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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY AND REDUCED  
SAD OF FIRST-GRADE STUDENTS IN TEHRAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and reduced SAD of first-grade students in Tehran. The studied population included 3432 teachers. For this purpose, schools were divided into five geographical categories (northeast, northwest, central, southeast and southwest). Then, 345 teachers were selected by Cochran's formula. Finally, 280 students with SAD were selected in the second phase. Schwarzer's GSE and teacher evaluation form were used to evaluate teachers. Espada's CSAS as well as SCAS were used to measure student SAD. A post-test was performed on students with SAD. Data analysis and statistical calculations showed that teacher self-efficacy considerably influenced on students. The results showed a significant difference in pre-test and post-test scores of students with SAD, indicating positive teacher self-efficacy which significantly reduced student SAD.

**Keywords: Self-efficacy, separation anxiety, positive teacher-student interactions.**

**INTRODUCTION**

The significance of education and its key role is undeniable in growth and development of human societies; a glance at factors influencing the growth of developed countries reveals their efficient and effective education systems [1]. The beginning of formal education is the origin

of great change in the lives of children. In first days of school, a child may have many questions in mind for which he needs clear answers; otherwise, he will feel irrational and intense fear. This may manifest as school refusal or separation fear and distress, and even separation anxiety

disorder (SAD). Thus, teachers have a remarkable task. Those teachers with high self-efficacy, practical commitment, and a sense of responsibility can undertake their duties best and increase efficiency, effectiveness and productivity of educational system. In literature, little is known on the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and reduced student SAD. There is a significant relationship between teacher self-efficacy and how the teacher treats students [2,3]. Teacher self-efficacy is the only trait which has strong relationship with student achievement [4]. This study examines the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and reduced student SAD. This study can provide opportunities for reform efforts in schools by top management of education system.

### **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

Self-efficacy is a key variable in Bandura's social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy refers to one's beliefs in his capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required for management in situations which will happen in the future. Self-efficacy is a constructive capability by which cognitive, social, emotional and behavioral skills are organized to achieve different goals effectively [5]. Self-efficacy is also defined as a kind of self-confidence [6] or a kind of self-esteem associated with a certain task [6]. Bandura defines self-

efficacy as one's perception of the degree of control over his life [7]. Cassidy and Eachus (1998) describe self-efficacy as one's belief in his ability for a successful behavior or task [8]. Total self-efficacy refers to expected skills of teachers in actions leading to development of students [9]. Research has shown a positive relationship between teacher self-efficacy and effort and persistence of teachers in problems [8], professional commitment and motivation of students [8]. In addition, studies show that teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to use student-centered methods, while teachers with low self-efficacy tend to use teacher-centered strategies. Not all children are the same; family, the relationship between members of the family, culture and environment influence the psychological growth and personality of children. Therefore, teachers deal with children with different personalities. Some children may suffer anxiety. Literally, anxiety means distress, agitation, restlessness and fidgety. Anxious person may be restless to sit or stand in a place for a long time. The symptoms of anxiety vary from one person to another. It is believed that events and problems do not cause anxiety or stress; this is one's interpretations of events that lead to problems. Beck believes that anxiety is a cognitive damage caused by further and

frequent assessment of risk in one or two cases of dimensions including excessive estimate of a fearful event, excessive estimation of the severity or intensity of a frightening event, underestimation of abilities to deal with problem, and undermining of any potential help from others [10]. In separation from people to whom they are attached, children suffering SAD experience agitation and avoid separation [11]. SAD is one type of anxiety disorders in children. SAD is prevalent in 3.5% of cases in pre-adolescence. SAD is twice more common in boys than girls [12]. A child with school phobia does not go to school continuously and parents are aware of this. School phobia occurs for various reasons, including vulnerability and natural emotional reactivity, mood (shyness and fearfulness), stressful events occurring in home and school, and accumulation of psychological pressures [13].

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Taleb Pour et al (2012) studied children's SAD as one of the most common anxiety disorders [14]. Abbasi et al (2010) evaluated the effectiveness of parent-child interaction on SAD symptoms. Using a correlation method, Padashi (2009) examined the relationship between job satisfaction and self-efficacy of elementary school teachers [15]. Examining the relationship between educational quality of

primary school teachers and their self-efficacy in science class with emphasis on Flanders method, Noori (2009) evaluated teacher-student interaction and its correlation with student achievement [17]. Chesnut and Cullen (2014) evaluated the effects of self-efficacy, expectations of future workplace and emotional intelligence on teacher commitment [18]. Salami (2010) measured emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, mental health and attitudes of students [19]. Mollie et al. (2006) evaluated parent-child interaction for treatment of children SAD. Hood and Eyeberg (2003) studied the results of parent-child interaction therapy; maternal reports supported the treatment after three to six years [20].

#### Application and Hypothesis

The findings of this study can be used to improve performance of the education system. The hypothesis examined in this study is that there is a significant relationship between teacher self-efficacy and reduced student SAD.

#### Variables

This study examined the relationship between self-efficacy and other variables. Although variables such as gender, age, experience, education, marital status, etc. can also be effective, they are not considered here. Self-efficacy is predictor and student SAD is criterion.

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**Population, Sample Size and Sampling**

The studied population included all primary school teachers and students. There were 21 departments of education in Tehran (19 urban and 3 rural departments). The public and private first-grade classes included 1773 classes for boys and 1638 classes for girls. The first-grade students included 50244 boys and 46997 girls. Education level of teachers ranged from diploma (413), associate (1353), bachelor (1562) and master (105). The studied teachers included 3433 (3239 female and 194 male) first-grade teachers. Sample size (345) was determined by Cochran formula. Stratified sampling method was used with proportional assignment to assign random samples to different categories. Schools were divided into five geographical categories including northeast schools, northwest schools, central schools, southeast schools and southwest schools.

**MATERIALS AND SCORING**

In this study, a questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: a) description; b) general questions; c) main questions. The used questionnaires included Schwarzer's general self-efficacy (GSE) scale and teacher evaluation form for teachers and Espada's CSAS (children's separation anxiety scale) and Spence children anxiety scale (SCAS) for students.

**RESULTS****Descriptive Analysis**

In this section, descriptive statistics, including central and distribution parameters such as frequency, diagrams and tables were used to describe data. The samples included 324 (94%) female and 21 (6%) male teachers. Majority of samples (144, 42%) were 30-35 years old and minority of samples (7, 2%) were 45-50 years old. Most samples (145, 42%) had 5-10 years of experience and the least samples (20, 6%) had 15-20 years of experience. The highest number of samples (210, 61%) had bachelor degree and the lower number of samples (30, 9%) had master degree. Schools were divided into five geographical categories. The number of schools, students, classes and teachers as well as the prevalence of SAD was calculated for each category.

**Inferential Analysis**

The first category included northeast schools in districts 1, 3, 4, and 8. In district 1, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 37 to 39. In district 3, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 37 to 39. In district 4, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 37 to 38. In district 8, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 37 to 40. The second category included northwest schools in districts 2, 5, 9, and 10. In district 2, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 37 to 40. In district 5, teacher

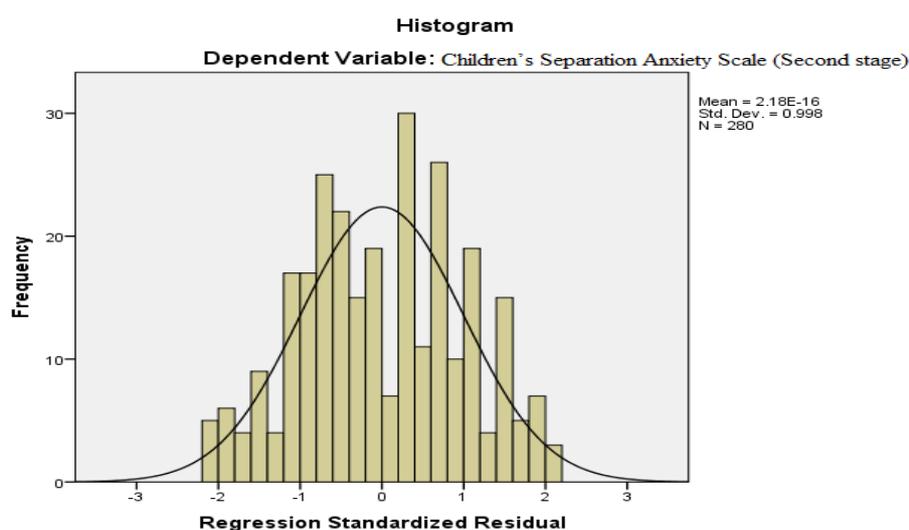
self-efficacy ranged from 35 to 40. In district 9, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 37 to 40. In district 10, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 37 to 40. The third category included schools in districts 6, 7, 11, and 12. In district 6, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 36 to 40. In district 7, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 36 to 40. In district 11, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 35 to 39. In district 12, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 36 to 37. The fourth category included southeast schools in districts 13, 14, and 15. In district 13, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 35 to 37. In district 14, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 35 to 39. In district 15, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 36 to 38. The fifth category included southwest schools in districts 16, 17, 18, and 19. In district 16, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 35 to 37. In district 17, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 35 to 38. In district 18, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 36 to 38. In district

19, teacher self-efficacy ranged from 36 to 40. For each of these districts, student SAD was calculated in relation to teacher self-efficacy and the results were compared to the tables.

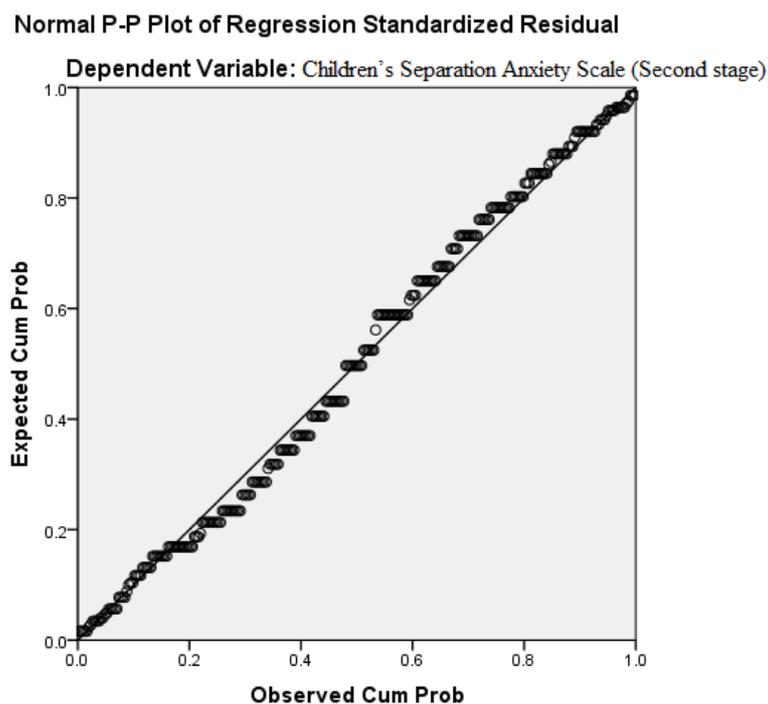
### Relationship between total teacher self-efficacy and total student SAD

To examine the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and student SAD, descriptive characteristics of these two variables were given for the first and second phase; then, the correlation between teacher self-efficacy and student SAD was examined. Finally, the results of regression were presented for the teacher self-efficacy and student SAD in the second phase. The histogram shown in Figure 1 supports the assumed normal distribution of the population.

As Figure 2 shows, student SAD was normally distributed for any value of teacher self-efficacy. Therefore, residuals were normally distributed.



Graph 1: normal distribution of student SAD in relation to teacher self-efficacy



Graph 2: Linear regression for normal distribution of student SAD in relation to teacher self-efficacy

## CONCLUSION

As findings show, positive teacher self-efficacy can be effective in solving student problems, particularly their SAD. As the results show, the mean of total teacher self-efficacy (37.546) could reduce student SAD from 104.860 to 85.20 in the second phase. In addition, results indicate a negative correlation between teacher self-efficacy and student SAD. The coefficient of correlation was  $-0.055$  ( $p = 0.000$ ) in the first phase and  $-0.197$  ( $p = 0.01$ ) in the second phase. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between teacher self-efficacy and student SAD. Moreover, ANOVA supports the overall accuracy of the regression equation where the variance explained by regression line was divided by the variance unexplained by regression line

(11.218) and the significant level was zero which is  $<0.05$ ; thus, the overall accuracy of the model is confirmed. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between teacher self-efficacy and student SAD. The negative value of the correlation suggests the effective role of independent variable (teacher self-efficacy) in prediction of regression equation. As a result, there is an inverse correlation between teacher self-efficacy and student SAD.

## REMARKS

- The Department of Education is recommended to promote self-efficacy of teachers by providing available targets, replacing unsuccessful experiences by successful experiences and improving confidence.

- It is recommended to explain the significance of self-efficacy for teachers and provide strategies for this personality.
- It is recommended to consider therapy sessions together with parents in order to acquaint them with SAD in children and the ways to deal with anxiety issues.
- It is recommended to consider training courses and therapy sessions for pre-school and primary school teachers to represent problems of children focusing on growth process in childhood, provide solutions for mental health services, realize the emotional shortcomings, defects and needs of children, and treat their separation anxiety.

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