



GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS

Jonida Lesha¹

University of Shkodra,
Albania

Abstract:

Researchers and academics have recently developed a great deal of interest in the beliefs of the self-efficacy beliefs of the teachers given the fact that such a construct promotes effectiveness to teachers and also obtains solutions to problems in teacher education. The literature shows that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs influence classroom instructions, student learning and performance. The study was conducted to explore the primary school teachers' self-efficacy beliefs with respect to gender. Teachers' sense of efficacy scale was used to collect data from the participants. Findings revealed a significant difference between male and female teachers on student engagement and classroom management where male teachers were likely to be significantly better in classroom management and student engagement than female teachers.

Keywords: gender, primary school, teachers, self-efficacy beliefs

1. Literature review

There are two main sources on which the concept of teacher efficacy is supported and formulated (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy and Hoy, 1998). The first source is based on the theory of the Locus of Control (Rotter, 1966) and the second source derives from the Social cognitive theory of Bandura (Bandura, 1986).

Teachers' self-efficacy in relation with the locus of control theory is perceived as a measure in which teachers believe that the factors that can control have a major impact on teaching outcomes than the belief that the environment has the greatest power (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). According to this theory, teachers with internal

¹ Correspondence: email jlesha@unishk.edu.al

locus are able to teach difficult and unmotivated students and have greater achievements in their teaching, while teachers with external locus have less confidence in their teaching skills and believe that the environment has the greatest impact on student learning, compared to their teaching ability.

The social cognitive theory of Bandura attempts to predict and explain human behavior. A key component of Social- Cognitive theory is human action. According to Bandura, *“the power to originate actions for certain purposes is the main feature of personal action. Human action refers to the deliberate choice of an individual for taking measures to accomplish a particular purpose”* (Bandura, 1986), whereas human behaviour is determined by a number of factors that interact.

Bandura (1994) has perceived and defined self-efficacy as *“trusting people about their ability to produce certain levels of performance that exerts influence on events that affect their lives”*.

Viewed as a multidimensional construction, self-efficacy has two components: (1) expectations from oneself, (2) expectations from the outcome (Gibson and Dembo, 1984). Self-expectations are beliefs that relate to personal capacity to perform a task, behavior or ability, while expectation from the outcome is the general belief that a behavior will result in a particular conclusion (Bandura, 1986; Gibson and Dembo, 1984). For this reason, behavior is thought to be influenced not only by the belief that a certain action will lead to desirable results, but also by the belief that it has the ability to carry it out.

According to Bandura (1986), self- efficacy, is perceived as *“judging people in their abilities, organizing and executing the performance of required actions, to achieve certain types of performance”*. It has to do not only with concern for the skills it possesses, but also with the judgment of what it can do with the skills it owns. Self- efficacy determines how people feel motivated, behaved and think for themselves through four major processes: cognitive, motivational, emotional, and selective. People get information about their efficacy from four sources:

- 1) Mastery experiences are one of the most influential sources of information about efficacy. They originate from mastering personal experiences.
- 2) Vicarious experiences are also important for efficacy. Respecting the perseverance of other individuals through difficult tasks can increase efficiency expectations by providing a model for success.
- 3) Verbal persuasion is usually used to influence behavior. It affects effectiveness, especially in negative situations. *“If people are convinced they have what it is needed to be successful, they exert more effort, but if they feed doubts, problems will arise”*.
- 4) Physiological arousal affects people’s confidence in self –efficacy as people rely on these factors to judge their abilities (Bandura, 1999). People rely on their

physical and emotional status to judge their abilities. Emotional awakening significantly affects expectations of efficacy, but high levels of awakening or anxiety increases the sense of ownership or incompetence.

Teachers' self-efficacy is "*his/her judgment of the ability to bring desired outcomes to the engagement of students in learning, even to students who may be difficult or unmotivated*" (Tschannen–Moran and Woolfolk–Hoy, 2001).

Teachers' self-efficacy is a self-perception, not an objective measure of teaching effectiveness (Ross and Bruce, 2007). Self-efficacy should not be confused with the professional competence of a teacher. It is an important variable in teacher development and in the way, teachers teach. It is important to support the teacher to develop efficacy convictions at the beginning of the career. Over time, teachers need to develop and stabilize a set of beliefs (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). These beliefs, in teachers' self-efficacy vary gradually with the influence of many resources (Bandura, 1986).

The results of teachers' self-efficacy studies have shown that it is a powerful tool to understand both the success of the teachers and their students. Teacher's efficacy is powerful because of its clinical nature (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). This means that if a teacher has high levels of efficacy, he tends to deliver a large amount of energy and effort, which brings a better performance, so that the teachers' efficiency increases. But, the teachers' efficacy can go in the opposite direction. If the teacher has low efficacy, he tends to give less efforts, showing a weaker performance and consequently a teacher's efficacy decrease (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Tschannen-Moran et al., (1998) agree with Bandura on the fact that in individuals who have no confidence in their efficacy tend to be driven by failure and stop at things that do not go in the direction, or the way they originally planned.

Gibson and Dembo (1984) found that there are differences in classroom behavior when comparing teachers with low and high efficacy. When students of teachers with low efficacy were asked, 4% of teacher feedback included criticism, while for teachers with high efficacy, there was no criticism. Teachers with low efficacy were more likely to give wrong answers, while teachers with high efficacy led students in the correct answer. Low efficacy teachers appeared worried by interruptions in their schedule, while high efficacy teachers seemed more relaxed with change. Low efficacy teachers are more discouraged, experiencing failure, while high efficacy teachers are more willing to learn from mistakes and "*continue to help students with learning difficulties*" (Yetkin, 2003).

Although Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) explained that demographic variables are not usually determinative of teaching efficacy, researchers continue to explore the power of these variables, as teachers experience, teacher gender, teachers'

education (Edwards, Green and Lions, 1996; Soodak and Podell, 1997; Paneque and Barbetta, 2006; Penrose, Perry and Ball, 2007).

Soodak and Podell (1997) reported that teachers in the early years of the profession perceived themselves as more efficient than their experienced colleagues; however, efficacy levels decline during the first months, in the first year of teaching. Similarly, Edwards, Green and Lions (1996) reported that teacher experience is negatively related to teaching efficacy, but Five and Buehl (2010) and Penrose, Perry and Ball (2007) found that teachers experience was positively related with teaching efficacy. Paneque and Barbetta (2006) have not reported any significant relationship between teaching experience and teachers' self-efficacy.

Some studies have found that female teachers have higher efficacy levels, than male teachers (Five and Looney, 2009; Edwards et al., 1996). In other studies, there were no statistically significant differences in the teacher's efficacy by gender. Of all the studies' results, there is no clarity if it varies by gender or that the differences in the results may be due to cultural differences (Azar, 2010).

Elementary school teachers report higher levels of self-efficacy in student engagement than middle school teachers (Capa, 2005). Likewise, Five and Buehl (2010) and Five and Looney (2009), reported elementary school teachers as more efficient than secondary school teachers, however, they emphasized that elementary school teachers in general are women.

2. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study were to investigate changes in teachers' self-efficacy beliefs based on teacher's gender.

2.1 Hypotheses

There is a significant difference between female and male teachers' sense of efficacy beliefs on the three subscales Efficacy in student engagement, Efficacy in classroom management, efficacy in student engagement.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design

This study used a cross-sectional design, as the main tool of quantitative methodology, where data are collected on the whole study population at a single point in the time.

3.2 The sample

The study is focused on primary school teachers from Shkodra. It was created a probabilistic sample of 543 subjects (where 464 are women and 79 are men).

Table 1: Teacher characteristics

Participants	Novice Teachers	Experienced teachers
Age Mean	30.08	41.88
Gender		
Female	30	434
Male	2	77
Teaching experience	4.5	19.5

As illustrated in table 1, at the time of the study, novice teachers had an age mean of 30.08 and their experienced colleagues had a age mean of 41.88. In the study as illustrated above participated 464 females and 79 males. The small representation of the male teachers in primary education is normal because the number of male teachers in primary education in Albania is very low, and also is a normal trend even in EU countries where in primary education setting 15.3% are male teachers and 84.7% are female teachers. As can be seen in the above table the mean years of teaching experience for novice teachers is 4.5 years and for experienced teachers is 19.5 years.

3.3 Assessment Tools

A demographic questionnaire and TSES was used to assess teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. The demographic questionnaire was used to obtain information pertaining to gender, age, teaching experience. The TSES model was developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) in an effort to provide an instrument of robustness. It is a recent measuring instrument, which has been developed in response to the ongoing problems associated with previous measuring instruments. The TSES is more specific to teaching tasks and provides interpretable factors (Woolfolk-Hoy, A. and Spero, R.B., 2005). It is superior to previous teacher efficacy instruments for the fact that it has a unified and consistent structure of factors and evaluates a wide range of skills considered important for teachers to teach well. This instrument is widely used in teacher efficacy studies by many scholars such as Turkovich (2011), Fives and Buehl (2010). The TSES, formally called Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (TSES) includes two versions: the long form (Including 24 items) and the short form (including 12 items). In this study, a shortened form of 12 statements was used. For each statement, teachers are asked to judge their ability to influence the result ("*How much can you do?*") on a 9 point scale. Factorial analysis has consistently shown three factors: Efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in classroom management, efficacy in instructional strategies.

In Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2001) the following results were found:

Table 2: Reliabilities

	Long Form		
	Mean	SD	Alpha
OSTES	7.1	.94	.94
Engagement	7.3	1.1	.87
Instruction	7.3	1.1	.91
Management	6.7	1.1	.90

3.5 Data analysis

Data were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 17.0 software and Excel. Quantitative data on teachers' self-efficacy beliefs was determined by computing the un-weighted means of the TSES items also t-tests and descriptive statistics were performed along.

4. Research Findings

Table 3: Differences in teacher's self-efficacy dimensions according to gender differences

		N	Mean	SD	Variance
Self- efficacy in student engagement	Female	464	3.91	.391	.153
	Male	79	4.52	.680	.463
Self-efficacy in instructional strategy	Female	464	4.17	.632	.401
	Male	79	3.93	.368	.135
Self-efficacy in classroom management	Female	464	3.31	.631	.398
	Male	79	3.62	.476	.227

As can be noticed in Table 5, the data in this table shows that for the dimension of efficacy in student engagement, the average teacher rating (men) is higher in comparison to teachers (females), $M_m= 4.52$ while $M_f=3.91$. Regarding to efficacy in instructional strategies, it is noticed the opposite, where female teachers reported higher levels compared to their male colleagues, $M_f=4.17$ while $M_m=3.93$. Regarding the dimension of efficacy in classroom management, it is obvious that male teachers have a higher average compared to female teachers ($M_f=3.31$ and $M_m=3.62$), and that means that men reported to be more efficacious in classroom management compared to women. Meanwhile, if the results are interpreted in the total scale, male teachers have a higher average compared to female teachers but it is needed to take in account the small number of male teachers in the total sample compared to female teachers.

5. Discussions & Conclusions

The present study explored the differences between female and male teachers towards self-efficacy beliefs in the three subscales dimensions (self-efficacy beliefs in classroom management, self-efficacy beliefs in instructional strategies, self-efficacy beliefs in student engagement). Findings show a significant difference between male and female teachers on student engagement and classroom management where male teachers were likely to be significantly better in classroom management and student engagement than female teachers. As cited by Shaukat and Iqbal (2012) a possible reason for this finding may come from the fact that male teachers usually maintain stricter discipline in the classroom than female teachers (Shaukat, Abiodullah & Rashid, 2011). However, caution should be taken when interpreting these results due to the large difference in size of male and female participants, and specifically the small number of male teachers.

Similar findings were reported even by Klassen and Chiu (2010). The authors reported that female teachers showed lower classroom management efficacy beliefs than male teachers. Also, Butucha (2013) indicated that there were significant gender differences in self-efficacy in classroom management with males having higher scores than females.

This study was a first attempt to explore the relationship between a demographic variable as gender and teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. It is recommended that to enhance teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, teachers should be trained on topics related to classroom management, student engagement and instructional strategies etc.

The findings of this study have implications for the researchers, teacher educators, curriculum developers for teacher education programmes, and all the stakeholders of teaching practice.

5.1 Limitations of the study

Although, maximum attention has been paid to the design and implementation of this study, it has the following limitations:

- The literature review is based on studies from countries from America and Europe etc, and there are no studies conducted in Albania regarding in-service teacher's self-efficacy beliefs.
- The study is focused in the city of Shkodra, Albania
- The study is further limited by the disproportionate representation of male and female teachers. Primary school teachers in Albania prevail on women. A gender balanced gender sample could more accurately reflect teacher perceptions of teachers self-efficacy beliefs.

- Another limitation of this study is the fact that all the data to measure teachers self-efficacy beliefs are gathered through self-reporting tools.
- Also, the study used only a quantitative approach; a mixed methods approach would have yielded findings with more meaning.

References

1. Azar, A. (2010). In-service and Pre-service Secondary Science Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs about Science Teaching. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 5(4), 175-188.
2. Bandura, A. (1986). *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
3. Bandura, A. (1999). Social cognitive theory of personality. In Pervin, L., & John, O. (Eds), *Handbook of personality theory and research* (pp. 154-196). New York: The Guilford Press.
4. Butucha, K. (2013). Gender and school type differences in self-efficacy in teaching. *Sky journal of educational research*.
5. Capa, Y. (2005). *Factors influencing first-year teachers' sense of efficacy*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University.
6. Edwards, J. L., Green, K. E., & Lyons, C. A. (April, 1996). *Teacher efficacy and school and teacher characteristics*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, NY.
7. Fives, H. & Buehl, M. (2010). Examining the Factor Structure of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 78, 118-134
8. Gibson, S., & Dembo, M. H. (1984). Teacher efficacy: A construct validation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 76(4), 503-511.
9. Klassen, R. M. & Chiu, M. (2010). Effects on teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction: Teacher gender, years of experience, and job stress. *Journal of Educational Psychology*
10. Paneque, O. M., & Barbetta, P. M. (2006). A study of teacher efficacy of special education teachers of English language learners with disabilities. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 30(1), 171.
11. Penrose, A., Perry, C., & Ball, I. (2007). Emotional intelligence and teacher self-efficacy: The contribution of teacher status and length of experience. *Issues in Educational Research*, 17(1), 107-126.
12. Ross, J., & Bruce, C. (2007). Professional Development Effects on Teacher Efficacy: Results of Randomized Field Trial. *The Journal of Educational Research*,

- 101(1). Retrieved February 20, 2010 from Rotter, J. (1966). Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcements, *Psychological Monographs*, 609.
13. Soodak, L. C., & Podell, D. M (1993). Teacher efficacy and student problem as factors in special education referral. *Journal of Special Education*, 27, 66-81.
14. Shaukat, S., Abiodullah, M., & Rashid, K. (2011). Students' beliefs about information seeking behaviour and responsible behaviour towards environment at postgraduate level. *Journal of Pakistan Psychology*, 42 (1)
15. Shaukat, S., Iqbal, H., (2012) Teacher self-efficacy as a function of student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management, *Pakistan Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*
16. Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2001). Teacher efficacy: Capturing and elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, 783-805.
17. Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2007). The differential antecedents of self-efficacy beliefs of novice and experienced teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 944-956.
18. Tschannen-Moran, M., Woolfolk-Hoy, A., & Hoy, W. K. (1998). Teacher efficacy: Its meaning and measure. *Review of Educational Research*, 68(2), 202-248
19. Turkovich, Dawn, M., (2011). Pre-Service Teachers' Teacher Efficacy Beliefs and the Perceived Relationship with their University Supervisor. A Dissertation for the Degree Doctor of Education, Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
20. Woolfolk Hoy, A. & Spero, R.B. (2005). Changes in teacher efficacy during the early years of teaching: A comparison of four measures. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 343-356
21. Yetkin, I. E. (2003). Self-Efficacy and Prior Experiences as Predictors of Prospective Teachers. *Teaching Anxiety*. N/A, ED482674

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Education Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).