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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Effect of Storytelling on Learning Social Skills and Reducing Anxiety in Female Elementary School Students in Kerman

Nasim Saeid [*], **Zahra Nooshzade**

1. Associate Professor of Educational Sciences, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran.
2. Masters graduate in educational sciences, Payame Noor university, Tehran-Iran.

Correspondence:
Nasim Saeid
Email: n.saeed@pnu.ac.ir

Email:
Nooshzade.f@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The present study proposed to investigate the effectiveness of storytelling intervention on improving social skills and reducing anxiety levels in elementary school students. This study was applied research employing a semi-experimental design with a pre-test-post-test control group. The statistical population included all second-cycle female elementary school students (grades four, five, and six) in kerman city during the academic year 2024-2025. Participants were selected through non-probability convenience sampling. After administering the pre-test, 40 students with low social skills scores and high anxiety levels were chosen and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups (20 students per group). The control group received no intervention, while the experimental group underwent a storytelling program consisting of 10 sessions. Research instruments included the texas social skills inventory (tiss), the anxious thoughts questionnaire (anti), and a cognitive-emotional storytelling intervention protocol, whose content validity was confirmed by psychology specialists and university professors. Data were analyzed at the descriptive level using mean, standard deviation, and variance, and at the inferential level using multivariate analysis of covariance (mancova). Statistical analysis was performed using spss software version 26. The results indicated that the storytelling intervention significantly enhanced social skills and reduced anxiety levels in female students.

KEYWORDS

Storytelling, Social Skills Learning, Anxiety Reduction, Students.

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Introduction

Education can be considered one of the fundamental and vital pillars of any society; the survival, durability, and progress of society depend on the quality of its education and training, and this institution, with its individual and collective mission, is considered the main guide to development and progress. Education plays a vital role in nurturing the individual and developing the community, and identifying talents, creating the necessary conditions for their flourishing in various fields, and the harmonious and balanced development of humans in their intellectual, emotional, social, and physical aspects are among the heavy responsibilities of this institution (Khodai Khiawi, 2012: 12). Recent developments and advances in today's world can be boldly attributed to education. Today, the learning process is one of the most fundamental issues in education that has attracted the attention of educational science experts. Researchers emphasize that learning is more effective when the individual is actively involved in it, and the learner's multiple senses are used; in other words, the more the individual's entire being is involved in the learning process, the greater the amount of learning (Zofen, 2017: 23).

Method

This study was conducted with an applied purpose and with a quasi-experimental design of pretest-posttest type with a control group and random assignment. The statistical population of the study consisted of all female students of the second year of primary school (fourth, fifth and sixth grades) in Kerman city in the academic year 1403-1404, numbering 23,189 people (based on statistics from the General Directorate of Education of Kerman province). In the sampling process, a list of volunteers was prepared from among the students in grades 4 to 6 of the aforementioned school by announcing the call and obtaining informed consent from the parents. Social skills and anxiety questionnaires were administered to these individuals. In order to analyze the data after data collection, the assumption of normal distribution of data in both groups and for both measurement stages was examined and confirmed using the Shapiro-Wilk test ($p<0.05$)($p<0.05$). In order to answer the research question and effectively compare the groups by controlling for initial scores, multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was used.

Results

The results of multivariate covariance analysis in Table 7 showed that **storytelling-based** education has a significant **effect** on reducing students' anxiety in various dimensions of social, physical, and **meta-anxiety**. The interactive effect of storytelling training on social anxiety **posttest** scores had an F value of 6.320 and a significance level of 0.001. Also, $\eta^2=0.473\eta2=0.473$ showed that approximately 47 percent of the variance in social anxiety **posttest** scores was due to the storytelling intervention. Also, the effect of the intervention on physical anxiety **posttest** scores had an F value of 3.944 and a significance level of 0.001. In order to investigate the effect of **storytelling-based** education on the reduction of students' social skills, multivariate analysis of covariance was used. The assumption of normal distribution of variables related to social skills was evaluated using the **Shapiro-Wilk** test. The results presented in Table 2 show that social skills scores in both **pretest** and **posttest** stages had the required normal distribution ($P<0.05$)($P<0.05$).

Discussion and conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of storytelling-based education on reducing anxiety and improving social skills in students. The findings from multivariate analysis of covariance showed that storytelling education significantly reduced social anxiety, physical anxiety, and meta-anxiety in students. Also, the adjusted means showed that the experimental group had a significant decrease in anxiety posttest scores compared to the control group. The eta square obtained for anxiety variables was between 0.39 and 0.48, which indicates a high contribution of the storytelling intervention in changing students' anxiety status. The findings of this study showed that storytelling has been able to significantly improve social skills and reduce anxiety in elementary school female students. This effect can be explained by the fact that stories present anxiety-provoking situations in an indirect and symbolic form. Therefore, students can experience and process their emotions without directly facing the threat, which helps reduce the severity of anxiety and increase the sense of control. Considering the significant effects and high effect size of the storytelling intervention, it can be concluded that this educational method is an effective, low-cost, and applicable tool in the school and family environment. Regular use of storytelling in the classroom or counseling sessions can help reduce anxiety and improve students' social behaviors, and provide them with a safe and supportive learning environment.

The findings of this study have several practical applications for school counselors and the education system. Counselors can use purposeful storytelling as a low-cost and engaging intervention technique in individual and group counseling sessions to reduce students' anxiety and strengthen their communication skills. Schools can also provide a safe and supportive environment for emotional release and indirect learning of social skills by incorporating regular storytelling into the curriculum or extracurricular activities. Teachers can also help students develop social skills by selecting appropriate stories that address the social and emotional challenges of their students.

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Authors' Contribution

The sole author was responsible for the study's conceptualization, methodology, data collection, analysis, writing, and final approval of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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(Text in Persian)