

An Old Folktale Reconstructed for Better Generation

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An Old Folktale Reconstructed For Better Generation:
An Indonesian Case

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Abstract

A folktale must not be a dead and dormant narrative. Being a text that possesses power in the education of children, and in shaping them to approved behavior, a folktale must develop with time. As values in society alter and shift, folktales must be adjusted and amended. This is especially true and urgent in folktales that carry values or principles that are not believed anymore or that do not carry constructive values. Such tales have to be rewritten and reconstructed in order to be able to transmit constructive values to child readers, for a better generation. This paper presents a study on the influence of a reconstructed version of a long-established Indonesian folktale to Children's Perceived Self-Efficacy in Indonesia. Children's perceived self-efficacy represents children's beliefs in their abilities to achieve certain attainments. In this study, 93 students of grades 4 – 5 Elementary School in Indonesia are surveyed on their perceived self-efficacy prior to and after being read to a reconstructed version of the tale. Using a 4-point-response format, their perceived self-efficacy are compared and contrasted to those who read the traditional version of the tale. The result of the study shows how a reconstructed folktale can influence child readers in positive ways on their perceived self-efficacy that influence the construction of a better generation.

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Introduction

Children stories have always played a double role as an 'edutainment' tool for children, that is, to entertain and to educate (Citraningtyas, 2011). In the case of folktales, however, the edification element is always much stronger than the entertaining element. Folktales are widely believed to be tales that are capable of shaping children's character (Johnston, 2001; Pantaleo, 2001; Meek 2001, Rusciano, 2003; Citraningtyas et.al., 2011, 2012) and of molding a nation (Johnston, 2000). It is therefore hardly surprising that parents, educators, and even government, greatly trust folktales for the edification of younger generation.

Despite the important function of folktales in shaping a nation and in educating young generation, Indonesian children have grown with tales that are disturbing to be used to mold a character. A number of Indonesian tales end with unconstructive endings, where the

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protagonists are cursed to be a lifeless, dead, and objects that are unproductive or infertile. These kinds of endings are unconstructive in shaping young generation of a nation, for such endings may promote negative impact for the young generation, and thus for the nation.

One of Indonesia's most popular tales is '*Malin Kundang*', a tale of a young unfilial man who is then cursed by his own mother as he fails to acknowledge her. He is cursed to be a stone by the mother. So popular is this tale that *Malin Kundang* is widely used as a reference to establish and assert filial piety amongst Indonesian children (Citraningtyas, 2004). It is common in Indonesia to read news or articles about a child or children who face catastrophe for being unfilial. Parents and educators often use the folktale to warn young generations not to be like Malin Kundang or else they will face the consequence of being cursed.

Although there are numerous different versions of *Malin Kundang* found, there has never been a version that totally reconstructs the tale to give it a new impact to readers. It is deemed vital to reconstruct the tale in order to shape Indonesian children and society for a better future. In 2012, Citraningtyas *et.al.* has prepared a reconstructed version of the tale where Malin is freed from his curse, is forgiven and is given another opportunity. After another long struggle, Malin then lives happily ever after with his wife and mother to embrace a promising future together. The removal of the curse from Malin is believed to free Malin, and other Indonesian young generation from an everlasting curse that may hinder their progress and development. The change in the tale ending to forgive Malin and to give him another opportunity is believed to encourage a higher self-efficacy to child readers. A high self-efficacy is a quality important in shaping a better generation.

This paper presents the effect of the reconstructed version of *Malin Kundang* tale on the self-efficacy of Indonesian child readers. Children's perceived self-efficacy, developed by Bandura (1977), represents "children's beliefs in their abilities to achieve certain attainments". Ninety five students aged 9 - 12 are surveyed on their perceived self-efficacy prior to and after being read to a traditional and a reconstructed version of the tale. Using 1 to 4 point Lickert Scale format, their perceived self-efficacy are compared and contrasted between those who read the traditional version of the tale to those who read the reconstructed version.

Review Of Literature

Folktales are alive, just like plants that continually grow: "*Tales, just as plants, adapt to a certain environment through natural selection and thus differ somewhat from other members of the same species*" (Bratkūnas 1975). Therefore, tale reconstruction has to be an essential activity in order to adapt with the ever-changing cultural and social shifts.

To reconstruct is generally understood as to build again. Something is reconstructed because there is a need to correct it. A building, for example, is reconstructed to refurbish its looks and/or strengthen its structure. A physical reconstruction is needed to correct certain defect in the body. If applied to a tale, reconstruction is to construct again an available tale with the purpose of making it better and more suitable to adapt with cultural and social changes. The parts that are old and not suitable anymore are changed with new better and stronger parts (Citraningtyas *et.al.*, 2012).

Tale reconstruction is not a new entity and has been done throughout history to a number of well-known tales. Tales such as *Cinderella* and *Little Red Riding Hood* are the popular examples of tales that have undergone numerous changes over centuries to adapt with

2
societal need. The earliest version of Cinderella, for example, ended with Cinderella killing the stepmother. The version of Cinderella that we know today is a happy ending that is more constructive and more acceptable for today's audience. The ending of Little Red Riding Hood has also gone through a number of changes, from the girl who died, to a girl who is rescued by the huntsman (Dundes, 1989, p. 73). It is thus proven that tale reconstructions are normal and necessary.

It is believed that tale reconstruction can be beneficial for the betterment of the readers' self-efficacy. Should a reader's self-efficacy increase, the quality of human resource will be increased. Thus, the advancement of the nation can progress with better quality of human resource. Self-efficacy is a term coined by Albert Bandura (1977, 1986, 1992, 1997), to refer to a person's belief in their own ability to succeed in a given situation. Bandura affirms that if a person believes that he or she is capable of accomplishing a task, he or she will persevere longer and is more likely to succeed because of this perseverance. On the contrary, if a person does not believe that he or she is capable of performing a task, he or she will give up easily, and thus will unlikely succeed in the task. Higher levels of perceived self-efficacy and higher performance attainments, therefore, tend to go hand in hand.

Self-efficacy has now become such an important topic among psychologists and educators as researchers (Nilsen, 2009; Loo and Choy, 2013) have confirmed that self efficacy can influence people's goals, actions, motivation, and successes in life. Nations with citizens that have higher self-efficacy will be more productive to those with lower self-efficacy. Therefore, increasing perceived self-efficacy will be advantageous for the betterment of a nation.

Method And Procedure

The subjects of this study are 95 Indonesian students aged 9 – 12 years old. These students are in their fourth grade of Elementary School. They are recruited through the schools that agree to participate in this research project. Respondents from each school are split into two groups: the control group and the experimental group. Both groups are given a pre-test, treatment, and a post-test to measure difference of their perceived self-efficacy before and after treatment.

During the pre-test, the respondents were given nine questions adapted from Muris (2001, 2002) that measure respondents' self-efficacy in three areas. Three questions are on academic self-efficacy, three on social, and three on emotional. These three areas of human quotient are generally believed to be important for the development of an individual. Prior to the pre-test, the students were given guidance that the activity was not a test and that their answers were equally correct as long as they were answered honestly, according to their own condition. They are also told that they should answer the questions according to what they think is correct for themselves, not according to what their teacher, parents, or any authoritative figures they may know may be considered to be right. This phase was appropriate for the Indonesian setting, where students are not accustomed to express their opinions or to provide answers that may be different from the commonly agreed response. The questionnaire used 1 (not at all) to 4 (not at all) Lickert-Scale. The 4-point Lickert Scale was preferred due to the absence of the neutral or undecided option, because this option can be very well-liked option to respondents who are not used to give their opinion.

After the pre-test, both groups listened to *Malin Kundang* tale told by a professional story-teller. The control group listened to the traditional version of the tale, while the experimental group listened to the reconstructed version of the tale. The reason why professional story-tellers were used was to eliminate any bias that might be present if the tale was told by their teacher or by the researcher. Based on a general observation, most children in Indonesia first heard the *Malin Kundang* tale through parents, educators, or other authoritative figures in their lives. In this research, the respondents listen to the tale through a professional story teller so that they are not bound by the same feeling and experience that they acquire through the introduction of the tale by an authoritative figure. The respondents did not listen to the tale through the researcher either so that the respondents do not feel any obliged connections between the tale and the questionnaires they answer.

During the post-test, the respondents were again given a set of nine questions adapted from Muris (2001, 2002), to measure their perceived self-efficacy in three areas: academic, social and emotional. The responses were then summed up to produce a total score. Higher scores indicate higher self-efficacy.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It is found that both control and experimental groups achieved an average score of 2.75 in the pre-test. This can be understood as the general starting score for the respondents: that Indonesian child readers who have all been familiar with the traditional version of *Malin Kundang* tale, have average self-efficacy of 2.75 or 68.7%. It will be observed whether the self-efficacy will increase with exposure to the reconstructed version of the tale.

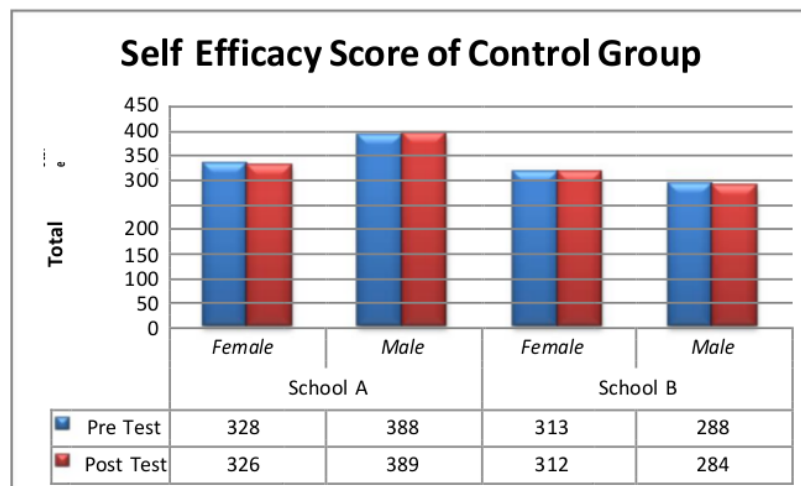


Figure 1 : Self Efficacy Score of control group during pre test and post test.

Figure 1 shows the comparison of self-efficacy score in the control group at pre-test and post-test. It is evident that there hardly any changes in the respondents' self-efficacy between the pre-test and post-test in both schools. It means that the respondents who are already very familiar with the traditional version of the tale have unchanged self-efficacy

after listening to the same traditional tale. This is regardless that the tale was told by a professional story teller rather than an authoritative figure in the respondents' lives.

In the experimental group, on the other hand, shows an increase in the post-test score. Figure 2 demonstrates that all male and female respondents from both schools experience an increase of score from pre-test to post-test. These respondents experience positive increase after listening to the reconstructed version of *Malin Kundang* tale. As higher score indicates higher self-efficacy, it can be said that the reconstructed version of the tale increase respondents' self-efficacy. It is interesting to note that in both schools, the increase is more apparent among male students. In school A, the increase experienced by male respondents double the amount of increase experienced by female respondents. A similar situation also happens in school B, where the increase among male students is 59 points, if compared to 34 point increase among female students.

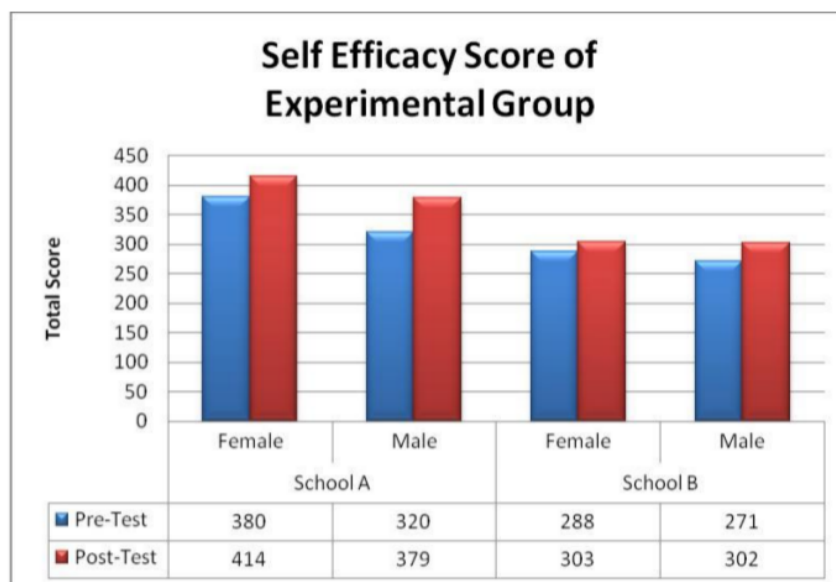


Figure 2 : *Self Efficacy Score of experimental group during pre-test and post-test.*

It is also found that the average score for the post-test of the experimental group is 2.97 or 74%. It is therefore apparent that the reconstructed version of the tale had increased respondent's self-efficacy.

Although in average there appears to be no change between the score of pre-test and post test in the control group, when examined more closely it is apparent that there are dynamics of results in the three areas of self-efficacy researched. There were some increase and decrease in scores recorded there. In the control groups, the most affected self-efficacy on repeated exposure of the traditional version of *Malin Kundang*, is self-efficacy in social area. As shown in Figure 3, the post-test score of control group decreased by 29% in social self-efficacy area. In addition to the decline in the field of social self- efficacy, the self-efficacy in the emotional area also decreased. However, interestingly, the traditional version of this tale does not only decrease the self-efficacy of the control group, but also gives an increase on the self-efficacy in the academic area. It may be due to the top-down style of educational and parental approach in Indonesia where an authoritative figure remains to be a

very influential figure for Indonesian children. Thus the teachings of a top-down authoritative figure, as affirmed in the traditional story of *Malin Kundang*, could well be accepted by the respondents. It is more so in a society with a belief that respect to parents is a key for success. This element can increase a child's self-efficacy in the academic field.

The experimental group, on the other hand, generally experienced more improvement in the post-test score. Areas of self-efficacy that increased the most are in the academic field. Figure 3 also shows an increase in value by 68% in the educational self-efficacy. This shows that despite the fact that a top-down educational approach can indeed increase confidence in one's academic field, but liberating education, which is not merely a top-down, even further enhancing self-efficacy in the field of education.

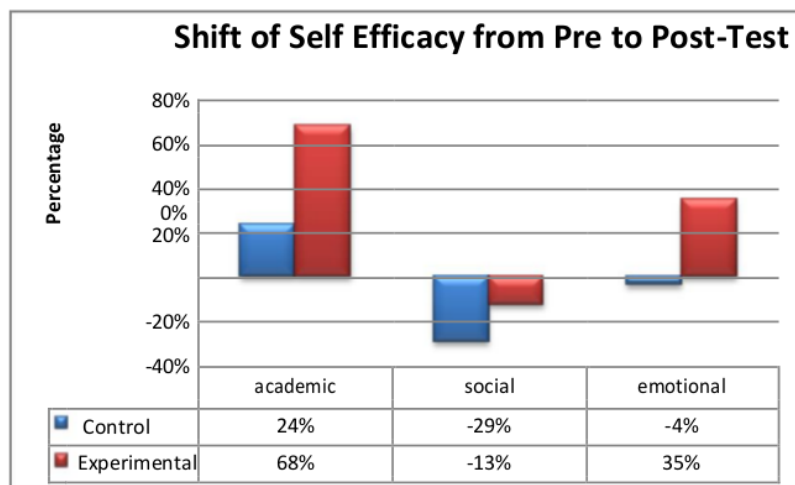


Figure 3: Self-efficacy grouped by three areas.

In this experimental group, the increase in value also occurs in the emotional self-efficacy. The result of this increase can be seen in Table 3. It is apparent that emotional self-efficacy increases by 35%. The only value that decreases in this group is the value of self-efficacy in the social area. There is a decrease by 13% in social self-efficacy. However the decrease in the area of social self-efficacy in the experimental group is still much lower than (only a half of) the decrease in social self-efficacy in the control group.

From the findings of self-efficacy by gender as exposed through Figure 4, it is interesting to note that the change in score is more obvious in male respondents than female respondents in the experimental group. While in the control group, the decrease experienced by male and female respondents are the same.

At school A, score increase experienced by male respondents is twice the increase in scores experienced by female respondents. The same is seen in school B, where the male respondents scores increased by 54 points, compared to female respondents who experienced a gain of 34 points.

This phenomenon may be due to the type of story used in this study. *Malin Kundang* is a

folktale that concerns the child-parent relationship experienced by a little boy. Therefore, male respondents are more likely to identify themselves with Malin Kundang rather than female respondents.

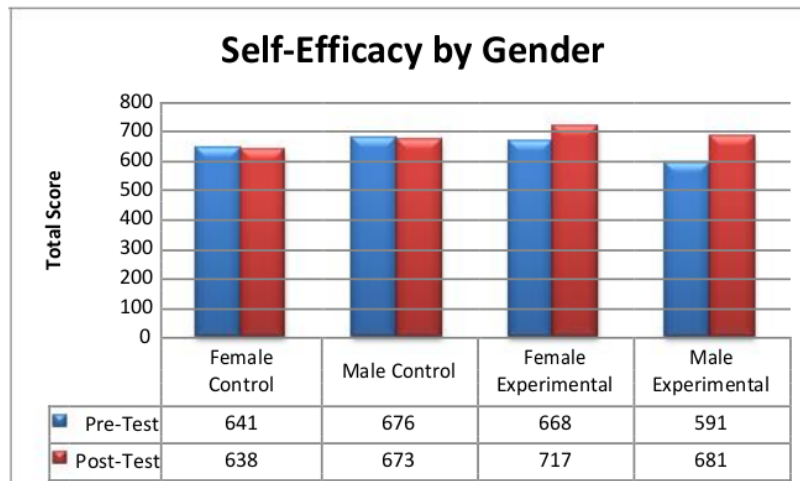


Figure 4: The comparison of pre-test and post-test score grouped by gender.

The findings obtained have shown that the reconstructed version of *Malin Kundang* increase the self- efficacy of Indonesian children. With the increase in self-efficacy, it increases the motivation and fighting spirit of Indonesian children for the betterment of Indonesia.

Conclusion

The research is to measure the effect of a reconstructed version of an Indonesian folktale to the self- efficacy of Indonesian readers. It is hypothesized that a tale that is reconstructed for more positive values positively affects readers, and thus enhance a better generation. The *Malin Kundang* tale is reconstructed to liberate Malin from the curse of his mother for his unfilial conduct. Malin is forgiven and lives happily with his wife and the mother.

The subject of the study is 95 students aged 9 - 12 who are divided into control and experimental groups. Both groups receive similar treatment to measure academic, social and emotional self-efficacy: pre-test, treatment, and post-test. During the treatment, the control group is exposed to the traditional version of the *Malin Kundang* tale, while the experimental group is exposed to the reconstructed version.

The study results in four main findings. There are no apparent changes of self-efficacy score occurs in the control group. The respondent' self-efficacy score, therefore, remains constant between the pre test and post test. Noticeable improvement on self efficacy, on the other hand, happens in the experimental group. The respondents, who, after being read to the reconstructed version of the tale, reported an improvement in their self-efficacy score, an increase by 139 points all together. In the experimental group, the respondents' score increased the most in the self-efficacy of academic, followed by emotional self-efficacy. An increase in the self-efficacy of social did not happen to these respondents. Male respondents

Affected most by this reconstructed tale if compared to female respondents. In the experimental group, male students achieved higher increase in self-efficacy score if compared to female respondents.

The findings confirm the hypothesis that a tale reconstructed to be more positive will result in positive effect to the readers' self-efficacy. The increase of the self-efficacy score of the respondents from the experimental group will definitely advantageous for the improvement of a nation. However, more treatments still need to be done to confirm the stability of the result if the exposure to the reconstructed tale is repeated and given to wider audience.

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