Original Research

Academic Well-Being of Adolescent Girls: The Role of Academic Self-Efficacy and Happiness

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Abstract:

Background: Academic well-being is the students' view of education and it has been seen as an important indicator in educational processes. Therefore, identifying its predictive factors is very important. Based on this, the aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between academic self-efficacy and happiness with academic well-being in female students.

Method: The present research design was descriptive-correlational. 375 female students were selected by multi-stage cluster sampling method using Krejcie & Morgan table. With Using Tuominen-Soini et al.'s academic well-being questionnaire (2012), Morgan-Jinker academic self-efficacy questionnaire(1999) and Oxford Argyle & Lu (1989) happiness questionnaire data were collected. The data were analyzed with correlation significance test and stepwise regression analysis using spss26 software.

Results: The results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between academic well-being and academic self-efficacy ($P < 0.01$, $r = 0.66$) and happiness ($P < 0.01$, $r = 0.64$).

Conclusion: The results of regression analysis showed that academic self-efficacy and happiness predict academic well-being and academic self-efficacy plays a stronger role in explaining the variance of academic well-being. Based on the findings, it can be said that students who have more academic self-efficacy and happiness have a positive attitude and more ability to adapt and solve problems in the school environment and have higher academic well-being. The findings of the present research have practical implications for psychologists and school counselors.

Keywords: Academic well-being, Happiness, Academic self-efficacy.

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Introduction

The positive psychology movement continuously seeks to understand the processes and conditions that contribute to the flourishing of people. Hamilton and Hamilton (2009) state that schools are an important key source in acquiring competencies and skills needed to achieve the greatest capacities needed for success and are considered one of the most important contexts of human evolution [1]. Hence, it has been emphasized to use programs to increase prosperity in schools, since 2009. In 2009, by introducing "positive education", Seligman highlighted whether students are being taught to be good and happy. And if happiness and well-being are the most desirable goals of humans, why not foster them in the classroom [2]. If schools are interested in such goals, they should expand well-being in addition to academic learning. School is a critical context for adolescent development. Positive education in schools provides the process of increasing life satisfaction, increasing social bonds, promoting learning and creativity, as well as promoting citizenship, which continues into adulthood. Positive education improves the positive psychological characteristics and students flourishing. Assessing students' well-being helps to understand the state of well-being in schools and its progress [3]. Psychological research indicates that teacher and peer support and a sense of belonging at school are important predictors of student psychological and academic well-being [4]. In addition, among the different periods of human life, adolescence is considered to be the most valuable and important period of individual life. This transition stage, from childhood to adulthood, is the beginning of social, physical and psychological changes and developments that affect the individual's performance in adulthood and create different needs specific to this age [5]. Adolescent girls are among the groups that, due to age requirements, are very important in freedom and gender-related issues. Concerns about identity, independence, choice, freedom, power, perfection and many related concepts have created significant challenges for this age group, which are vulnerable for various reasons, sometimes determining the path and foundation of their lives and influencing their health [6]. On the other hand, the emotional evolution of adolescent girls and their perception of well-being is affected by cultural context and beliefs and cultural differences such as the definition and experiences of well-being in Western and Eastern societies should be taken into account in order to analyze the structure of well-being [7]. In exploring the perception of well-being in iranian girls, factors such as social changes, cultural and educational patterns, the structure of education and the perception of low well-being of Iranian adolescent girls compared to boys are of interest [8]. The differences between adolescent boys and girls in well-being, including the lower level of well-being, social support, and independence of adolescent girls compared to boys (Nik Azin, Shoairi, and Nainian, 1392), show the importance of exploring the girls' well-being, specificically in educational situations. Academic well-being is expressed as a good and constructive connection of a person with learning and studying, which is of particular importance in education. Academic well-being consists of four components related to the school. First, the value of the school; School value expresses the amount of value that learners consider for school [9]. Eccles and Wigfield (1995) have generally expressed the value of school as the student's understanding of the process of going to school; which includes the attractiveness, importance, practicality and usefulness of the results of studying and going to school from the student's point of view. Also, Niemivirta (2004) considers the value of school as the level of students' interest in studying and enthusiasm in going to school [10]. The other dimension, which is called school exhaustion, is a feeling of tiredness in meeting school expectations, a negative attitude towards school and an unfavorable feeling about learning. In this sense, emotional fatigue and pessimism are primary predictors of lack of academic ability.

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The third dimension is academic satisfaction, which refers to a person's feeling of satisfaction with choosing educational paths and options to achieve their educational [11]. The fourth dimension is involvement, participation or engagement in school affairs, which is defined as a positive and focused state of mind for doing all school affairs (not just studying), which is associated with the characteristics of appreciating, constant attention, and content perception [11]. The quality of education that young people-especially girls-receive [12] could affects their perception of school and their well-being. For example, research suggests that students from lower classes may have more negative views of their schools and experience lower academic achievement than students from higher classes, which is because of different educational expectations and opportunities at home, as well as lower expectations and bias from teachers and organizations[12, 13].As a result, increased pressure to achieve success and uncertainty about future education and employment may lead to academic stress for some students and jeopardize their academic well-being. The recent reports of the Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare have also shown worrying trends in the feeling of fatigue and failure of students at school, which seems especially common among girls (Institute of Health and Welfare of Finland, 2019). In general, some studies have shown that girls are more engaged in academic tasks than boys, but consistently report higher levels of failure and exhaustion at school. Therefore, identifying the factors affecting academic well-being, developing practical tools to support academic well-being and providing adequate coping skills and helping students to maintain and recover their resources, are important to maintain interaction and manage the feeling of possible fatigue and prevent more serious problems in their future [14]. Various factors predict academic well-being. One of which is academic self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is an important component that refers to a person's assessment of his abilities for order in affairs and activities necessary to achieve desired performance. Self-efficacy has been expressed as a motivational, activating and guiding variable of behavior towards the goal. Self-efficacy is defined as a person's belief in his work to complete tasks within a specific time frame [15]. From the individuals' perspective who state that people are confident in their abilities to perform a task well, even if it if the work has many obstacles, they are self-efficacious, and vice versa [16]. Self-efficacy has been studied in various fields such as behavior change, performance and sports skills, job behaviors and academic performance etc. In educational context, self-efficacy is often expressed as academic self-efficacy, which refers to the learner's judgment about the ability to successfully achieve educational goals [17] .Academic self-efficacy is an important predictor. Academic success is academic sustainability and continuing education and is positively correlated with academic progress [18]. Academic self-efficacy is a construct rooted in Albert Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory or social learning theory. Academic self-efficacy, which reflects a student's personal belief in his/her abilities to perform educational tasks at expected levels, increases the student's mental effort [16]. Studies conducted by researchers on academic self-efficacy have concluded that it is very important for students to believe in their ability to begin and continue their education. Academic self-efficacy may further enhance students' intrinsic motivation, such that students set higher goals for themselves and show more persistence in schoolwork [19]. Students' academic self-efficacy is a strong positive or negative predictor of a wide range of indicators of academic performance, such as academic achievement. Academic self-efficacy, task importance and being interested, together can predict students' class participation. Even when the tasks seem very challenging, students with a high level of interest and academic self-efficacy can engage in learning in the classroom [20]. In other words, academic self-efficacy and interest together moderate the effect

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of task importance on learning behaviors, because interest has a lasting effect on students' learning and self-efficacy has become a strong predictor of motivation and academic success[19]. From a motivational point of view, a person with higher academic self-efficacy shows more effort and persistence to solve problems and overcome the obstacles and challenges ahead, which reduces the probability of failure and increases the probability of victory that leads to more vitality. Also, from the selection process point of view, the student with higher academic self-efficacy beliefs tries to choose the conditions for performance that will make him more likely to succeed, and this choice leads to increased academic well-being [21]. Academic self-efficacy means confidence in performing academic tasks, including answering questions in class, reading books, and preparing for exams. Sahrai et al.'s field research (2017) also showed that part of the distribution of academic well-being can be explained by academic self-efficacy[22]. Pajares (2003) believes that academic self-efficacy can affect academic progress and indirectly affect students' goals, which is to achieve better grades [23]. Sahraei et al.(2017) in their research "the relationship between academic self-efficacy beliefs and academic well-being with the mediating role of perceived academic stress and progress emotions, emphasizing the mediating role of information sources and positive and negative progress emotions and perceived academic stress in the relationship between academic self-efficacy beliefs and academic well-being" state that part of the common difference between the two concepts of academic self-efficacy beliefs and academic well-being is expressed through the emotions of progress and perceived academic stress. In addition, in general, the results of this study provided additional empirical evidence in defense of the underlying conceptual logic of self-efficacy theory - as one of the contemporary theories of academic achievement motivation[22]. Another variable that affects students' well-being is happiness. Happiness is a form of well-being that is often taken for granted, however, despite various theories, its definition is quite challenging. Happiness as one of the positive influences on people's lives, consists of three dimensions. These are dimensions of having positive affect, connection with life, and meaning in life[15]. Having positive emotions means that people have positive feelings about the past, present, and future and acquire the necessary skills to experience these emotions intensely. Studies have shown that these desirable situations have positive relationships between feelings of security, happiness, and forgiveness. Happiness, due to its effect on people's life span and health, has attracted the researchers' attentions for years [24]. In research related to happiness, well-being and life satisfaction of teenagers, various factors in individual context (such as self-concept, perception of self-efficacy, temperament and physical appearance), communication (such as relationships with family, peers and friends of the same and opposite sex) and psychological abilities and skills (such as goal setting, emotional intelligence, problem solving and appreciation) have been studied [25]. Happiness is a force that motivates, moves and makes a person active in accepting responsibility and striving for success, and even in case of failure, it makes a person strive for success with strong determination and learning from failures and communicate with the surrounding world. In turn, hard work leads to the progress and success of a person in various areas of life and can create a feeling of happiness. Many studies have shown the correlation between happiness, educational progress and educational satisfaction [26,27]. Perneger (2004) believes that there is a strong relationship between happiness, health and psychological well-being. In a study by [28] who examined the relationship between happiness and mental and physical health on 1275 students in Geneva, the results showed that the mental health and well-being of students was due to continuous and stable happiness. In general, due to the fact that mental vitality plays a role in expanding education and creating a sense of

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belonging to the school; School principals should try to create a happy and lively environment for education in order to attract students. In this situation, students with high internal motivation get further involved in the learning process, and they increase academic well-being by focusing on the motivation of progress[29]. In education, the school is a social institution where the personality development of the people of future takes place. Focusing and emphasizing on academic well-being is one of the important and effective factors on the full-fledged growth of students, and happiness plays an important role in the development and strengthening of well-being, emotional stability, creativity, mental dynamism, positive feelings in life, self-confidence, social cooperation and desire to progress of students in school[30] . Alipour and Hashemi (2018) state that happiness has positive results on the academic success of students and increases the desire to perform behaviors that are related to academic success[31]. Considering the importance of academic well-being in adolescents and the need to pay attention to the changes and developments of adolescence in girls and the special importance of well-being in the school environment of girls[25], this research was conducted aiming to investigate the relationship between happiness and academic self-efficacy with academic well-being and determining the contribution of happiness and self-efficacy in predicting academic well-being among female students.

Methods

1.2. Research design and participants

The current research was descriptive-correlational. The sample of this research included all the female secondary students in the 8th and 14th regions of Tehran in the academic year of 1400-1401. Based on the table of Karajesi and Morgan (1970), 375 female students were selected with a multi-stage cluster method. Using IBM SPSS 26.0 software, the data was analyzed through step-by-step regression analysis.

2.2. Data collection

In this research, the following questionnaires were used to collect information:

Academic Well-Being Questionnaire: Tominin-Sweeney et al. (2012) designed the Academic Well-Being Questionnaire (AWBQ). This scale is a self-assessment tool with 31 items on a Likert scale in four dimensions: school value, academic exhaustion, academic satisfaction, and homework participation. Cronbach's alpha for these four dimensions was calculated as 0.64, 0.77, 0.91 and 0.94 respectively [11].

Moradi et al. (2015) conducted a research titled the evaluation of factor structure and measurement of internal consistency of the Iranian version of the academic well-being questionnaire. To determine the factorial validity of this questionnaire, they used the exploratory and confirmatory analysis method and used the Cronbach's alpha method to measure the internal consistency of the items of this index. The results of the factor analysis showed four components for this questionnaire and the indicators of the factor analysis confirmed the existence of them [32]. In this research, they found the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this questionnaire of 0.87, the school value factor of 0.88, the exhaustion factor to school of 0.73, the academic satisfaction factor of 0.73, and the school bonding factor of 0.75. Karami et al. (2017) in their study "the effect of self-compassion training on academic well-being" obtained the reliability of this questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.81[33].

In their research, Viskarmi et al. (2018) reported Cronbach's alpha for the whole questionnaire as 0.78, school value factor as 0.73, academic satisfaction factor as 0.81, school exhaustion factor as 0.73, and assimilation with school as 0.79. In the present study, the total Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.90, the school value was 0.81, the exhaustion factor was 0.80, the academic satisfaction factor was 0.77, and school engagement was 0.74.

Happiness Questionnaire: This questionnaire was designed by Argyle and Lowe (1990), and has 29 items and is scaled using a four-point scale

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between zero (completely disagree) and three (completely agree). The score of this tool is obtained by summing up the scores of the items, and the higher the subject's score, the more it has that feature. The makers reported the reliability of the tool with Cronbach's alpha method of 0.90. Kamtan et al. (2019) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient for happiness as 0.91 in their research [34]. Robbins, Francis and Edwards (2010) also reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.92 in their research. This tool was translated and standardized by Alipour and Noorbala (1998). They obtained 0.92 reliability of the tool by halving method [35]. Hadinejad and Zarei (2008) reported that Cronbach's alpha for the total happiness index in the first test was 0.84, and in the retest it was 0.87, both of which were optimal. Kohi and Tabatabai et al. (2020) in their research calculated the reliability coefficient using Cronbach's alpha method as 0.89. In the present study, the reliability coefficient was calculated using Cronbach's alpha method of 0.94[36]. Academic self-efficacy questionnaire: Jinks and Morgan (1999) academic self-efficacy scale was used to measure students' academic self-efficacy. This scale has 30 questions and 3 subscales of talent, effort and texture [37]. The items of this scale are on a 4-point Likert scale. The internal consistency of the scale is determined by Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82. Also, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the three subscales of talent, effort and texture has been announced as 0.78, 0.99 and 0.70 respectively. Qudsi and Putri (2016) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.79 in their research. Also, Hull (2011) reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82 for their research and 0.78 for the talent subscale, 0.70 for texture and 0.70 for 0.66 attempt passed. Jamali, Norouzi, and Tahmasbi (2012) obtained a total reliability coefficient of 0.76 for academic self-efficacy and 0.62 for texture components, 0.59 for effort, and 0.79 for talent [38]. Karimzadeh and Mohseni (2004) have reported the validity of this scale using optimal factor analysis in Iran. Also, the reliability coefficients of this scale were obtained by Cronbach's alpha by Karimzadeh and Mohseni (2015) for overall self-efficacy of 0.76, effort dimension of 0.65, aptitude dimension of 0.66, and texture dimension of 0.60 [39]. Khormaei and Zaboli (2017) reported the alpha coefficient for the entire questionnaire to be 0.75. In the present study, reliability coefficients were obtained through Cronbach's alpha for overall self-efficacy of 0.78 and for talent dimension of 0.74, effort dimension of 0.63 and texture dimension of 0.73 [40,41].

Results

At first, the underlying assumptions of the analysis were examined. Smirnov's Klomogrof method was used to check the assumption of normality. The results show that none of the research variables violate the assumption of normality. The assumption of independence of the residuals was checked with the help of Durbin-Watson's statistic and multiple collinearity analysis with the help of VIF variance inflation factor and tolerance index. Durbin-Watson's statistic was calculated as 2.02, which indicates no violation of the assumption of independence of the residuals. Also, the values of VIF index and tolerance index were obtained as 1.72, 1.73, 2.25, 0.58, 0.57 and 0.44, respectively, which indicates the lack of multiple collinearity. Table 1 shows the standard deviation, mean and correlation coefficients of the studied variables.

Table 1 shows that educational well-being has a positive and significant relationship with academic self-efficacy ($p>0.01$, $r=0.66$) and happiness ($p>0.01$, $r=0.64$).

In order to determine the contribution of self-compassion, academic self-efficacy and happiness in predicting academic well-being, step-by-step multivariate regression analysis was used.

The results of Table 2 show that in the first step, the academic self-efficacy variable explains 44% of the changes in academic well-being. In the second step, the variable of happiness is included in the prediction equation and the explanation coefficient increases to 52%. That is, academic

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self-efficacy and happiness explain 52% of the changes in academic well-being.

Discussion

The current research was conducted with the aim of predicting academic well-being based on academic self-efficacy and happiness in adolescent girls. The results of the present study showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between self-efficacy and academic well-being. The results of the research by Ustadian(2019)[42], Heydari, et al(2019)[43], Daimiel et al (2020)[44], McGeown et al(2014)[17], OECD (2019)[45], Yousefi Afrashteh and Rezaei (2022)[29]. Based on research, paying attention to increasing awareness of one's feelings and experiences regarding cognitive strengths and weaknesses, as well as giving awareness about abilities in female students, leads to an increase in psychological well-being [42, 43, 44, 45, 46]. Students with higher self-confidence are more capable in studying and are confident in their ability to overcome academic challenges. In case of failure, such students not only do not withdraw, but seek other paths to achieve success and better performance. This same resistance to academic challenges and providing a positive, constructive and adaptive response to different permanent and ongoing educational obstacles is the basis of academic vitality [46,47]. If, during the teaching and learning process, the desired topic is presented to the female student in a way that increases her self-confidence in solving the problem and ultimately creates a feeling of "I can" in the individual, it will have a much greater impact on mental health and It will leave a person's mind to emphasize how to cope with the problem. The ability to solve problems plays a role in increasing the well-being of girls, and to enhance this variable, one should increase his/her confidence in his/her own beliefs and abilities to solve problems and self-efficacy[41]. The dimensions of academic self-efficacy (effort and talent) have the ability to explain academic conflict and are able to predict it. In fact, more effort put in carrying out activities by a student is a sign of high self-efficacy, and causes the student to be more involved in academic activities and challenge himself when facing the task [48]

People who believe in their abilities, compared to people who do not, are more persistent and diligent in doing their homework[49]. As a result, they perform better in homework and involve themselves more in academic activities. On the other hand, people with low self-efficacy stop their efforts before reaching the desired result, but people with high self-efficacy do not stop their efforts until reaching the result of desire. People with weak self-efficacy are focused on their inabilities and shortcomings and avoid participating in potentially rewarding activities due to a feeling of inadequacy[50]. Another result of the present study was that there is a positive and meaningful relationship between happiness and academic well-being. This finding is in agreement with the results of the researches of Jitdoorn et al., Jay and Gupta (2021). If the school environment is happy and safe, students' absenteeism from school will decrease and desire to study, academic progress and also academic well-being will rise [51]. One of the determining factors in students' achievement of goals is happiness. If the school can create happiness in the students, they can easily determine their behavioral goals, and this will encourage them to have a greater tendency and act in a certain way in certain situations. [52]. This orientation in educational situations shows the individual's motivation to study, and thus, his actions, inclinations and responses in learning situations are affected [53]. Many researches show that students who have permanent happiness have better mental health and mental well-being. Apathy and low self-confidence are factors that lead to a decrease in the quality of life and academic status of students. According to Arjal (1986), a happy person has a favorable and satisfactory attitude towards himself and others, has balanced social relations and evaluates his life process. Diener (2001) believes that a person with vitality has a purpose in life and chooses his goals

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consciously, and he also makes a lot of effort to achieve his goals[54]. Avoiding wasting time, hoping for success and positive approach to life make people successful [55].

Conclusion

The results of the present research have practical implications for trainers, counselors, teachers, psychologists, and secondary school administrators in order to improve the academic well-being of adolescent girls. The present study had limitations; Participants' answers to the self-report instrument of the questionnaire may be distant from their real answers. Considering that the current research was conducted on secondary school girls, one should act cautiously when generalizing the results to other populations. In addition, the academic well-being of students may be affected by several factors such as ethnic, cultural and economic characteristics and school factors, but in the present study, the differences of individuals in such variables have not been considered. Therefore, it is suggested for future research to study or monitor the role and contribution of these factors on well-being; Also, it will be useful to examine the effectiveness of strategies to strengthen academic well-being and educational interventions based on self-efficacy and happiness on improving academic well-being.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Table/ Figure

Table1. Standard deviation, mean and correlation coefficients of study variables

Variables	SD	Mean	Educational self-efficacy	Happiness	Educational wellbeing
Educational self-efficacy	10.82	91.22	1		
Happiness	16.85	41.26	0.64**	1	
Educational wellbeing	31.25	122.93	0.66**	0.64**	1

Table2. Step-by-step regression analysis results for educational wellbeing from educational happiness and educational self-efficacy

Step	Variables	Beta	Significance level	R	R^2	F	Estimation error
1	Educational self-efficacy	0.665	0.000	0.665	0.442	214.751	0.770
2	Educational self-efficacy happiness	0.428 0.368	0.000	0.722	0.521	146.886	0.715

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