

Investigating the Relationship between Social Skills and Social Acceptance with Academic Performance, Considering the Mediating Role of Ethical Privacy

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Abstract

Introduction: Academic performance, as one of the most important criteria for evaluating students' ability to complete their studies, can grow under the influence of social skills, social acceptance, and respect for moral privacy. With the understanding of this importance, the present study was conducted with the aim of the relationship between social skills and social acceptance with academic performance, considering the mediating role of ethical privacy.

Material and Methods: The research method was descriptive-correlation study. The statistical population consisted of 645 middle school students of Babol province, using Cochran's formula, 347 of them were selected by one-stage cluster random sampling method. Four standard questionnaires of social skills, social acceptance, respect for moral privacy, and academic performance were used for gathering data. The face and content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by experts and through factor analysis. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Data analysis was done using Pearson's correlation coefficient and path analysis in SPSS and Lisrel statistical software.

Results: The results showed that the relationship between social skills and social acceptance with students' academic performance was positive and significant, and the mediating role of ethical privacy in the relationship between social skills and social acceptance with students' academic performance is positive and significant.

Conclusion: Based on the results; in order to increase academic performance, it is possible to increase the social skills and ability of social acceptance of students in the context of respecting moral privacy.

Keywords: *Social skills, Social acceptance, Ethical privacy, Academic performance*

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INTRODUCTION

The educational system of a country has a fundamental role in educating the citizens of that society. The most personal and social growth of people is done by the official institution of education. In fact, education is responsible for the targeted parts of human education in different intellectual, social, religious, artistic and moral dimensions [1]. Also, educational systems play an

important role in training competent and qualified human resources for the country in terms of their important mission in training experts and scholars [2]. In this regard, measuring the level of academic performance and identifying factors affecting it are among the issues that have attracted the attention of psychologists and education specialists [3]. Because achieving positive results in the field of education (by identifying and controlling the

factors affecting academic performance) leads to the all-round progress of students and society [4]. Researchers consider academic performance as the learned or acquired ability resulting from the courses presented, or in other words, the learned or acquired ability of a person in school subjects, which is measured by standardized tests [5]. One of the basic issues and problems of the educational life of people and the educational system of any country is the low level of academic performance of that country. This phenomenon, in addition to huge economic losses, distorts the mental health of learners. The meaning of academic performance decline is the reduction of academic performance of a learner from a satisfactory level to an unfavorable level. Meanwhile, various factors affect people's academic performance, which education experts have divided into four categories including individual factors, school factors, family factors, and social factors [6].

Although academic performance is affected by many factors, the role of social skills in academic performance cannot be ignored [7, 8]. Having social skills is one of the basic necessities of today's life. This necessity is more tangible especially for teenagers and young adults who face many situations. In this regard, the role of school and teachers is very important. Based on this, considering the importance of learning social skills in the critical years of development, it is necessary to make an initial assessment of the teaching of these skills by teachers [9]. Social skills are abilities that cause behaviors that are positively or negatively reinforced. These skills can produce positive and successful results in human relationships with others and provide more adaptation and a suitable and favorable effect on the behavior of other members of society with whom the child lives in society [10]. In order to live successfully in a society, each person needs other skills in addition to personal skills, which are called social skills. Social skill is said to be a set

of learned and acceptable behaviors that enable a person to have an effective relationship with others and avoid unreasonable social reactions [11]. Socialization is a process during which the norms, skills, motivations and behaviors of a person are formed and prepares him to enter the society and provides the basis for success in education [12].

Also, one of the factors that affect the academic performance of students and is raised in the behavioral outputs of the individual in relation to others is the variable of social acceptance [13]. So that it is expected that people who have succeeded in achieving academic performance have positive evaluations in their academic behaviors and feedback and generally benefit from higher social acceptance [14]. Social acceptance refers to a person's ability to effectively interact with others and the community in order to create satisfying personal relationships and fulfill social roles [15]. Social acceptance is the full capacity to live in a way that enables a person to understand his natural capacities and instead of separating a person from other people who make up his world, they create a kind of unity between the person and others [16]. Social acceptance has a protective role against psychological pressures that supports a person against stressful events of social life [17]. Studies show that one of the key factors affecting the academic performance of learners is social ethics and respect for moral privacy [18, 19]. Due to the functions that ethics has in life, dealing with this issue has always been the concern of thinkers and all schools, and they have sought to find ethical structures to create more requirements and standards for their followers. Morality is actually a set of human traits that appear in the form of behavior that originates from the inner nature of man [20]. In this regard, observing moral privacy as a moral obligation seems to be ambiguous to everyone [21]. Privacy includes a set of human rights such as the right to privacy, i.e. the right to be alone without

disturbing others, the right to anonymity, i.e. the right not to publicize one's identity, the right not to be monitored, and the right to protect personal information [22]. Meanwhile, respecting moral privacy is a psychological distance that guides people in their psychological space. This orientation also directs the way a person responds and reacts to others [23]. Observance of moral privacy expresses the boundary and scope in which people and groups are defined in such a way that a person wishes to show moral attention towards them [24]. The scope of this border is on a continuum from focusing on one's own needs and interests to paying attention to the needs and interests of all human beings. Based on this, people can consider a wide range of human beings and differences by developing respect for moral privacy in themselves [25]. By developing respect for moral privacy, a person values all people regardless of background, affiliation, ethnicity, language, etc., and observes moral principles in interacting with them. What then measures the observance of moral privacy is people's perception of other people as people who are psychologically close. Along with the definition of the group, with a very inclusive degree, which is related to sharing limited resources with others and showing a friendly behavior towards them [26].

Academic performance is one of the important indicators in the evaluation of educational systems. Its high levels can predict a bright future for the individual and the society, and all the efforts and investments of every military are the realization of this goal. Based on this, psychologists and education experts have emphasized on the investigation and identification of factors affecting academic performance. On the other hand, the educational system of any country needs to pay attention to all aspects that provide the basis for improving the academic performance of students. This problem can be realized by developing social

space and social skills. Result orientation, which is one of the prominent characteristics of our educational system, cannot alone provide the basis for the success and all-round growth of students, and the need to pay attention to other individual, environmental and social elements is felt in this regard. On the other hand, the development of social relations requires ethics, which acts as a light in the development of moral privacy. Although moral values are naturally present in all human beings, the acquisition of moral values cannot be assigned to self-examination, and students cannot find their values without getting the opinion of elders. Therefore, one of the important duties of educational systems is to recognize the effective methods of moral education in learners and to try to develop moral values such as respecting moral privacy. As a result, according to the discussed topics, the main goal of the current research is to answer the question of whether social skills and social acceptance have a significant relationship with the academic performance of students with the mediating role of moral privacy.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The current research is descriptive-correlation study. The statistical population of the research includes all the second middle school students of Babol province, numbering 645 people. Using one-stage cluster random sampling, 347 people were selected as a statistical sample for the study, and Cochran's formula was used to estimate the statistical sample size. The data collection tools in this research are four standard questionnaires as follows:

Social skills questionnaire:

The social skills questionnaire is standard for students [27]. This questionnaire contains 27 closed-ended items based on a five-point Likert scale, which has been validated for three educational periods: preschool, elementary school, middle school, and high school. The

questionnaire measures the four dimensions of self-control, empathy, self-expression, and cooperation. In research, the validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by experts and confirmatory factor analysis. The reliability of the questionnaire was also reported based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84[7]. The standard questionnaire of social skills has content validity, but in order to coordinate the questions with the statistical population, some modifications were made. Therefore, its content and form validity were confirmed by the opinion of experts and professors of educational and management sciences. The results of the factor analysis of the social skills questionnaire obtained the desired four components, in which 69% percent of the variance of the questions was extracted. KMO =785% and Bartlett's test ($P<0.000$) showed that the sample size is sufficient and these factors exist in the statistical population. The results of factor loadings higher than 3% with orthogonal rotation obtained the desired four components. The reliability of the questionnaire was obtained based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89.

Social Acceptance Questionnaire:

It is a standard social acceptance questionnaire. This questionnaire contains 33 closed-ended items based on a five-point Likert scale. In research, the validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by experts and confirmatory factor analysis. The reliability of the questionnaire was also reported based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84 [28]. The social acceptance questionnaire has content validity, but in order to coordinate the questions with the statistical population, some modifications were made. Therefore, its content and form validity were confirmed by the opinion of experts and professors of educational and management sciences. The results of the factor analysis of the social acceptance questionnaire obtained 33 desired items, in which 58% percent of the

variance of the questions was extracted. KMO=642% and Bartlett's test ($P<0.000$) showed that the sample size is sufficient and these factors exist in the statistical population. The results of factor loadings higher than 3% with orthogonal rotation obtained the desired items. The reliability of the questionnaire was obtained based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82.

Circle of Moral Regard (CMR):

The CMR is a standard questionnaire [29]. This tool contains 4 questions that measure the level of belief in moral commitment towards four different groups. These four groups are: individuals from other countries, foreigners, people belonging to religious groups different from their own religious group, people belonging to an ethnicity different from their own. The items are graded on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (not committed) to 5 (very committed). The reliability of the questionnaire in internal studies has been reported based on the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.86 [30], the standard questionnaire of ethical privacy has had content validity, but in order to coordinate the questions with the statistical population, some modifications were made. Therefore, its content and form validity were confirmed by the opinion of experts and professors of educational and management sciences. The results of the factor analysis of the social acceptance questionnaire obtained 4 desired items in which 64% percent of the variance of the questions was extracted. KMO =712% and Bartlett's test ($P<0.000$) showed that the sample size is sufficient and these factors exist in the statistical population. The results of factor loadings higher than 3% with orthogonal rotation obtained the desired items. The reliability of the questionnaire was obtained based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84.

Academic Performance Questionnaire:

The academic performance questionnaire is standard [31]. The academic performance test is able to measure 5 areas related to academic

performance with 48 questions as follows: self-efficacy factor, emotional effects, planning, consequence control and motivation. A score has been assigned to each of these factors. In research, the validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by experts and confirmatory factor analysis. The reliability of the questionnaire was also reported based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.71 [32]. The standard questionnaire of academic performance has content validity, but in order to coordinate the questions with the statistical population, some modifications were made. Therefore, its content validity was confirmed by the opinion of experts and professors of educational and management sciences. The results of the factor analysis of the academic performance questionnaire obtained the desired five components, in which 63% percent of the variance of the questions was extracted. KMO=680% and Bartlett's test ($P < 0.000$) showed that the sample size is sufficient and these factors exist in the statistical population. The results of factor loadings higher than 3% with orthogonal

rotation obtained the desired five components. The reliability of the questionnaire was obtained based on Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87.

The analysis of the results of this research was done using SPSS₂₂ and Lisrel statistical software at two descriptive and inferential levels. At the level of descriptive statistics, statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used, and at the level of inference, Pearson's correlation coefficient tests and path analysis were used in Lisrel software.

RESULTS

One of the presuppositions of modeling the structure of the variables is the normality of the variables, the researchers state that in causal modeling, the distribution of the variables must be normal. They suggest that the absolute value of skewness and kurtosis of variables should not be more than 3 and 10, respectively [32]. According to table number 1, the absolute value of skewness and kurtosis of all variables is less than one.

Table 2: Table 1: Descriptive indices of research variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3	4
Social skill	3.31	0.58	-0.02	0.37	1			
Social acceptance	3.36	0.65	-0.18	0.59	0.54**	1		
CMR	3.19	0.68	-0.25	0.27	0.38**	0.39**	1	
Educational performance	3.29	0.58	0.16	-0.04	0.39**	0.45**	0.53**	1

Another prerequisite of structural modeling is the correlation matrix between research variables [33]. As shown in Table 1, there is a positive and significant relationship between the research variables.

According to Figure 1, the relationship between social skills and academic performance (0.11) with a t-statistic of 2.08 at the 0.05 level is positive and significant. The relationship between social acceptance and academic performance (0.24)

with a T-statistic of 4.46 is positive and significant at the 0.01 level. The relationship between social skills and academic performance with the mediating role of circle of moral regard (0.17) with a T-statistic of 3.30 is positive and significant at the 0.01 level. The relationship between social acceptance and academic performance with the mediating role of circle of moral regard (0.18) is positive and significant with a t-value of 3.67 at the 0.01 level.

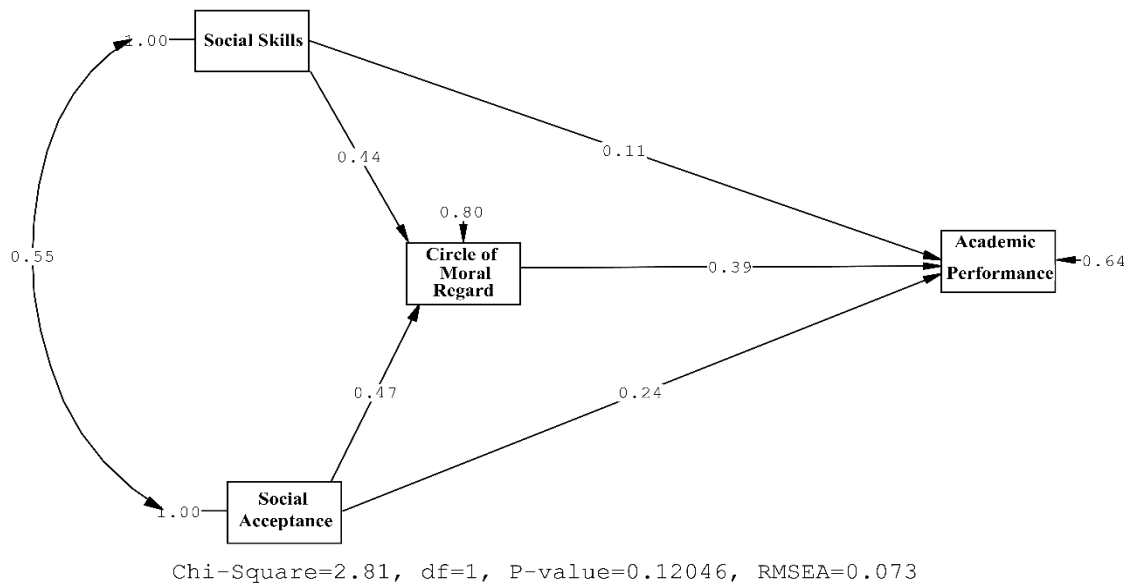


Figure 1: Tested model of research in standard mode

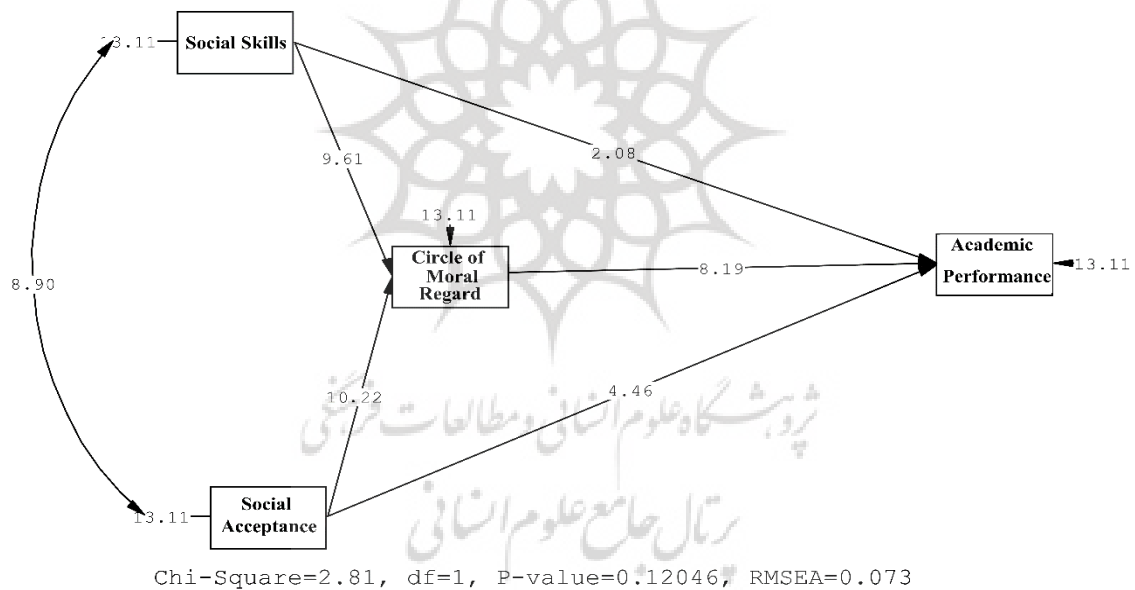


Figure 2: Tested model of the research in meaningful mode

In Table 2, the values obtained in the present study and the acceptable limit of each of the fit indices are reported.

Table 2: Goodness of fit indices of the tested research model

Factor	χ^2/df	RMSEA	P
Experimental value	2.81	0.07	0.12
Accepted value	Less than 3	Less than 0.08	More than 0.05

According to the above table, all the fit indices are at the optimal level and it can be concluded that the tested model has a good fit with the collected data.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the research findings showed that the relationship between social skills directly and with the mediating role of circle of moral regard with academic performance is positive and significant. Studies show that the relationship between social skills and academic performance of students is positive and significant [7, 34-36]. In another research, it was found that the observance of circle of moral regard has a positive and significant effect on the academic performance of students [19]. In another research, they found that social and moral intelligence grows in social interactions and leads to good academic performance [37]. These results are in line with the findings of the present study because they reached similar results. In explaining the obtained results, it can be stated that social skills are abilities that cause behaviors that are positively and negatively reinforced. These skills can produce positive and successful results in relationships with others, manage emotions, and lead to greater adaptability and appropriate and favorable effects on the behavior of other students in the classroom and school environment. Social skills help to interact with others, start and maintain friendships, deal effectively with emotions, and manage emotions. A person's good behavior helps in establishing good relationships with others, which in turn helps him gain new experiences and develop his true talents, to improve his academic performance. Good social skills are very important for students to achieve successful performance in life. By learning these skills, students know how to make decisions and plan in the academic processes, deepen their learning in

interaction with others, and as a result, have a good academic performance. Also, in line with the mediating role of circle of moral regard, it can be said that respecting moral privacy in students is fostered in school due to communication with more people. Respecting social distance from others, how to greet others, talking, playing and working with others, attracting attention and asking for help, the ability to control aggression, being polite and not curious about other people's affairs are the basis of respecting the moral privacy of students. Observance of moral privacy expresses the unethical and ethical attitudes of students in relation to the issues of individuals or groups. This importance in the interactions between students provides a basis for them to devote their attention to the needs, well-being and comfort of others and in this way establish a link with moral principles. This can increase students' desired academic performance.

The analysis of the research findings showed that the relationship between social acceptance directly and with the mediating role of respect for moral privacy with academic performance is positive and significant. In a study, it was found that academic performance is predicted based on the components of social acceptance [8]. In another research, it was shown that social ethics has a positive and significant relationship with students' academic performance [18]. In another research, it was reported that there is a positive and significant relationship between social acceptance and academic progress with the mediating role of the sense of belonging to the school in students [38]. Another study found that social acceptance in social media can have a positive and significant effect on the academic performance of learners [13]. Other research results showed that the ability to intervene in group counseling in the form of learning practical skills and strengthening social relationships and intra-school acceptance will lead to increased

academic enthusiasm and improved academic performance [39]. In a similar study, they found that friends' popularity moderated peer effects over time in reciprocal friendships. While friends' social acceptance exerted equal effects on the achievement of two-way and reciprocal friendships. In general, the popularity of students was affected by mutually favorable social relations. Also, the social acceptance of students is caused by creating friendly relationships among classmates, which affects the academic performance of students [16]. These results are in line with the findings of the present study, because they reached similar results. In order to explain these findings, it should be noted that social acceptance is as important as course content, so low social acceptance can lead to limited opportunities for learning and social isolation. In addition, students may be identified based on behavioral disorders such as anxiety and low levels of social relationships. Therefore, social acceptance can be the basis of personal and social adjustment in people's lives. Also, deficits in social acceptance are associated with poor social adjustment, mental health problems, delinquency, and low self-efficacy. Also, social acceptance is used to gain reinforcement and strong social relationships and avoid annoying social situations. Individuals who fail to develop appropriate social skills are at risk of experiencing negative outcomes, including peer rejection, the emergence of psychological disorders, expulsion from school, isolation, crime, and low academic performance. There are students who are chosen by their peers more than other students for activities such as playing, studying, speaking and other common activities. On the other hand, there are students who are left out in terms of acceptance in the peer group, and peers do not want to choose them to do the activities that were said. Therefore, it can be concluded that students who have good social behavior have high academic performance. Considering that the goal

of all educational activities is to improve the academic performance and academic success of students, in addition to educational facilities and having a suitable educational environment and experienced teachers, students also need moral, positive and constructive interactions. Because having interpersonal relationships based on moral principles among peers in the class and between teachers and students can provide a pleasant environment along with a satisfactory communication and guide students to achieve appropriate educational goals. Therefore, according to the findings of the research and the background of the research, it can be said that students who have high social acceptance will have better academic performance in the context of respecting moral privacy. This structure includes awareness of social situations and dynamics that guide them, as well as knowledge of interaction style and strategies that help students to achieve their goals and create a context for them to perform well academically.

One of the limitations of this research is the lack of measurement of cause-effect relationships between variables, because the research is correlational. Also, the sample examination was limited to the second middle school students of Babol province, which requires caution in generalizing the findings to students of other cities and grades. In line with the obtained results, it is suggested that educational workshops and counselors be held in order to reduce undesirable social behaviors and improve social skills and social acceptance for parents, teachers and students. Also, in formal and informal programs of schools, a special place should be considered for developing social skills and social acceptance of students. It is suggested that teaching discourse techniques to students and providing responsibility and creating a sense of independence should be considered in schools. This can be a big step towards respecting the moral privacy of students. Also, try to consider

the development of moral principles and values in the overt and hidden curriculum of students, especially in line with the education of moral privacy.

CONCLUSION

The general result of the research showed that the relationship between social skills and social acceptance with the mediating role of moral privacy is positive and significant. Education is one of the most important social institutions, and in fact, the quality of the activity of other social institutions largely depends on the performance of this institution. The sensitivity of education, on the one hand, and the complexity of today's world, on the other hand, demand that special attention be paid to the discussion of education and the level of students' learning. Today, instead of providing educational programs or classroom behavior management, the focus of education has changed to cultivating motivated, creative, thoughtful and ethical students. Because students are the biggest assets of any society and they can set a cycle of progress and development in motion by combining youth, science and learned skills. In fact, today, the all-round education of students with emphasis on moral values for learning and maintaining and continuing it, may be one of the main concerns of parents and teachers. Also, from an educational point of view, it is very important to educate ethical based students. Based on this, it seems that the most important task of schools is to provide quality experiences for students, to create interest and get involved in the assignment and development of their skills and knowledge, and to develop moral principles and values.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues (such as plagiarism, conscious satisfaction, misleading, making and or forging data, publishing or sending to two places, redundancy and etc.) have been fully considered

by the writers.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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