefs and their students achievement**

**by Hossein Navidinai, Iman Mousavi, & Mohsen Shirazizade**

of efficacy favor a “custodial orientation that relies heavily on negative sanctions to get students to study”. (p. 11). Similarly, Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2000) quote from Ross et al (1996) arguing that “a teacher’s sense of efficacy will determine the amount of effort he or she puts into teaching, the degree of persistence when confronted with difficulties, and the task choices made.” (p. 651).

The results of many studies in the literature have proved the effects of teacher efficacy on different aspects of teacher performance as well. For example the findings of the studies conducted by Brouwers and Tomic (2000) and Fires, Humman, and Olivarez (2006) confirmed that teacher efficacy is related to teacher burnout.

In addition, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, and Malone (2006), examined the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, their job satisfaction, and students' academic achievement. Their findings indicated that teachers' personal efficacy beliefs affected their job satisfaction and students' academic achievement.

Likewise, Ross (1992) investigated the relationship between student achievement, teacher efficacy, an interaction with assigned coaches on a sample of 18 grade 7 and 8 history teachers in 36 classes. The result of the study indicated that students' achievement was higher in classrooms of teachers who had more contact with their coaches, and in classrooms of teachers with greater confidence in the effectiveness of education. Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2000) also found that self-efficacy was positively related to “extra-role behavior” toward the team and the organization.

In other study, Ghaith, and Shaaban (1999) investigated the relationship between perceptions of teaching concerns, teacher efficacy, and selected teacher characteristics on 292 Lebanese teachers. The results of their study revealed that beginning teachers and those with low sense of personal efficacy were concerned about the task of teaching and

**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy beliefs and their students achievement**

**by Hossein Navidinai, Iman Mousavi, & Mohsen Shirazizade**

the impact they make as teachers more than their highly experienced and more personally efficacious counterparts.

Finally, Di Fabio and Taralla (2006) investigated the relations between teacher self-efficacy, social demographic variables (age, years of teaching and type of school) and level of job involvement, organizational commitment, and organizational satisfaction. The result of their statistical analysis confirmed the correlated nature of the self-efficacy's construct with the constructs of job involvement, affective commitment and organizational satisfaction.

**1.2.1. Teacher efficacy measurement**

According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), there have been lots of efforts to capture and measure teacher efficacy, and lots of scales such as The Rand Measure (Armor et al., 1976), Responsibility for student achievement (Guskey, 1981), Teacher locus of control (Rose and Medway, 1981), The Webb Scale (Ashton et al., 1982), The Ashton Vignettes (Ashton, Buhr, & Crocker, 1984), Gibson and Dembo's teacher efficacy scale (Gibson and Dembo, 1984), Subject-matter specific modifications of Gibson and Denbo instrument (Riggs and Enochs, 1990), Brief eclectic measure (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989), Bandura's self efficacy scale (Bandura, 1997) have been developed. Having reviewed all of these attempts, they developed a 24 item scale which measure three facets of teacher efficacy. This instrument presents the items on a 9 level likert scale which reflects the degree to which the participants agree or disagree with each of the 24 items. The reliabilities that Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) reported for the three facets of teacher efficacy were .91 for efficacy for instructional strategies, .90 for efficacy for classroom management, and .87 for efficacy for students' engagement. Moreover, in order to test the validity of the scale, the authors correlate it with the earlier measures of teacher efficacy. Total scores on the 24-item scale were positively correlated to both Rand items, and an abbreviated version of the

**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy beliefs and their students achievement****by Hossein Navidinai, Iman Mousavi, & Mohsen Shirazizade**

Gibson and Dembo (1984) Teacher Efficacy Scale. The authors concluded that "The OSTES could be considered reasonably valid and reliable" (p. 801).

**2. Method****2.1. Participants**

The sample for this study consisted of 168 (147 male and 35 female) junior and senior high school teachers. Teachers in the sample had 2 to 12 years of teaching experience with a mean of 5.14 years, and ranged in age from 23 to 40 (mean, 27.3). Within this sample, 21 (12.5) held a master degree, 133 (79.2) had a bachelor's degree, and the remaining 14 (8.3) had an associate degree.

**2.2. Instruments****2.2.1. The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale**

The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) was used to measure teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. TSES is composed of 24 items, assessed along a 9 point likert scale from 1 to 9, ranging from "Nothing" to "Great Deal". Each of the three subscales of teacher efficacy i.e. efficacy for instructional strategies, efficacy for classroom management, efficacy for students' engagement is assessed by 8 statements. The reported reliabilities for the three facets of teacher efficacy were .91 for efficacy for instructional strategies, .90 for efficacy for classroom management, and .87 for efficacy for students' engagement (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2001). Moreover, in order to test the validity of the scale, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) correlated it with the earlier measures of teacher efficacy. Total scores on the 24-item scale were positively correlated to both Rand items, and an abbreviated version of the Gibson and Dembo (1984) Teacher Efficacy Scale. The authors concluded that "The OSTES could be considered reasonably valid and reliable" (p. 801).

**2.2.2. The Evaluation Form**

The teachers were asked to fill this Evaluation Form by entering the mean scores of their students' final exam anonymously. Further, this form was used to collect the teachers'

**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy beliefs and their students achievement****by Hossein Navidinai, Iman Mousavi, & Mohsen Shirazizade**

demographic information including, their age, gender, teaching experience, affiliation, and grade.

**2.3. Procedure**

Data collection was conducted during a period of 8 weeks. Two sources of data were compiled and reviewed in this study: results of TSES and Evaluation Form for the 168 participants in this study. The TSES and EF were administered to each participant after receiving voluntary consent. Participants were asked to rate themselves on a five- on nine-point likert scale of TSES from 1 to 9, and to fill the EF.

**2.4. Data Analysis**

Scores from TSES and EF were computed and entered into SPSS. Data were examined to ensure that they met assumptions for correlational analysis. These assumptions according to Hatch and Lazarton (1991) include accuracy of data entry, linearity, and normality. First descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. The mean and standard deviations were compiled and skewness was computed. Distributions were also examined using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. To answer the study question, correlational analyses were used.

**3. Results****3.1. Descriptive statistics**

The descriptive statistics for self-report efficacy and student achievement are shown in table 1. The reliability of TSES for this sample was .875. The mean in the three subscales indicate that participants judged themselves more efficacious for instructional strategies (m. 59.8) than for classroom management (m. 57.7) and student engagement (m. 56.8). In other words, they perceived themselves more efficacious and capable in designing instructional strategies, and managing the classroom than engaging the students in classroom activities.

**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy beliefs and their students achievement**  
**by Hossein Navidinai, Iman Mousavi, & Mohsen Shirazizade**

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics for three facets of teacher efficacy construct, and student achievement*

		Instructional strategies	Classroom management	Student engagement	Student achievement
N	Valid	168	168	168	168
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		59.8333	57.7917	56.8333	15.5161
Std. Deviation		5.54423	6.53214	7.29422	1.71200
Minimum		49.00	44.00	40.00	11
Maximum		72.00	71.00	70.00	19.50
Sum		10052.00	9709.00	9548.00	2774.70

### 3.2. Correlation analyses

In order to answer this question of this study Pearson correlation was performed between the total scores of teacher efficacy and student achievement. The results, as presented in table 2, indicated a significant positive relationship (.358) between these variables.

Table 2. *Correlation between teacher efficacy and student achievement*

		Teacher efficacy	Student achievement
Teacher efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.358(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	168	168
Student achievement	Pearson Correlation	.358(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	168	168

Then, three different correlations were performed between each of the three facets of teacher efficacy and student achievement. The results indicated that there were significant

**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy beliefs and their students achievement**  
**by Hossein Navidinai, Iman Mousavi, & Mohsen Shirazizade**

relationships between all of the three facets of teacher efficacy and student achievement, albeit the correlations were low. The degree of correlation was .366, .251, and .274 for classroom management, instructional strategies and student engagement respectively. Tables 3, 4, 5 summarize the results.

Table 3. *Correlation between classroom management facet of teacher efficacy and student achievement*

		Student achievement	Classroom management
Students achievement	Pearson Correlation	1	.366(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	168	168
Classroom management	Pearson Correlation	.366(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	168	168

Table 4. *Correlation between instructional strategy facet of teacher efficacy and student achievement*

		Student achievement	Instructional strategies
Student achievement	Pearson Correlation	1	.251(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	168	168
Instructional strategies	Pearson Correlation	.251(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	168	168

**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy beliefs and their students achievement**  
**by Hossein Navidinai, Iman Mousavi, & Mohsen Shirazizade**

Table 5. *Correlation between student engagement facet of teacher efficacy and student achievement*

		Student achievement	Student engagement
Student achievement	Pearson Correlation	1	.274(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	168	168
Students engagement	Pearson Correlation	.274(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	168	168

All in all, the correlational analyses indicated that there is a significant positive correlation (.358) between the total scores of teacher efficacy and student achievement. Further, all three facets of teacher efficacy were significantly correlated with the students' achievement. The results indicated that classroom management, students' engagement, and instructional strategies have the highest correlation with students' achievements respectively.

#### **4. Discussion**

Data analysis using Pearson correlation indicated a significant positive correlation (.358) between students' achievement and teacher efficacy. Further, each of the three facets of teacher efficacy i.e. classroom management, instructional strategies, and students' engagement had a significant positive correlation with students' achievement (.366, .251, .274, respectively).

These findings are consistent with some of the previous studies which have found a significant relationship between teacher efficacy and increased students achievement (Ross, 2002; Carpara et al. 2006). The results are also in line with Bandura (1994)'s observation that teachers who have a strong sense of efficacy about their capabilities can motivate their students and improve their cognitive development. However, those who

**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy beliefs and their students achievement****by Hossein Navidinai, Iman Mousavi, & Mohsen Shirazizade**

have a low sense of efficacy favor a “custodial orientation that relies heavily on negative sanctions to get students to study”. (p. 11). Similarly, Ross et al. (1996) maintained that “a teacher’s sense of efficacy will determine the amount of effort he or she puts into teaching, the degree of persistence when confronted with difficulties, and the task choices made.” (Quoted in Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2000, p.651).

Any published study which argued against the existence of significant relationship between teacher efficacy and student achievement could not be found in the literature.

**5. Conclusion**

The notion of efficacy influences different aspects of our life and teaching is not an exception. The results of this study indicated that the three facets of teacher efficacy i.e. classroom management, instructional strategies, and students’ engagement had a significant positive correlation with students’ achievement (.366, .251, .274, respectively). These findings are mostly consistent with the pervious research findings concerning the relationship between teacher efficacy and students’ achievement. Considering the dearth of studies in language teaching context, this study adds new information about the relationship of English language teachers’ efficacy and their students’ achievement. It also has implications for the studies conducted on other types of teachers’ characteristics such as teacher burn out, teacher job satisfaction, teacher anxiety and stress, and teacher involvement, as well as teachers’ pre-service and in-service programs etc. We hope that this research stimulates additional exploration of the relationship between teacher efficacy and student achievement.

**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy beliefs and their students achievement**

**by Hossein Navidinai, Iman Mousavi, & Mohsen Shirazizade**

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**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy beliefs and their students achievement**  
by Hossein Navidinai, Iman Mousavi, & Mohsen Shirazizade

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**On the relationship between Iranian English language teachers' efficacy beliefs and their students achievement**

**by Hossein Navidinai, Iman Mousavi, & Mohsen Shirazizade**

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