The effect of Social Adjustment and Hope on the Educational Well-being of Students: The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to devise and test a structural model for educational well-being based on social adjustment and hope with the mediating role of self-efficacy in high school students. To this end, the research employed correlational-descriptive design and structural equation modeling. The statistical population of this study was consisted of all students studying in high schools of Khorramabad in the Persian educational year academic year 2019-2020. The sample of this study included 373 students who were selected using proportionate stratified sampling based on gender and educational level. The instruments used included the Tominin-Sweeney et al. (2012) Academic Well-being Scale, Adjustment Inventory for School Students by Sinha and Singh (1993), Hope Questionnaire and General Self-Efficacy Scale (Scherer, 2002). After collecting the questionnaires, the data obtained from this study were analyzed using structural equation modeling. The results from determining the validity and reliability of the instruments using the Cronbach's alpha validity coefficient, test-retest, and factor analysis indicated graceful validity and reliability of the tests. In this research, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed for the fitness the measurement models, while structural equations were used for the fitness of the structural model. The findings indicated that there was a significant relationship between the variables (p <0.001). In addition, the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between social adjustment and hope, and educational well-being of students was confirmed. Given its significance in the aforementioned relationship, enhancing the educational well-being of students is readily possible through providing a self-efficacy training package for students.

Key Words: *Academic well-being, Social adjustment, Hope, Self-efficacy.*

INTRODUCTION

It goes without saying that addressing issues and challenges ahead of students, as future policy-makers of the society is of paramount importance, as enhancing the educational conditions of the students is devised as one of the major goals of the contemporary education systems. The emergence of a positive psychology approach has led to significant developments and influential research in various fields of behavioral sciences, including studies on the academic achievement of the students. Positive psychology is directed at human talents and abilities, instead of addressing abnormalities and disorders, and

hence aims to identify the structures and methods that lead to human well-being and happiness [1].
Educational well-being is one of the many variables arising from a positive approach in the educational process of students that is inevitably involved in adjustment of students to school and the consequent academic success [2]. Wang, Dego, Amemiya, Parr, and Guo (2020) argued that educational well-being includes students' sense of security and contentment from the educational environment (lack of loneliness and burnout) [3]. Some researchers, such as Woogul, Myung-Jin, Mimi (2014) reported that students with low educational well-being have perceived their academic events to be undesirable and

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consider themselves more likely to experience negative emotions, including anxiety and anger [4]. Educational well-being places great emphasis on the active role of the student and his/her abilities in creating a vibrant educational environment [5]. As such, the structure of educational welfare is defined in relation to the four dimensions of school. The first dimension is the value of the school that is defined as the honor and sanctity that the student places upon the school and also the purpose and meaning that he seeks in there [6]. The second dimension of educational well-being is burnout from school, which is a state of mental and emotional fatigue that results from chronic stress symptoms such as role overload, stress and time constraints, and a lack of resources to perform tasks. The third dimension of educational well-being is getting engaged in school homework. Getting engaged in school homework is defined as a positive and focused state of mind on the learning process that is associated with the features of energy, consistency of attention and comprehending contexts. The fourth dimension of educational well-being is educational satisfaction, which refers to the feeling of personal contentment in choosing the path to achieve personal goals [7].

There are different variables and contexts involved in the educational process of students. As a social being, humans are always trying to acquire skills to communicate with others with ultimate purpose of adjusting to the environment. Adjustment is an inherent psychological tendency to cope with life challenges and is a vibrant flow that refers to a person's response to the environmental conditions and the changes that take place therein [8]. Social adjustment in adolescents is one of the topics that has garnered the interest of many sociologists, psychologists and educators in recent decades as the most important sign of their mental health, as adolescence is deemed a highly sensitive period, in which they are subject extremely intense emotional, physical and mental changes. Moreover, social development is the most significant aspect of personal development, and the criteria for measuring the social development of each person can be sought in his/her compatibility with others. Similar to physical, emotional, and intellectual development, social adjustment is a continuous measure that is gradually perfected, and is achieved naturally throughout life and in dealing with experiences.

Another factor perceived to be correlated with educational well-being examined in this study is hope. Hope is one of the more interesting normal structures and concepts in the study of positive psychology, which is a mental and psychological state that motivates man towards work and active engagement, as hope pushes man to reach his goal. According to Snyder's theory of hope, it is a person's ability to set goals, visualize the paths needed to achieve those goals, and shape the motivation to achieve those goals. Hope can assist students in setting clear goals and creating multiple paths to achieve those goals, stimulate them to pursue their goals, and re-frame obstacles as challenges in need of being overcome. Bandura (1999) places great significance on people's self-efficacy beliefs and argues that these beliefs are more involved in academic achievement of students than ability, knowledge and prior achievements [9]. Shank (1991) also considers academic self-efficacy to reflect a person's strong belief in fulfilling academic tasks with contentment. Academic self-efficacy is also defined as an individual's confidence in his or her ability to perform academic self-control behaviors. Self-control refers to the extent to which a learner is metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally able to control the learning process [5]. Research evidence suggests that beliefs of self-efficacy improve the effort and resilience of learners in line with meeting the demands of academic life [10]. The results of other studies also emphasize the important role of self-efficacy beliefs in overcoming academic challenges [11].

The issue of education and improving its quality level is one of the major concerns of all societies today. In spite of the importance of well-being, a review of previous studies clearly reveals that the volume of research on students' psychological problems (i.e. the negative aspects) such as depression, stress, and anxiety is six times greater than that of contentment, happiness, and well-being (i.e. the positive aspects; [12]). It is trivial that identifying the factors associated with academic well-being and providing scientific solutions for its improvement can be of utmost value and importance in enhancing the quality of education and training. This research focuses on highly important variables as preconditions of academic well-being and examines one of the important moderating variables proposed by Bandura, namely self-efficacy as a moderator. Obviously, establishing the relationship between the proposed variables can result in important and influential practical references on well-being to provide useful scientific solutions, based on which the level of academic well-being of students can be improved. Given the aforementioned arguments, the main purpose of this research is to examine whether social adjustment and hope are able to predict educational well-being through the mediating role of self-efficacy.

RESEARCH METHOD

The present study was a correlational study using structural equation modeling (SEM), which is basically a combination of path analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. The statistical population of this study included all students studying in the second-level high-school of Khorramabad in the Persian educational year academic year 2019-2020, amassing to a total of 12728 people. The

sample of this study included 373 students who were selected using proportionate stratified sampling based on gender and educational level, such that after receiving the data on the number of tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade students (by gender), 373 students were selected by setting the proportion. Determining the minimum sample size required is very important for modeling. Many researchers suggested the minimum sample size to be 250 subjects [13]. Based on this, the final number for sample size was determined to be 350 people, for which 377 students were considered to compensate for possible exclusion. The inclusion criteria for this study included: attending second-level high school, willingness to participate in the study, not receiving psychological intervention during the study and having an age range of 16 to 18 years. Moreover, the exclusion criteria of this research were unwillingness to continue participating in the study, distorted response to the questionnaire and the occurrence of unforeseen events. For ethical reasons, a written consent for participating in research was obtained from each student and they were informed of all stages of research. In addition, the students were assured of their confidentiality and that the research findings are published anonymously.

Tools and instruments

Academic Well-being Questionnaire (AWBQ)
Tominin-Sweeney et al. (2012) designed the Academic Well-being Questionnaire by modeling and adapting the psychological well-being features for the context of school. This questionnaire is a self-assessment tool that uses a Likert scale to ask the respondents whether they agree or disagree on 31 items on their educational well-being. The questionnaire included the dimensions of school value (9 items, scored on a seven-level scale ranging from not at all true = 1 to completely true = 7), burnout towards school (9 items, scored on a seven-level scale ranging from Completely Disagree = 1 to Strongly Agree = 7), educational contentment (4 items, scored on a five-level scale ranging from by no means = 1 to very high = 5) and engagement in school tasks (9 items, scored on a seven-level scale ranging from never = 1 to always = 7). Tominin-Sweeney et al. (2012) evaluated the validity of the scale as favorable. They calculated the Cronbach's alpha for the four dimensions of school value, burnout, academic contentment, and engagement with school work to be 0.64, 0.77, 0.91, and 0.94, respectively [14]. Moradi et al. (2016) study calculated the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the aforementioned dimensions plus the whole scale as 0.89, 0.87, 0.92, 0.90, and 0.92 respectively. The content and structure validity of the questionnaire were also reported as favorable.

Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SAQ)

The Student Social Adjustment Questionnaire was developed by Sinha and Singh (1993) in order to determine students' social, emotional and academic adjustment. It was translated and standardized by Karami (2003) for Iran. This questionnaire distinguishes well-adjusted students from poorly-adjusted ones. It has 55 binary-selection items and its scoring is zero and one. Bahmani et al. (2016) calculated the reliability coefficients of the above scale using Kuder-Richardson and Split-half methods for the whole scale as 0.86 and 0.79, for the emotional subscale as 0.79 and 0.81, for the social subscale as 0.78 and 0.84 and for the academic subscale as 0.69 and 0.78, respectively. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scale was equal to 0.82 and the coefficients for the emotional, social and academic subscales were respectively 0.80, 0.79, 0.80.

Snyder Hope Questionnaire (HQS)
The Hope Questionnaire, which was developed by Snyder et al. (1991) to evaluate hope, has 12 items and is administered as a self-assessment. It is scored on a four-level scale ranging from completely right to completely wrong. As can be seen, the range of variations of this questionnaire is between 8 and 32. Of these items, 4 are related to measuring agency, 4 are for measuring pathways, and 4 are control items; Therefore, this questionnaire includes two subscales: agency and pathways. The internal consistency of the whole test was 0.74 to 0.84 and the reliability of the test and retest was 0.80. The validity of this scale was 0.86 using Cronbach's alpha and 0.81 through retesting. The coherence of the items on this scale with Snyder's theory of hope indicates its good content validity [15]. The validity of this scale in the present study was calculated through factor analysis and principal component analysis using varimax rotation. KMO index in this scale was equal to 0.718 and Bartlett spherical coefficient was equal to 194.67 which was significant at the level of $P < 0.0001$ with a DOF of 66. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for measuring reliability in the present study was 0.73.

Self-efficacy questionnaire
The self-efficacy questionnaire was developed in 1982. The scale has 17 items, each based on a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (score one) to strongly agree (score 5). Items 1, 3, 8, 9, 13 and 15 are scored positively, while the rest of the questions are items in reverse, i.e. from left to right. Therefore, the maximum a respondent can achieve from this scale is 85, the minimum of which is 17. Achieving a higher score indicates higher self-efficacy [16]. This scale has been translated and validated by in Iran by Barati Bakhtiari (1997). To assess the validity of the constructs of the General Self-Efficacy Scale, Barati Bakhtiari (1997) correlated the scores

obtained from this scale with measures on several personality traits (Rutter Internal and External Control Scale, Personal Control subscale, Crown-Marlow Social Acceptance Scale, and Rosenberg Interpersonal Competency Scale). The predicted correlation between self-efficacy scale and measurement of personality traits was moderate (0.61 and significant at the level of 0.05) and enough to confirm the desired structure. Furthermore, the reliability coefficient of the scale was determined to be 0.76 using the Guttman split-half coefficient and 0.79 using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient [17]. Also, Rahimi Pardanjani and Ghobari Bonab (2011) evaluated the reliability of self-efficacy using Cronbach's alpha, which was determined to be 0.84. The reliability of the questionnaire in this study was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.82).

For the purposes of this study, both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used. In the descriptive statistics section, central indicators such as mean and standard deviation were employed, while in the inferential statistics section, Pearson correlation matrix, multiple regression and structural equation modeling were used to analyze the data and test the hypotheses. It is noteworthy that in the present study, SPSS and Amos v. 23 were used for statistical analysis.

FINDINGS

Demographic data revealed that 62.5% of the respondents were girls (n=233) and 37.5% were boys (n=140). Also, among the respondents, 11.8% (n=44) were 15 to 16 years old, 71% (n=265) were 16 to 17 years old and 17.2% (n=64) were 17 to 18 years old. On the other hand, among the respondents, 42.4% (n=158) studied in the tenth grade, 31.3% (n=116) in the eleventh grade and 26.5% (n=99) in the twelfth grade. Finally, among the respondents, 55.2% (n=206) were studying experimental sciences, 20.1% (n=75) were studying in the humanities field, 18% (n=67) were studying mathematics, while 6.7% (n=25) were studying theology.

Table 1: Descriptive indicators of research variables

Variable	Mean	SD
Educational Well-being	152.41	12.47
Social Adjustment	91.12	10.83
Self-Efficacy	52.03	8.87
Hope	66.72	9.54
Variable	Mean	SD
Educational Well-being	152.41	12.47
Social Adjustment	91.12	10.83
Self-Efficacy	52.03	8.87

Before presenting the results on Pearson correlation test analysis, the assumptions of parametric tests were tested. Accordingly, the results of Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the normality of the distribution of data samples in the variables of academic well-being, social adjustment, hope and self-efficacy is established (p> 0.05). The assumption of homogeneity of variance was also measured by Levin test, the results of which were not significant, indicating the homogeneity of variances in the variables of academic well-being, social adjustment, hope and self-efficacy (p> 0.05). The results of inferential statistics are presented in the following. To determine the fitness of the proposed model, a combination of fitness indicators was used, the results of which are presented in Table

Table 2: Fitness indices of the proposed model in the research

χ^2	DF	χ^2/df	GFI	AGFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
53.17	22	2.41	0.955	0.910	0.972	0.963	0.971	0.953	0.076

According to the results from Table 3, it can be seen that in the proposed research model for the whole sample of subjects, the ratio of chi-square to degree of freedom (χ^2 / df) is equal to 2.41 (optimal value less than 3), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) is equal to 0.955 (optimal value above 0.95), Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI) is equal to 0.910 (optimal value above 0.90), Incremental Fitness Index (IFI) is equal to 0.972 (optimal value above 0.95), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) is equal to 0.972 (optimum value above 0.95), Confirmatory Fitness Index (CFI) is equal to 0.971 (optimal value above 0.95), Normalized Fitness Index (NFI) is equal to 0.953 (optimal value above 0.95), while Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is equal to 0.076 (optimal value less than 0.08). All the indices indicate a good fit of the proposed model.

Evaluation of the measurement models using confirmatory factor analysis

In this research, variables of "Academic Well-being", "Hope", "Social Adjustment", "Self-efficacy" were presented using separate dimensions and items in the questionnaire, for which Amos 26 software (the latest version of the software) and confirmatory factor analysis was used for the fitness of each of the measurement models. Figure 1 shows the measurement models in the standardized factor load mode. If the factor loads in the measurement model are greater than 0.5, the items are perceived to explain the conceptual variable.
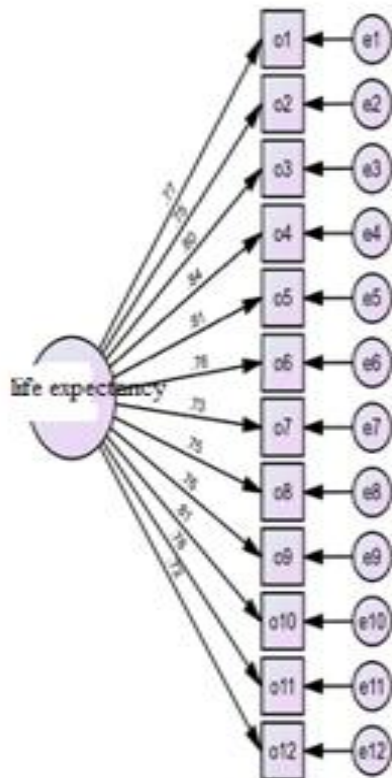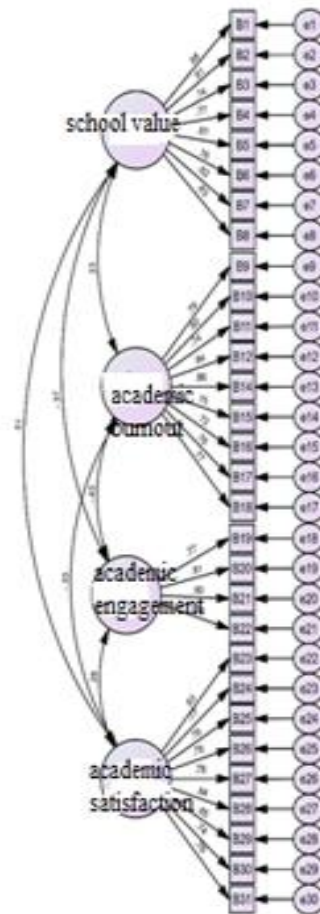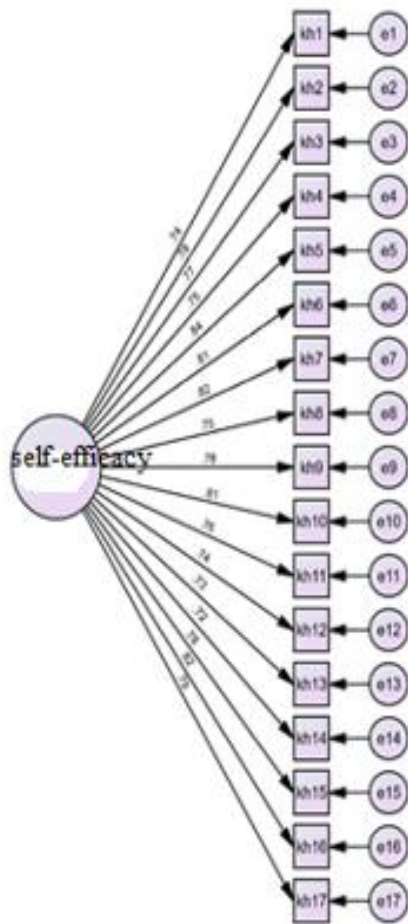
Figure 1: Model for Hope (left), Self-efficacy (center), Academic Well-being (right)

As observed in the measurement models, the factor load of all items is more than 0.7. In other words, more than 70% of the changes in each item are explained by the underlying variable.
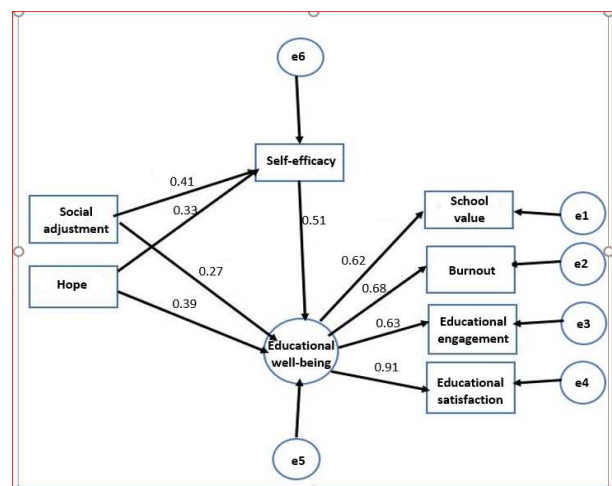

Figure 1: Standard coefficients for the proposed model on the relationship between social adjustment and hope in predicting academic well-being of students with the mediating role of self-efficacy

Table 3: Final results of the study

Relation	Mediator	Standard coefficient	CR	Sig. level	Result
Social adjustment -> Academic Well-being	Self-efficacy	0.41 x 0.51 = 0.209	5.38	0.001	Approved
Hope -> Academic Well-being	Self-efficacy	0.33 x 0.51 = 0.168	4.57	0.001	

Data from table 2 clearly indicates the variables of social adjustment and hope - with coefficients of 0.209 and 0.168, respectively - have an indirect and significant effect on academic well-being through the mediating variable of self-efficacy (significance level less than 0.05). Given that both indirect effects are significant, the overall hypothesis is confirmed.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the structural model of academic well-being on social adjustment and hope with a mediating role of self-efficacy in students. The results indicated that there is a significant relationship among the variables. Moreover, the mediating role of self-efficacy in the correlation between social adjustment and hope with academic well-being was confirmed in a sample of high-school students.

The first part of the findings indicated that social adjustment positively affects the academic well-being of students. Consistent with this finding, Sekar and Lawrence (2016) [18], Mohammadipour and Rahmati (2016) and Bibi, Wang, Ghaffari and Iqbal (2018) and Wang et al. (2018) reported in their respective studies that administering proper social adjustment in schools can bring about positive outcomes such as purposefulness and striving to achieve educational goals in students. The results from Mohammadipour and Rahmati (2016) suggest that high social adjustment is able to prevent burnout and result in high academic hope. Sekar and Lawrence (2016) reported that emotional, social and academic adjustment of high school students can lead to higher academic achievement. In explaining the results of this hypothesis, it can be argued that people who establish a healthy relationship between themselves and their social environment and thus feed their motivations form an atmosphere in which the relationship between individuals, groups and cultural elements achieves satisfactory status. People with high social adjustment have the ability to perform their tasks without help from others, tolerate loneliness and even enjoy it, take responsibility and be providential, and understand that their decisions and actions today can have long-life effects. Furthermore, individuals with high social adjustment interact constructively with other people, exhibit more positive reactions, and avoids behaviors that have negative consequences. Such people often exhibit proper behavior in any given situation, and students with high social adjustment have emotional stability and courage in social relationships, as well as interest in school and education in the form of emotional adjustment, social and educational adjustment. They are highly aware of their strengths and weaknesses and seek to invest in areas they perceive themselves to be talented, while at the same time accepting his limitations in some other areas, as they respect themselves and others. They properly adjust themselves to their family, classmates, relatives, neighbors, and other social settings such as school. An adjustable person has a philosophy that shows him or her the direction of life so that he or she can observe the changing dimensions of situations and circumstances, all of which are highly effective in promoting academic well-being.

The other part of the findings showed that hope also affects the academic well-being of students. Consistent with these results, this hypothesis is line with the results from Shirmohammadi, Mikaeli and Zare (2010), Islami et al. (2016), Ghavidel and Zarei (2018). Ghavidel and Zarei (2018) reported that hope is a mediating variable affecting mental well-being and hope as a mediating variable increases the effects of positive components such as resilience on mental well-being. Shirmohammadi et al. (2010) argued that there is a significant correlation between hope and perseverance, and life satisfaction, as hope is able to explain a very high percentage of personal satisfaction.

Explaining the results of this hypothesis, it can be said that hopeful people are better able to set effective goals and make appropriate decisions about these goals. Research findings show that a person's higher hopes are positively perceived with self-esteem and worthiness and negatively associated with depressive symptoms. Adolescents with high levels of hope perform better on topics related to school, exercise, health, problem solving, and mental well-being. Hope effectively affects many areas of life. People with high life expectancy have the ability to believe in a better feeling in the future and with their penetrating force stimulates the person to gain new experiences, makes him strive and brings him closer to a high level of psychological and behavioral functions. . Life expectant students are able to pursue daily activities and keep themselves active. Hopeful and optimistic people have full confidence that they will achieve their future goals. Hope is one of the signs of mental health and hope is one of the structures that has a significant relationship with positive well-being as an indicator of empowerment. Conversely, people who are disappointed can be frustrated as a symptom of depression, which both paralyzes the will and causes It becomes intolerable and the desire to escape from a situation and can affect the whole life of the person and overshadow the

social and educational performance, etc., and this person considers life as empty and a motivation for progress. It will not and therefore will not do anything important and will not take any positive action.

The final finding of the study indicates a significant mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between social adjustment and hope with academic well-being in students. In line with the present finding, Raouf, Khademi and Naghsh (2019) reported that academic self-efficacy has a significant mediating role in the relationship between perfectionism and academic procrastination [19]. Moreover, Fakharian et al. (2010) reported that academic self-efficacy can be a significant mediator between academic vitality and academic engagement [20]. On the other hand, Pourkarimi and Mobin Rahni (2015) argued that the correlation between achievement motivation and academic burnout can be mediated by self-efficacy [21]. In explaining the implications of this finding, it is noteworthy that people with self-efficacy have achieved knowledge and perception of themselves in finding grounds for achievement as the concept refers to the self-confidence by which an individual can successfully perform the assigned tasks at the designed level. People with self-efficacy believe in their ability to succeed in specific tasks with purpose of achieving their goals, and as such, instead of avoiding difficult tasks, they consider them challenges worthy of their best efforts. Their more positive attitudes result in higher interest and they feel committed to achieving the goals they have selected. In case of failure, they do not lose hope, and try harder and focus more on their tasks. They employ pathway thinking and consider the cause of failure in lack of effort on their side. After every failure, they soon regain their efficiency, and with the confidence that they can control every bit of various factors, they approach risky situations, the very type of attitude and perception that inevitably leads to academic well-being.

The limitations of this study include limiting the scope of research to second-level high-school students in Khorramabad and the existence of some uncontrolled variables, such as the intelligence level of the examined students, financial and social status of the families and lack of control over environmental, individual and social variables affecting academic well-being, social adjustment, hope and self-efficacy of students. Therefore, the authors suggest that in order to increase the generalizability of the results, the same research should be conducted in other cities, regions and communities on different cultures, other educational levels, control of the mentioned factors and study of factors affecting research variables.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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