

Self-Concept, Social Adjustment and Academic Achievement of Persian Students

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Abstract

The present study aimed at exploring the relationship between self-concept and social adjustment with academic achievement of students. The research population was male and female secondary students in Iran, Islamshahr city. The subjects selected through cluster random sampling method including 234 students (122 male and 112 female students). Rogers Self-concept questionnaire and the student adjustment questionnaire utilized. For academic achievement, the first half-year GPA considered. Using SPSS software for data analyzing, the results of the study are; there is a significant difference between girls and boys academic achievement, there is also a significant difference in the overall adjustment between these two groups, but there is no significant difference between their self-concept. To study the relationship between self-concept and social adjustment with academic achievement of the male and female students and its dimensions the correlation matrix of the students' scores of research variables calculated. The result indicates a significant relationship between self-concept and adjustment. There is a significant correlation between academic achievement and social adjustment, but there is no significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. In General, the results indicated that the better adjustment people have, the more ability they will make progress in their life.

Keywords: Self-Concept, Academic Achievement, Social Adjustment, Gender Differences.

Introduction

In the current world, scholastic performance is of a paramount importance and all countries pay special attention to academic achievement, scholastic performance, success and competition. In fact, one of the main objectives of education is to develop the students through providing proper conditions for them so to reach the highest levels of academic achievement. Academic achievement refers to the results of intellectual performance in schools and universities, and as an education parameter it is the most important factor for individual and social prosperity (Steinmayr, Dinger, & Spinath, 2012). Researchers have always showed great interest to find out how factors affect academic achievement and progress and what role they play in this regard. No doubt, a set of individual and environmental factors among many others influence the students' academic achievement. Undoubtedly, it is impossible to make research into all the affecting factors in one research study and to analyze all the related materials and variables. It seems academic achievement is a multi-dimensional variable, and it is affected by enormous factors.

The age of early adolescence is the critical age of the development of self-concept and it changes the concept of "self" profoundly (Dudovitz, Li, & Chung, 2013), studying the nerve system of early youth through nerve photography, the scholars found that the changes in nerve system affect their "self". Furthermore, the nerve development in the early youth interferes with the adolescents' behaviors like the increase of awareness and peer effectiveness. The observation of the youth behaviors and ensued age changes support the finding of the present study (Sebastian, Burnett, & Blakemore, 2008).

On the course of development and self-actualization, every person actively begins to differentiate himself from others so as to perceive the differences between his/her experiences which are part of his performance and others' experiences. "Self-concept" includes the person's experiences, his/her understanding of the conceptual forming the "self" traits and also it takes in the quality of the interpersonal relationship she/he has in outside world. He/she comprehends the values of this realization (Rogers, 1951). Self-concept, therefore, is comprised of a set of thoughts, feeling, and attitudes a person develops about him or herself (Woolfolk, Hughes, & Walkup, 2007). Huitt (2004) believes that self-concept is the cognitive and intellectual aspect of "self, which provides the person with an overall understanding about him or herself. Self-concept can be defined as self-assessment, awareness and insight one has about him or herself (Hormuth, 2010).

Self-concept does not necessarily reflect the reality. Every person has some kind of perception of what he/she would be in future. The more the "ideal self" is in congruence with the actual self, the more satisfied the person would be. The failure to achieve the ideal concept leads to the social and psychological incompatibility. On the other hand, self-concept summarized to just what a person imagines about him/herself; it also includes the other's judgment, real or unreal, especially coming from those present in one's social environment. Therefore, self-concept involves the attitudes, feeling and awareness one has about his/her abilities skills, appearance and social acceptance and other features; it is actually formed through transaction with the environment special through self-assessment with others.

The youth who have positive self-concept possess a higher social and emotional compatibility so they have the potentiality to make better progress (Nasir & Lin, 2012). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) believe weakening the person's positive self-concept has a close correlation with vulnerability to depression. Those who have negative perception about themselves often show a lower efficiency and face problems to set up a close relationship with others. A lower self-concept can even make problematic one's emotion management. The finding of Ybrandt (2008) indicates that positive self-concept is an indicator of psychological health and proper growth of the youth and it can be the reason to keep the

person from the behavior difficulties. The negative self-concept and sense of guilt lead to social isolation and hence depression. The results of the study conducted by Ybrandt (2008) showed that self-concept is a main factor in social relationship, peer relationship and compatibility with the life events and behavior problems.

Social adjustment as an important indication of psychology health is a topic attracting the attention of many psychologists. Social growth is the most important aspect of one's development and it is acquired through the relationship with others especially with the parents, peers and the teachers, and it is the assessing criterion of social growth related to the person's adjustment with him/herself and others (Hartup & Rubin, 2013). On the other hand, living in a human society has stemmed from a set of values and expectations paradigm, and to meet one's expectations and value framework a person needs a sufficient amount of adjustment. Without adjustment, the person is not able to meet many of his/her basic needs. If one is incompatible with the society properly, he will feel isolated.

Nasir and Lin (2012) believe that one's personality, self-concept and social interactions as steamed from his or her compatibility. Adjustment is an effective factor for one's positive self-concept. Hence, a person who has a positive self-concept has a vast range of joys and interests. Rogers (1951) indicated that one who does not have a clear self-concept is not compatible. Rogers makes a differentiation between one's actual-self rooted in one's experience and one's ideal self which one wants to gain. To Rogers, if these two selves are far separated, one suffers more from in compatibility and vice versa, when one has positive self-concept feels more valuable for having high self-esteem and behaves confidently and enjoys high social adjustment(Rogers, 1951).

Dhingra and Colleagues (2005) assert that adjustment is a continuous process through which one changes to be in proper adjustment with his environment, others, and himself. The basic objective to adjustment is to set a balance between one's wishes and social expectations that affects all aspects of one's life. As a result, the person can respond properly to all environmental stimuli to acquire his favorable stimuli and reinforcement.

Although adjustment contains many aspects like social, emotional, physical and educational dimensions; the best aspect is social adjustment which is the prerequisite to the other aspects of adjustment (Mazaheri, Baghiyan, & Fatehizadeh, 2006). Emotional and social adjustment resulting from positive self-concept can provide the person with some kind of ability to face the difficulties, and a higher self- esteem strengthens one's ability to efficiently tackle with the psychological pressures (Wilbum & Smith, 2005).

In literature, many researchers have studied the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement and their findings assert that a good adjustment leads to the positive self-concept, in turn, bringing about a better educational performance. meanwhile, most research studies have demonstrated that students regardless of the obtained results consider their efforts as a predicator of academic achievement; so for the students think of their self-concept as an indicator of academic achievement and their reluctance of their lower academic achievement (Gerardi, 2005). Huang (2011) showed in his meta- analysis study that there is a positive correlation between positive self-concept and higher scholastic performance and lower self-concept leads to lower scholastic performance. Since learning occurs in social setting, the main educational objective is to provide a proper condition for the students to obtain a higher academic achievement. If a young person suffers a lower and unfitting position among his classmates, his main function, learning and achieving academic achievement is inhibited. Then the person is isolated because he does not get the attention and interest of others; hence decreasing the amount of his social relationship and this isolation and loneliness gradually creates negative self-images, lack of efficiency and alienation which leads to a lower self-esteem resulting in inability to confronting difficulties and problem solving (Yarmohammadeain, Molavi, & Iranpoor, 2003).

It seems self-concept and academic performance has a bilateral relationship. Burns (1979) believes that self-concept is the most important parameter of academic achievement, and it is obvious that schools as foundational factor have vital effect on the development of positive self-concept in the age of the early youth. Having positive attitudes, self-esteem, and responsibility are the other affective factors in cognitive social approach which influence the academic achievement (D. F. Albert-Green, 2013). Verschueren and colleagues (1996) studied social acceptance and social adjustment in children. Their findings showed that there is a positive and significant correlation between positive self-image and the amount of social acceptance of students.

The research studies have showed that student s' academic achievement can be predicted on the base of the students' social adjustment, and social function can affect the academic achievement. The study conducted by Rey and Elliot (2006) showed that self-concept and social skills can be considered as the assessing factors of adjustment and some groups showed higher social adjustment and academic performance as they had higher social skills and positive self-concept. In other study (Yarmohammadeain, et al., 2003) conducted to study the relationship between bilateral friendship and peer acceptance, academic self-concept and social adjustment with academic achievement. The results of the study indicated a high positive correlation between the self-concept and social adjustment of the female students. Rivkin and his colleges (2005) showed that there is a significantly positive correlation between the bilateral friendship and peer acceptance with the academic achievement of male and female student. According to Ledd and his colleges (1997) peer acceptance, bilateral friendship and collaboration among young children can predict with certainly their adjustment in the school in future.

The results of some studies show positive relationship between the genders on the scales of positive relationship with others and personal development (Vleioras & Bosma, 2005). The research conducted by Maddux and Brewer (2005) revealed that one of the main differences between two genders is their self-concept. The difference in self-concept can be the cause of different behaviors people have. The research findings showed that gender differences in cognition, motivation, excitement and social behaviors can be explained according to the male and female different self-concepts (Cross & Madson, 1997). The research asserts that women and the men define themselves in a quite different ways. Women define themselves with others in society but men define themselves with themselves (Kemmelmeier & Oyserman, 2001). In a study, the women and men were asked to select pictures they think they may describe themselves best. Women chose the pictures showing them with others but the men chose the pictures in which they were alone (Clancy & Dollinger, 1993). In other research Marcic and Kobal Grum (2011) showed no significant difference between self-concept and self-esteem among the males and females. As far as self-concept indicators are concern, there is a positive relationship between groups of males and females, in the fields of social skills, responsibility, citizen responsibilities, honesty and loyalty. The research showed the women are more satisfied with being with others than men, and they are more competent to interact with others, and they are more loyal and honest in comparison with the men.

Since all societies help the men and women to obtain self-actualization and flourish their potentialities and talents, the study of the differences between genders is of paramount importance. The gender differences should be taken into consideration in studying many psychological factors (Kalantarkousheh, 2012). Furthermore, paying attention to the variables like self-concept, social adjustment, academic achievement among the youth, both in girls and boys, can help improve the youth self-actualization. Considering these points, the main objective of the present study is to explore the relationship between self-concept and social adjustment of boys and girls.

Research Method

Population, Sample and Sampling Method

The statistical population consists of all male and female students in Iran, Islamshahr. They are studying in high school in 2013. The study sample consists of 234 students (112 males and 122 female), who were selected through a multi-stage cluster sampling. To collect data the following testing scales are used:

Self-concept: Rogers' self-concept scale was used to assess the students' self-concept. It is in two forms of A and B: the form A assesses the person's attitude of actual self and form B the person's attitude of ideal self. This scale has 25 pairs of traits; every pairs are antonyms and written opposite touch other. In their interval are 7 scale of grading. In general, if the sum of the grades is below 7, the person has a normal self-concept and if over 7, the person has a weak self-concept. Since the original version of the scale is in English, and it has been standardized to Persian by Sohrabi and Alborzi (2002). In the present study, its reliability reported through 86 Kronbach A Fraction.

Adjustment Inventory for School Students(AISS): this questionnaire was designed by E.K.P Sinha and R.P. Singh (1993) and standardized in Iran by Karami (2001). It has 60 questions and assesses the adjustment of high school students (14-18) in 3 fields of emotional, social and education all levels (each contains 20 questions). Zero is assigned for who answered adjustment, and one for who answered maladjustment. In Persian version, the validity of the questionnaire obtained through test-retest method in /93 level (Karami, 2001)

Academic achievement: In present research, the relationship between self-concept and social adjustment, and Academic achievement, the mean of the first half year is used.

Research findings: The statistical factors of the scores of academic achievement, self-concept and social adjustment of male and female students were calculated. The data are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Data

	Group	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	α
Academic achievement	Female	112	17.32	2.29	-
	Male	122	14.58	2.35	
self-concept	Female	112	9.47	3.39	0.637
	Male	122	9.41	3.17	
total adjustment	Female	112	21.14	6.92	0.760
	Male	122	23.38	7.26	
academic adjustment	Female	112	7.37	3.40	0.55
	Male	122	9.22	3.53	
social adjustment	Female	112	6.94	3.11	0.57
	Male	122	7.03	2.67	
affective adjustment	Female	112	6.96	3.10	0.59
	Male	122	7.38	3.36	

As you see in table one, the means of the scores of self-concept of the female and male students are very close to each other but in academic achievement scale, male students' mean is lower than that of girls'; And in adjustment the mean of male students are higher.

To study the significant differences among male and female groups, T test of two independent groups was used, one of the pre requisite of T test for two independent groups is that Variances of two groups are equivalent which was assessed by Levene's Test for Equality of Variances. Table 2 shows the results of Levene's Test for the scores of academic achievement, self-concept, social adjustment and subscales for the males and females students.

Table 2: The Result of Levene's Test

variable	F	sig.	variable	F	sig.
academic achievement	2.60	0.11	academic adjustment	0.23	0.63
self-concept	0.14	0.71	social adjustment	4.11	0.06
total adjustment	0.17	0.68	Affective adjustment	2.27	0.13

In table 2 the results of Levene's test to evaluation has been represented according to given results in the about table. The equality of variances of two groups of males and female students in scores of academic achievement, self-concept and social adjustment and its subscales at the level of .95 ($\alpha=.05$) is not significant. In other words, because the Levene's test is not significant, the null hypothesis is conformed. With 95 percent we can concluded that the variances of two groups of girls and boys in the scores of academic achievement, self-concept, social adjustment and subscales are equal and the assumption of using parametric of research data has been confirmed

To test the research hypothesis and to evaluate the significance of the differences between the means of the scores of academic achievement and self-concept and social adjustment of girls and boys the t-test of two groups is used. The results can be seen in table 3.

Table 3: The results of independent t test to compare the means of academic achievement and self-concept of girls and boys

Variable	group	mean	standard deviation	t	df.	sig.
academic achievement	female	17.32	2.29	9.11	232	0.001
	male	14.58	2.35			
self-concept	female	9.47	3.39	0.13	232	0.894
	male	9.41	3.17			

According to table 3 and the value of t-test (0/11) and considering the significant level which is less than 0/05, there is a significant relationship between the academic achievement scores of male and female student in level(0/05), and girls compared with boys have got more means in academic achievement. According to table 3 and the given value of t(0/13) and because the level of significant is above 0/05, it can be said that there is no correlation between girls and boys in the level of($\alpha=0.05$).

Table 4: The results of independent t-test to compare the means of adjustment and its minor scales among girls and boys

variable	group	mean	standard deviation	t	Df	sig.
total adjustment	female	21.14	6.92	2.41	232	0.017
	Male	23.38	7.26			
Academic adjustment	female	7.37	3.40	4.08	232	0.001
	Male	9.22	3.53			

Social adjustment	female	6.94	3.11	0.18	232	0.857
	Male	7.03	2.67			
Affective adjustment	Female	6.96	3.10	0.99	232	0.322
	Male	7.38	3.36			

According to table 4 and the value of t-test (2.41), and its level of significance is lower than ($\alpha=0.05$), it can be said there is a positive correlation between the scores of adjustment of male and female students at level of ($\alpha=0.05$) That is, with %95 confidence there is a significant difference between girls and boys adjustment. The adjustment of girls, however, is more than of the boys.

The results of the examining the subscales of adjustment also revealed that only in educational adjustment ($\alpha=0.01$) there is a positive correlation between male and female students. The adjustment of girls however is more than of the boys.

To examine the relationship between self-concept, academic achievement, adjustment and its aspects in male and female students, correlation matrix of scores of research variables has calculated and the results are presented in table 5.

Table 5: The results of correlation coefficient for academic achievement and adjustment and its dimensions between the students

	academic achievement	Total adj.	educational	social	affective	self-concept
academic achievement	1					
total adjustment	-0.378**	1				
academic adjustment	-0.411**	0.820**	1			
social adjustment	-0.141*	0.716**	0.376**	1		
affective adjustment	-0.283**	0.697**	0.418**	0.297*	1	
self-concept	-0.064	0.230**	0.143*	0.257*	0.103	1

$n=234$ **= $P \leq 0.01$ *= $P \leq 0.05$

As shown in table 5 there is a positive relationship between adjustment and self-concept ($p \leq 0.01$) In other words, the higher the self-concept of the students the better their adjustment would be and vice versa. Among the adjustment dimensions a, self-concept and social adjustment ($p \leq 0.01$) and educational adjustment ($p \leq 0.05$) a positive correlation has been revealed.

According to table 5 there is a significant but inverse relationship between academic achievement and students' adjustment ($p \leq 0.01$) that is, with the increase in students' scores in academic achievement the amount of their adjustment is decreased and vice versa. As well as among the adjustment dimensions, academic achievement and educational and emotional adjustment (0.01) and social adjustment ($p \leq 0.05$) a significant but inverse correlation revealed. It means that the higher the students' adjustment (emotional, educational and social), the better and more desirable academic achievement they would have.

To sum up, in accordance with the above table and the amount of obtained correlation coefficient(0.064) we can come to this conclusion that there is not any significant correlation between academic achievement and self-concept of the students.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed at exploring the relationship between self-concept and adjustment of the students and their academic achievement, considering this idea that the youth are the human resources and future hopes of our society, they will play a great role in progress and development of the society. Academic achievement is one of the criteria to assess the individual and social development and specially the youth are facing many problems in their adjustment, interpersonal relation, maturity and cognition, the study of their effects on the academic achievement is quite essential.

The present study revealed that there is a significant difference in academic achievement between male and female students, and the girls are far better than the boys are as far as their academic performance is considered. It seems gender differences play a significant role in the students' academic achievement. The girls' educational, scientific and cultural progresses in recent years are far better than those of the boys. Of course, the impact of some factors like the teacher and the school (Rivkin, et al., 2005) should not be ignored. The teachers' attitudes toward the students are different, and they mostly infer that the boy's academic ability is lower than the girl's (Mullola, et al., 2012). Considering gender and individual differences, the researchers have proven that the girls enter the school with more advanced social and behavioral skills than the boys and they mostly maintain their skills and abilities in the next grades (DiPrete & Jennings, 2012) and the girls are more interested in group performance and teamwork(Skelton, 2010).

The present research also showed that the difference between the boys' and girls' self-concept is not significant. This result is not in congruence with the findings of the studies conducted by (Maddux & Brewer, 2005) ; (Marčič & Kobal Grum, 2011). Perhaps the study done about the relationship between gender and self-concept depends on the definition and the assessment tools. Several studies attribute the gender differences and self-concept to the gender stereotypes (Fox, 2000); (Crocker, Eklund, & Kowalski, 2000). A meta-analysis done by (Wilgenbusch & Merrell, 1999) showed that the girls introduce themselves powerful in verbal skills and befriending abilities, but the boys have clearer physical self-concept and are more powerful in math and physical skills.

Several factors affect the children's self-concept. When they grow up, the factors like family and school affect their self-concept. Family establishes an environment in which the child can form and develop his or her self-concept. In the early ages, the parents are the main sources of information that help children develop their vision of their self, and the parents give them the feedback. In fact, the first effective factor in children's self-concept is the parents. Then, when the child attends the school, the teachers and other people in the school setting may be an information source for the children can get and accumulate. Therefore, the teachers, classmates and other important people can influence the child's self-concept. All these factors can affect the children's self-concept and make them the same or different.

The findings of the present study confirmed this hypothesis that there is a significant difference the boys' and girls' adjustment. This finding is consistent with the findings of (Vleioras & Bosma, 2005); (Clancy & Dollinger, 1993; Kimmelmeier & Oyserman, 2001); (Dhingra, et al., 2005). To interpret the research results it can be said that if a young person is less accepted by his peers, the person will face some problems in his/her social performance, it can be concluded that adjustment also affects the youth behavior and their different emotional, educational and social performances. Adjustment is a process in which a person is

adapted to his/her environment and makes his or her environment adaptable with his or her self, and develops his or her self. Perhaps the confirmation of the third hypothesis supports the first hypothesis that the academic performance of the girls is better than that of boys. Gender differences shows that the girls experience a higher level of extroversion and agreeability (Lehmann, Denissen, Allemand, & Penke, 2013). The research findings proved that girls are more sociable, and are eager to teamwork.

The present study showed that there is a significant relationship between adjustment and self-concept. The result is consistent with the findings of the studies done by (Ladd, et al., 1997; Nasir & Lin, 2012; Ray & Elliott, 2006; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Verschueren, et al., 1996; Wilbum & Smith, 2005; Yarmohammadeain, et al., 2003; Ybrandt, 2008). It seems how one envisions his or her abilities one takes different roles in different settings like family, society and their behaviors. In fact, adjustment is the reflection of one's self-concept. Acceptance of others is possible just when the person has self-acceptance and his or her self-concept is in alliance with the individual experiences. Positive self-concept enables the person to have better understanding of other and provides better interpersonal relationships.

The fifth hypothesis shows a positive correlation between social adjustment and academic achievement; it expresses that social adjustment like physical, emotional and intellectual development is a spectrum quantity. One evolves gradually, and improvement obtained through one's experiences and it is the most important indicator of social well-being in adolescents. Adolescents using their social abilities and skills can find their right position among their interpersonal relationships and adult and peer relationship. They can get social acceptance and it, in turn, leads to success in social adjustment. The students who have lower social, emotional and educational adjustment, face various interpersonal problems (Wiener, 2004) and the problems like losing motivation, frustration, anxiety and depression (Sideridis, 2006), these problems, in turn, result in causing failure in academic achievement of the students. This finding was supported by many findings (Nasir & Lin, 2012; Ray & Elliott, 2006; Rivkin, et al., 2005; Yarmohammadeain, et al., 2003). The findings of the present research showed no significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement, and the result is not consistent with the findings of the research done by (D. Albert-Green, 2005; Burns, 1979; Gerardi, 2005; Huang, 2011). This inconsistency maybe attributed to the social and cultural differences of the students in different societies.

In fact, one of the higher objectives of the education is to provide the youth with the proper conditions to obtain higher academic achievement. The study emphasizes the following points: It is required that the factors affecting the academic achievement in general be studied in different societies in order to obtain their effects and the extent of their impact on academic achievement. Educational planners and curriculum designers are required to consider a course dealing with social skills and the ways to get adjustment with the problems facing the students in different fields. The present study studied just the effects of self-concept and social adjustment on the students' academic achievement and it was impossible to study the other existing factors so obtained result may be affected by other factors.

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