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# Assessment of educational intervention in enhancing parenting self-efficacy in parents of primary school students

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## Abstract:

**BACKGROUND AND AIMS:** Parenting self-efficacy, which is one of the main determinants of effective and positive parental behavior, has been commonly defined as the parents' opinions and beliefs to develop their ability to affect their children in a way that raises their confidence development and adjustment. This study was performed to examine the effect of educational intervention on parenting self-efficacy in parents of primary school students.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS:** This quasi-experimental study was conducted on 104 parents of primary school students in Khomeini Shahr city, Isfahan province of Iran, in 2017. In this study, 104 parents (52 couples) of primary school students were selected and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Then, an educational intervention was implemented in the experimental group during 6 sessions of 2 h while the control group received only the usual family school education program. The parenting self-efficacy was measured before the intervention and 2 months afterward. The data were analyzed by independent *t*-test, paired *t*-test.

**RESULTS:** There was no statistically significant difference between the demographic variables of parents in both groups. Both the experimental and control groups were similar in terms of age, number of children, education, and employment as well as parenting self-efficacy. Two months after the intervention, the mean of total parenting self-efficacy, as well as play and entertainment with the child, discipline and boundaries, self-acceptance, learning and knowledge in the experimental group, were significantly higher than the control group, but the mean scores of other areas were not significantly different between the two groups ( $P > 0.05$ ).

**CONCLUSION:** Educational interventions that engage parents in group task and facilitate expression of experiences, are feasible in the primary school meetings and have a helpful effect on parenting self-efficacy.

## Keywords:

Educational intervention, parenting self-efficacy, parents, total parenting self-efficacy, Iran

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## Introduction

The primary school period is an epoch of quick psychological and physical growth and development for students. The requirement to implement effective early intervention strategies to provide students the best opportunity to prevent future

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individual and social difficulties has been widely documented.<sup>[1]</sup>

Previous studies emphasized the need for preventative interventions aimed at enhancing the parental capabilities for parents of primary school students since parents have a very important role in shaping their children's emotional, physical, and social environs and their development.

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Moreover, even after controlling demographic variables; mothers' and fathers' behaviors play a significant role in a primary school students' psychosocial development.<sup>[2]</sup>

Therefore, parenting interventions are effective in preventing psychological difficulties in children. Akre's study tested the intended effect and feasibility of parenting intervention to help parents assist their children, in which the most valued aspect was to exchange ideas and experiences with other parents going through similar difficulties and receiving a new point of view on their relationship with their children.<sup>[3]</sup>

According to Bandura's theory, "Self-Efficacy" is the main factor in conducting behavior and it affects behavior change in various aspects.<sup>[4]</sup> This theory explains that former experiences of completing tasks efficaciously are the most effective way of creating strong feelings of self-efficacy.<sup>[5]</sup> Therefore, the level of an individual's self-efficacy determines how much effort he/she is willing to exert when met with a situation.<sup>[6]</sup>

A subdivision of general self-efficacy is "parenting self-efficacy." Parenting self-efficacy is one of the main determinants of effective and positive parental behaviors that has been mostly defined as the parents' opinions and beliefs in being capable of affecting their children in a way that raises their confidence development and adjustment.<sup>[7]</sup>

Earlier researches demonstrated that parenting self-efficacy has been related to improved quality of interactions between parents and their children, increased parental friendliness and sensitivity, child obedience, lower rate of punishment, child self-worth, and child self-regulation.<sup>[8]</sup>

The findings of the recent studies revealed that parenting self-efficacy was distinctively to know when one's kid is bullied and negatively related with both victimization and bullying.<sup>[9]</sup>

Sarimski *et al.*'s study results support the relevance of parental self-efficacy for parental coping among children with intellectual disabilities, hearing impairment, or visual impairment.<sup>[10]</sup>

Previous researches recommend that intervention focused on parents and child communication may be effective at promoting parental self-efficacy and reinforcement of parents' confidence in their ability to support their children's growth and development.<sup>[11]</sup>

To the best of our knowledge, there are few studies regarding parenting self-efficacy in Iran. Furthermore, there have been limited studies focusing on the effects

of parenting interventions in improving parenting self-efficacy in details. Therefore, more studies should be conducted regarding the importance of parenting and its effect on the general health, emotional, social, and cognitive development of the students, as well as its effect on the performance and psychological adjustment of parents to investigate the effects of parenting interventions.

## Materials and Methods

### Design and setting

This quasi-experimental study was carried out on 104 parents of primary school students in Khomeini Shahr city, Isfahan province of Iran, in 2017. A total of 104 parents of primary school students ( $n = 52$  in experimental group and  $n = 52$  in control group) participated in this research.

### Participants and the training program

All parents met the inclusion criteria; (parents must [a] be able to read and write, [b] be the biological parents of at least one child between the ages of 7 and 8 years, and [c] be married to the biological parents of this child, and [d] be interested in participation). They were excluded if they had filled out the questionnaire incompletely and were absent two educational sessions.

The sample was selected by multistage random sampling method; at first, we chose four primary schools by random numbers table. Two primary schools were randomly assigned as the control group and two primary schools as the experimental group. Then, one class was selected randomly from those schools, and then 15 students were selected randomly from those classes.

The parents of the selected students (112 parents) were invited to participate in the study by phone call. The response rate was 92.8%. Interested parents were evaluated for inclusion. Only four couples (8 parents) who did not completely fill out the questionnaires were excluded. A total of 52 completely filled questionnaires from fathers and 52 completely filled questionnaires from mothers were collected with the return rate being 92.8%, which was satisfactory. Then, the educational intervention was implemented in the experimental group for 6 sessions (including lectures question and answer and role play) while the control group received only the usual family school education program. In order to fascinate parental involvement; especially fathers involvement; in educational sessions, various measures were considered including that educational interventions were held on Friday morning also 2 h before the start of sessions the researcher made phone calls to the parents and reminded them to attending to the educational sessions as well as school principals attended in some

sessions and thanked the parents for their contributions. After 2 months, parents in both groups completed the questionnaires again.

Since four primary schools were selected separately, we ensured that the test group parents did not transfer their information to the control group parents.

The intervention was provided only for the parents in experimental group. It consisted 6 weekly sessions each for 2 h, delivered by skilled and trained educators in the field of parenting. Lectures, question and answer, role-playing, and active participation in group discussion were the main activities in the intervention. The facilitators encouraged parents to explore, discuss, and practice helpful parenting strategies to their children before taking them home. During each session, through engaging in group work, parents had the best opportunity to listen and pay attention to others and share similar parenting experiences among each other. Parents could modify approaches to their family conditions and achieve confirmation and support, for their individual practices to become more effective and confident.

The educational intervention was held as follows:

- Session 1: stating the goals and the introduction of the program, filling out a questionnaire, defining parenting self-efficacy, and teaching the principles for managing the behavior of the children by their parents
- Session 2: explaining the causes of behavioral problems in primary school children and positive relationship with them
- Session 3: explaining the importance of using appropriate ways for order and legislation in family
- Session 4: explaining the management of inappropriate behaviors with scenario design and role-playing
- Session 5: being ready to manage difficult situations and planning for the future
- Session 6: reviewing and summarizing presentations in previous sessions.

### Instrument and data collection and questionnaire analysis

Demographic and parenting self-efficacy data were measured through self-report questionnaires.

Demographic questionnaire was used to collect pertinent information regarding parents' gender, age, number of children, education, and employment status.

#### *Total parenting self-efficacy*

The parenting self-efficacy was measured by total parenting self-efficacy (TOPSE) which is a program evaluation tool and takes into account the outlooks and experiences of parents from various cultural, educational,

and social backgrounds.<sup>[10]</sup> The theoretical underpinning of TOPSE is based on the self-efficacy theory developed by Albert Bandura.<sup>[5]</sup> This multi-dimensional instrument consists of 48 items within eight scales, each scale having six items and demonstrating a divergent aspect of parenting that includes; play and enjoyment, emotion and affection, empathy and understanding, discipline and boundaries, control, pressures, self-acceptance, knowledge, and learning. Rated on an 11-point Likert scale, where 0 exemplifies totally disagreement and 10 represents totally agreement. The scale contains negative and positive phrased items, and the responses are summed to create a total score; the lower the score, the lower the level of parenting self-efficacy.<sup>[12]</sup> For the sake of ease in comparison, scores in each domain were set out of 100 in this study.

All items of this instrument were translated from English to Persian, and then back translated to English by 2 expert translators. Inconsistencies among the Persian and English forms were evaluated and reduced through an appraisal meeting. The cultural relevance and content validity of the instrument was evaluated by an expert panel. The panel consisted of 8 experts with over 3 years of experience in the fields of health education and promotion and psychology. The expert panel agreed that translated items were culturally relevant and valid among the Iranian population.

Data were evaluated by statistical package for social sciences software SPSS version 20.0. To compare control and experimental groups, with respect to the qualitative variables such as employment status and gender, Chi-square test was used. To compare control and experimental groups, with respect to the quantitative variables independent *t*-test was used. To compare the mean scores of parenting self-efficacy and its domains within and between the groups, the Paired *t*-test was used. Statistically significant level was set as 0.05.

### Ethical considerations

The Ethical Committee of Isfahan Medical University approved the study protocol. The requisite permission from Education Department of Khomeini Shahr City was acquired. The goals of the study were described to the parents, and informed consent was achieved from all of them before taking part in this study. Questionnaires were analyzed anonymously by the research team. Participants who were not interested in contributing or who did not continue the research process were excluded from the study.

### Results

The mean and standard deviation of the parents' age in the experimental and control groups were  $35.6 \pm 5.1$  and

36.1 ± 5.3 years, respectively. There was no statistically significant difference between the mean age of parents in both groups.

Likewise, there was no statistically significant difference between the number of children in the two groups. Furthermore, parents' education and employment in the experimental and control groups were similar. The results also showed that the frequency in the distribution of gender in the two groups was completely identical.

Based on the results of independent *t*-test, the mean of parenting self-efficacy total score and all its domain in parents of experimental and control groups were similar before the intervention, but the differences were statistically significant between the experimental and control groups in total parenting self-efficacy and some of its domains 2 months after the intervention [Table 1].

## Discussion

This study was done to examine the effect of educational intervention on parenting self-efficacy in parents of primary school students. The results disclosed that before the intervention, it was discovered that parents in both

groups were similar in their parenting self-efficacy total score and all its domain. Pretest scores for parenting self-efficacy domain in both groups were to some extent comparable to those found in Bloomfield and Kendall study.<sup>[12]</sup> This similarity can be interpreted as a reason for the validity used questionnaire.

In the pretest phase response rate was desirable in both groups. As expected, in the intervention phase parents and school principals welcomed the program. It can be said that parenting self-efficacy is one of the educational needs of parents.

Two months after the intervention, there was statistically significant difference between the two groups in parenting self-efficacy total score. That means educational intervention could change parents' opinions and beliefs in being capable of affecting their children in a good way.

Consistent with our study, in numerous studies, the positive effect of the intervention on TOPSE has been observed, for instance in a study by Boyce *et al.*, it was pointed out that the mothers in the intervention group presented higher maternal parental self-efficacy.<sup>[11]</sup> This

**Table 1: The parenting self-efficacy score before and after intervention in experimental and control groups**

TOPSE domains	Times	Mean±SD		Between group: <i>P</i>
		Experimental group	Control group	
Emotion and affection	Before intervention	42.6±8.01	42.04±6.5	0.72
	After intervention	43.8±5.4	42.01±6.4	0.12
Within group: <i>P</i>		0.18	0.99	
Play and enjoyment	Before intervention	41.1±16.1	40.9±10.1	0.95
	After intervention	46.5±10.6	41±9.9	0.004
Within group: <i>P</i>		≤0.001	0.98	
Empathy and understanding	Before intervention	44.2±9.6	43.9±9.8	0.89
	After intervention	46.8±9.5	44.1±9.8	0.12
Within group: <i>P</i>		0.09	0.94	
Control	Before intervention	37.4±6.1	38.5±9.1	0.49
	After intervention	39.6±7.7	38.6±9.1	0.61
Within group: <i>P</i>		0.11	0.89	
Discipline and boundaries	Before intervention	36.3±11.3	36.4±10.8	0.96
	After intervention	43.8±11.1	36.7±11.4	0.009
Within group: <i>P</i>		0.001	0.64	
Pressures	Before intervention	36.7±8.9	36±10.8	0.88
	After intervention	36.5±8.03	35.7±10.9	0.68
Within group: <i>P</i>		0.42	0.9	
Self-acceptance	Before intervention	43.4±7.4	42.6±6.7	0.56
	After intervention	45.3±4.5	42.6±6.6	0.03
Within group: <i>P</i>		0.042	0.84	
Learning and knowledge	Before intervention	45.7±6.8	44.6±6.7	0.56
	After intervention	50.5±8.9	44.8±9.6	0.002
Within group: <i>P</i>		0.001	0.91	
Total TOPSE	Before intervention	327.1±53.3	324.8±47.1	0.83
	After intervention	352.6±45.5	325.5±46.9	0.007
Within group: <i>P</i>		0.001	0.88	

TOPSE=Total parenting self-efficacy, SD=Standard deviation

finding reflects the parents' need for education in the field of parenting self-efficacy.

Likewise, the statistically significant difference was observed between the two groups in parenting self-efficacy in play and enjoyment domain, discipline and boundaries domain, and learning and knowledge domain. Inconsistent with our study, there was a statistically significant increase in Bloomfield and Kendall study, in scores from pre- to post-test on all parenting self-efficacy domains excluding the learning and knowledge domain.<sup>[12]</sup> The probable reason for this inconsistency is that in case of Bloomfield's study, parents' knowledge and information was already high. However, in the present study, parents in this dimension of parenting self-efficacy had relatively lower scores.

Moreover, 2 months after the intervention, there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups in emotion and affection domain and empathy and understanding domain. To explain this finding, it can be mentioned that modifications in these domains may happen over a longer period when both child and parent have been accustomed to new parenting methods and new ways of communicating with each other.

No statistically significant differences were also observed between two groups in control domain after the intervention. To explain this finding, it can be mentioned that it is hard for many parents, when they present at the educational programs, to gain a fairly quick understanding that it is their own behavior and response to their child that needs to be changed before changes in child behavior.

Inconsistent with other studies,<sup>[12]</sup> this study did not find any statistically significant differences between the two groups in pressures domain after the intervention. Possibly, many previous studies highlighted the importance of social support;<sup>[13,14]</sup> while the intervention in the present study was only educational and lacked social support. When providing such interventions, the profits of social support from the family members and spouse should be considered. In other words, to increase the parenting self-efficacy of primary school students' parents, social support, including their spouses' efforts and enhanced family relations should be underlined as an imperative subject.

It should be mentioned that the present study was not without limitations. First, parents who participated in this study were a comparatively identical group consisting of; literate, employed, primarily married couples from a small city, therefore assessing the generalization of our results may be difficult. Future researches are required to investigate educational intervention with a more diverse

sample of parents. Second, we used only self-reporting questionnaires to measure parenting self-efficacy, but it would be better for future studies to examine parenting self-efficacy by both self-report and observational measurement or other methods such as interviews with students. Finally, further researches should investigate the lasting effects of this educational intervention.

## Conclusion

Parents' behaviors have the most substantial effect on the development and growth of children. All parents can increase their knowledge and cognition about developmental periods and its prerequisites and learn helpful parenting practices by participating in effective educational interventions that provide informative support. The results of this study suggest that educational interventions that engage parents in group task and facilitate expression of experiences are feasible in primary school meeting and have a positive effect on parenting self-efficacy, which is in turn, associated with fewer children issues.

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## Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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