

Modeling the Relationships between Academic Well Being, School Enthusiasm, and Self Esteem in Elementary School Students: The Mediating Role of Social Adjustment at School

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to examine and model the structural relationships among academic well-being, school enthusiasm, and self-esteem in elementary school students, specifically evaluating the mediating role of social adjustment.

Methods: This descriptive-correlational study employed structural equation modeling (SEM). The statistical population comprised all fourth- to sixth-grade elementary students in Nir County during the 2024–2025 academic year. A sample of 250 students was selected using cluster random sampling. Data were collected using the Academic Well-Being Questionnaire (Tuominen-Soini et al., 2012), the Self-Esteem Scale (Bakra, 2021), the Social Adjustment Scale (Sinha & Singh, 1997), and the School Engagement/Enthusiasm Scale (Wang et al., 2011). Data analysis was performed using SPSS and SmartPLS 4 software.

Results: The findings showed that the direct effect of self-esteem on academic well-being is positive and significant. School enthusiasm also has a positive and significant direct impact on academic well-being and social adaptation. The direct effect of social adjustment on academic well-being was also confirmed. In addition, the indirect effect of self-esteem and school enthusiasm on academic well-being through the mediation of social adjustment was positive and significant. The positive and significant relationships between self-esteem, school enthusiasm, and social adjustment confirmed the mediating role of social adjustment in academic well-being. The goodness-of-fit indices of the model, including the coefficient of determination (R^2) and the coefficient of prediction (Q^2), were also confirmed.

Conclusions: The results showed that social adjustment is an effective mediator between self-esteem and school enthusiasm with academic well-being, which leads to the promotion of academic well-being in students.

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Introduction

One of the major challenges in schools is academic well-being. In recent years, students' academic well-being has gained considerable importance and refers to the sense of satisfaction and quality of the academic experience, encompassing psychological and social factors that influence academic performance (Shafqat et al., 2024). This concept includes positive emotions such as satisfaction with academic life, a sense of belonging to school, and the ability to manage academic challenges, all of which also affect mental health and academic success (Mohammadi et al., 2021; Nasirzadeh & Nargesian, 2019).

The educational environment, school policies, and teachers' interactions with students play a crucial role in shaping academic well-being (Barkar, 2016). Academic well-being is associated with positive emotions and stands in contrast to academic stress and anxiety, which negatively affect mental health and academic performance (Vinia, 2021; Rinilina et al., 2023). Balancing personal resources, such as social support and mental health, with academic achievement is a key factor in achieving academic well-being (Wiles, 2018). School engagement, social adjustment, and self-esteem are among the factors that contribute to increased academic well-being (Khaleqkhah & Karimianpour, 2020; Toi Van et al., 2024). Research has shown that academic pressure and exam-related stress can lead to a decrease in academic well-being (Fomina & Filipova, 2024), whereas academic engagement has a positive relationship with it (Khaleqkhah & Karimianpour, 2020). Mental health and emotional states, such as anxiety and depression, influence learning ability and academic success (Mehmand et al., 2022; Vinya, 2021). Social factors, including positive relationships with classmates and teachers and the quality of the learning environment, significantly affect academic well-being (Viskermi et al., 2019; Zainli et al., 2020). Psychological capital, such as students' hope and expectations, also plays an important role in promoting academic well-being (Amini et al., 2020).

The history of academic well-being dates back to the early twentieth century, and its importance in improving educational quality and reducing psychological problems—especially during critical developmental periods—has been emphasized (Zainli et al., 2020; Taheri et al., 2020). The main components of academic well-being include a sense of belonging to school (Yaghubi et al., 2020), academic satisfaction (Mohammadi et al., 2021), and the management of academic stress and burnout (Shafiei & Barhamat, 2020), all of which contribute to improving the academic

experience. As a multidimensional and dynamic construct, academic well-being requires continuous review and sustained attention to optimize developmental pathways within educational systems.

Fomina and Filipova (2024) stated that the pressure and stress resulting from examinations and academic assessments can reduce students' academic well-being. Similarly, Tuy Van, Daryl, Ali, and Korjo (2024) highlighted the key role of academic well-being in academic success and emphasized that, given the negative effects of stress and anxiety on students' mental and academic health, schools should place special emphasis on developing programs to enhance academic well-being. Such programs can improve both quality of life and academic outcomes. Mohmand, Monteiro, and Solomonian (2022) also noted a direct relationship between mental health and students' academic well-being, emphasizing that emotions such as anxiety and depression affect learning ability and academic success. Vinya (2021) further underscored that academic stress and anxiety can have detrimental effects on both academic performance and students' mental health. Finally, Khaleqkhah and Karimianpour (2020), drawing on various studies, reported a positive and significant relationship between academic enthusiasm and academic well-being.

One of the key factors associated with academic well-being is self-esteem. Self-esteem, defined as students' overall evaluation of their personal worth, is strongly associated with mental health and the formation of adolescents' life goals and is closely related to self-acceptance and self-respect (Marubo et al., 2024; Mishra, 2017). This construct comprises cognitive, affective–evaluative, and behavioral components, reflecting individuals' perceptions, feelings, and behaviors toward themselves (Malykhina, 2020). A sense of personal worth and perceived competence are central elements of self-esteem (Javid & Tariq, 2016; Bharti et al., 2015). Self-concept, which includes individuals' beliefs and perceptions about themselves, also influences academic motivation (Reddy et al., 2015; Hosseini, 2020).

Factors affecting self-esteem include positive interpersonal relationships (Marubo et al., 2024; Wagner et al., 2018), cultural and social changes (Marubo et al., 2024), personality traits (Noor Ezian Binti Saheidan et al., 2019), academic performance (Reddy et al., 2015), social support (Bharti et al., 2015), learning motivation (Zheng, 2024), teachers' attitudes (Shu, 2024), and emotional intelligence (Reddy et al., 2015). The importance of high self-esteem in enhancing resilience, mental health, and positive social relationships, as well as in preventing anxiety,

depression, and academic failure, has been widely emphasized (Mishra, 2017; Reddy, 2015; Rollo, 2013). Therefore, strengthening students' self-esteem is essential for improving both academic performance and mental health (Rolo, 2013).

Kim and Dammasakakarn (2024) reported that self-esteem fully mediates the effects of emotional intelligence on academic adjustment and psychological well-being. Guha and Berry (2024) also emphasized the significant role of social adjustment in academic well-being, noting that peer social support and self-regulation are associated with better social adjustment, which in turn enhances academic well-being. Almorumdeh et al. (2024) stated that self-esteem plays a pivotal role in the relationship between psychological capital, academic engagement, academic procrastination, and psychological well-being, acting as a mediating variable in these relationships.

Ilma and Hurriyet (2024) suggested that creating opportunities for positive interactions among students, teachers, and families can be highly effective. Prihartini et al. (2023) emphasized that school engagement directly influences learning and academic achievement. Ongel and Tabançali (2022) noted that digital learning environments provide opportunities for more active interaction and learning, leading to increased student engagement. Khanghahi, Sefatgol, and Siasar (2022) also reported a positive relationship between engagement and academic success, indicating that students with higher levels of engagement tend to achieve better outcomes. Keramati and Zare-e-Mirakabad (2024) demonstrated that the relationship between engagement and a sense of belonging contributes to positive academic achievement. Nazizadeh and Sadat Seyed Barki (2023) identified school engagement as a key factor in academic success. Additionally, school culture and climate can influence enthusiasm and improve educational quality (Karimi Dashtaki, 2023). Karimi Dashtaki (2023) emphasized the mediating role of classroom atmosphere and self-concept in shaping enthusiasm. Mollaei, Hejazi, Afrashte, and Marvati (2020) also highlighted educational hope as an effective mediator between academic support and academic enthusiasm.

Another important factor influencing students' academic well-being is social adjustment. Social adjustment has both positive and negative aspects; while it can promote group integration and harmony, it may also lead to excessive conformity and reduced critical thinking (Joliningrum et al., 2024). Social pressures can result in poor decision-making or behaviors that conflict with individual values and beliefs, potentially leading to harmful or unethical outcomes with serious consequences for individuals and society (Adamidis, 2024). The effects of social adjustment are

evident in various contexts, including educational environments, where it can foster responsible behavior and support the formation and maintenance of social norms (Joliningrum et al., 2024). This variable has frequently been examined as a mediating factor in research (Dalling-Boreham et al., 2024). Sociocultural adjustment is a complex process that can have both positive and negative effects on the academic and psychological functioning of international students (Dorcas et al., 2024). Social supports, such as promoting positive relationships, encouraging group activities, and strengthening social skills, play a critical role in facilitating this adjustment (Fernandez et al., 2019). Social adjustment refers to individuals' ability to align with collective norms, values, and expectations across different contexts, enabling effective communication and meaningful participation in society, and it has a significant impact on mental health and quality of life (Fokkerdi & Mohtat, 2017).

The history of social adjustment research dates back to the early twentieth century, with studies such as those by Faulkner and Steins focusing on the psychological conflicts arising from social change and adaptation (Brown, 2019). Social adjustment comprises several dimensions: the social dimension, involving positive interaction and group participation (Sharbatian, 2019); the cultural dimension, related to understanding and accepting cultural diversity and enhancing opportunities in multicultural societies (Askari Khanaghah et al., 2020); and the emotional dimension, which reflects individuals' emotional responses to sociocultural conditions and contributes to social satisfaction (Sharbatian, 2019). Dorcas et al. (2024) noted that language barriers and social challenges can lead to isolation and psychological difficulties, whereas support and counseling programs can facilitate social integration. Pham (2024) emphasized the reciprocal relationship between social adjustment and academic well-being, highlighting the need for focused interventions to improve students' quality of life. Selian et al. (2020) identified academic stress and social maladjustment as significant contributors to psychological problems. Fernandez Lasarte et al. (2020) and Fernandez et al. (2019) reported that strong social support from teachers and peers enhances academic engagement and improves social adjustment. Amini et al. (2019) also indicated that psychological capital and social adjustment play crucial roles in students' well-being and performance and promote healthy behaviors.

In conclusion, students' academic well-being plays a vital role in mental health and academic success and is influenced by psychological and social factors such as self-esteem, school

engagement, and social adjustment. A precise understanding of these factors and the mediating role of social adjustment can enhance the quality of academic experiences and improve students' performance. Therefore, examining these relationships within educational systems is essential.

Academic well-being fundamentally shapes students' mental health and academic success by influencing both the quality of learning experiences and overall satisfaction. Given the positive effects of school engagement and self-esteem on academic well-being, as well as the mediating role of social adjustment, a deeper understanding of these relationships can clarify the underlying mechanisms affecting mental health and academic achievement. Beyond theoretical contributions, such insights can inform the design of educational programs and psychological interventions aimed at fostering both academic and psychological success. With increasing academic pressures in schools, students' academic well-being is increasingly at risk, potentially leading to anxiety, depression, and reduced motivation. Consequently, it is essential to investigate the roles of school engagement, self-esteem, and particularly social adjustment as mediating variables to develop targeted interventions that enhance academic well-being. Elementary school represents a critical developmental stage for shaping academic attitudes and behaviors, underscoring the importance of research at this level. Neglecting these factors may lead to deficiencies in both academic performance and students' mental health. Therefore, the present study aims to examine and model the relationships among academic well-being, school engagement, and self-esteem in elementary school students, considering social adjustment as a mediating variable. The conceptual framework of the study is presented in Figure 1, which illustrates the hypothesized model tested in this research.

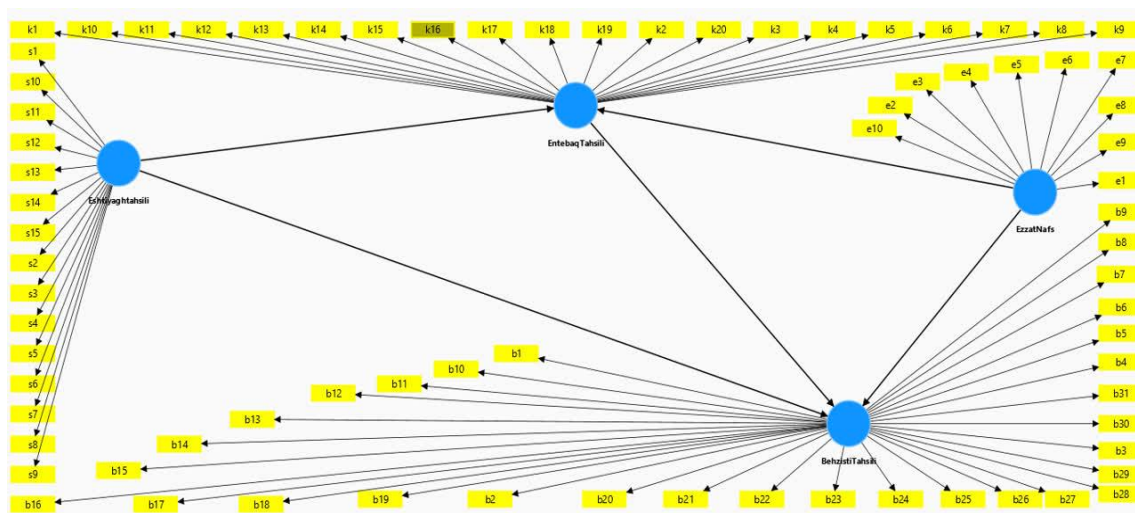


Figure 1. Conceptual research model

Material and Methods

The present study was descriptive–correlational in design and was conducted using structural equation modeling (SEM). The statistical population of the study included all elementary school students in Nir County during the 2024–2025 academic year. The statistical sample consisted of 250 students from the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, who were selected through cluster random sampling. Data collection instruments in this study included four questionnaires. To provide a more detailed explanation of the sampling procedure, three elementary schools were first randomly selected from among all elementary schools in Nir County. Subsequently, several classes from the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades were randomly selected from each of the chosen schools. Thereafter, students from these classes participated in the study based on proportional allocation of the sample size. This multi-stage cluster random sampling method was employed to enhance the representativeness of the sample and to improve the generalizability of the findings to the target population.

The selection of the research instruments in the present study was based on the theoretical framework of the research, its objectives, and methodological requirements. The questionnaires used were chosen for their conceptual alignment with the main variables of the study, their widespread application in previous empirical studies, and their favorable psychometric characteristics, including satisfactory validity and reliability indices. Since the statistical

population of the study consisted of elementary school students, special attention was paid to selecting instruments that were developmentally and linguistically appropriate for this age group, with items that were clear and comprehensible to the students.

The Academic Well-Being Questionnaire was selected because it measures multiple dimensions of students' academic experiences, including school value, engagement with schoolwork, academic satisfaction, and academic burnout. The Self-Esteem Questionnaire was chosen due to its concise structure, clarity of items, and high levels of validity and reliability, making it suitable for measuring self-esteem among elementary school students. To assess social adaptation, the Social Adaptation Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SASS) was employed, as it evaluates important aspects of students' social functioning, such as interpersonal relationships, social participation, and social motivation, and it aligns with the mediating role of social adaptation in the research model. In addition, the School Enthusiasm Questionnaire was used to measure the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement of students with school, which corresponds to the theoretical definition of academic enthusiasm in educational psychology.

Overall, the use of these four standardized instruments provided a comprehensive and reliable measurement of the research variables and established a solid methodological foundation for testing the proposed structural equation model. Accordingly, SmartPLS 4 was utilized for data analysis because the primary objective of the research model was predictive in nature.

Research tools

Tuminin-Sweeney et al. (2012) Academic Well-Being Questionnaire: The Academic Well-Being Questionnaire was developed by Tuminin-Sweeney et al. in 2012 and consists of 31 items. The measurement scale of the items in this questionnaire is designed based on a 5-point Likert scale, which is graded from completely disagree to completely agree. This questionnaire is used to measure the level of academic well-being of students and includes four main components: school value, school work engagement, academic satisfaction, and academic burnout. Academic well-being is equal to the score that respondents obtain from answering the questions in this questionnaire, and the higher this score, the higher the level of academic well-being of the individual. The validity of this questionnaire has been confirmed by Tuminin-Sweeney et al. (2012) in terms of face and content. Also, its reliability has been reported in various studies,

including studies conducted in Iran, using a Cronbach's alpha coefficient higher than 0.70, indicating the desirable reliability of this tool.

Bakra Self-Esteem Questionnaire (2021): The self-esteem questionnaire was developed by Bakra in 2021 and consists of 10 items. The measurement scale of the items in this questionnaire is designed based on a 5-point Likert scale, which is graded from "very low" to "very high". This questionnaire is designed to measure the self-esteem of individuals and has two main components: positive self-esteem and negative self-esteem. Items 1 to 5 are related to positive self-esteem and items 6 to 10 are related to negative self-esteem. Negative items are scored in reverse. Self-esteem is equal to the score that respondents get from answering the questions of this questionnaire, and the higher this score, the higher the level of self-esteem of the individual. In this questionnaire, the total score is calculated between 10 and 50; a score less than 20 indicates low self-esteem, a score between 21 and 40 indicates medium self-esteem, and a score higher than 41 indicates high self-esteem. The validity of this questionnaire has been confirmed in terms of content in the study of Bekra (2021). Also, its reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient has been reported as 0.935 for the positive self-esteem dimension and 0.924 for the negative self-esteem dimension, which indicates a very favorable reliability of this tool.

Social Adaptation Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SASS): The Social Adaptation Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SASS) was designed by Basque, Dubini, and Poulin in 1997. This questionnaire has 21 items, of which only one is selected from items 1 and 2, depending on the respondent's educational or occupational status, and is included in the scoring; therefore, the final scoring is based on 20 items. The response scale of this questionnaire is based on a 4-point Likert scale (from 0 to 3), with zero indicating the lowest level of social adaptation and three indicating the highest level of social adaptation. This tool is designed to assess the degree of an individual's involvement in social activities, interpersonal relationships, social motivation, and level of social functioning, and has a special application in the field of screening and follow-up treatment of disorders such as depression. In some items, such as items 16, 17, and 19, scoring is done in reverse. The total score of the questionnaire ranges from 0 to 60, with a higher score indicating a higher level of social adjustment. The validity of this tool has been confirmed in various studies in terms of form and content, and its reliability has been reported using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of more than 0.80, indicating its appropriate validity in psychological and clinical studies.

Wang et al. School Enthusiasm Questionnaire (SES): This questionnaire was developed by Wang et al. in 2011 and consists of 15 items. The item measurement scale of this questionnaire is designed based on a 5-point Likert scale, which is graded from never to always. This questionnaire is used to measure students' school enthusiasm and measures three main components: behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement. School enthusiasm is equal to the score that respondents get from answering the questions of this questionnaire, and the higher this score is, the higher the level of school enthusiasm is. The validity of this questionnaire has been confirmed in terms of face and content by Wang et al. (2011). Also, its reliability has been reported in various studies using Cronbach's alpha coefficient above 0.80, which indicates the desirable reliability of this tool.

Execution method

After obtaining the necessary permits from the Nir County Education Department, the questionnaires were distributed to the schools in Nir County. Fourth, fifth, and sixth-grade students answered the questionnaires, and the students were carefully supervised in completing the questionnaires. After eliminating the questionnaires that did not meet the requirements for entering the software, the questionnaires that met the entry criteria and were suitable were entered as input data into the SPSS software, then analyzed in the Smart PLS4 software, and the final model was drawn.

Data analysis method

The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling in SPSS version 26 and SmartPLS4 software. To calculate reliability and validity, the convergent validity (AVE) for the research variables was obtained above 0.50, and the convergent validity was confirmed. The reliability was also reported to be above 0.70, which is confirmed.

Results

In the present study, 250 students participated. Of these, 128 were girls (51.2%) and 122 were boys (48.8%). 85 (34%) were studying in the fourth grade, 81 (32.4%) in the fifth grade, and 84 (33.6%) in the sixth grade.

Also, the mean and standard deviation of the research variables were calculated, and academic well-being was reported with a mean of 123.6728 and a standard deviation of 19.29930, self-esteem with a mean of 39.7674 and a standard deviation of 6.71780, enthusiasm for school with a mean of 59.6026 and a standard deviation of 9.70553, and social adjustment with a mean of 79.2285 and a standard deviation of 12.93012. Considering the interval nature of the variables, the normality of the data, the lack of collinearity between exogenous variables, and the absence of correlation higher than 0.70 between exogenous variables as important assumptions in the structural equation modeling of the research, the following steps were carried out. The fitted model based on standard scores is presented in Figure 2.

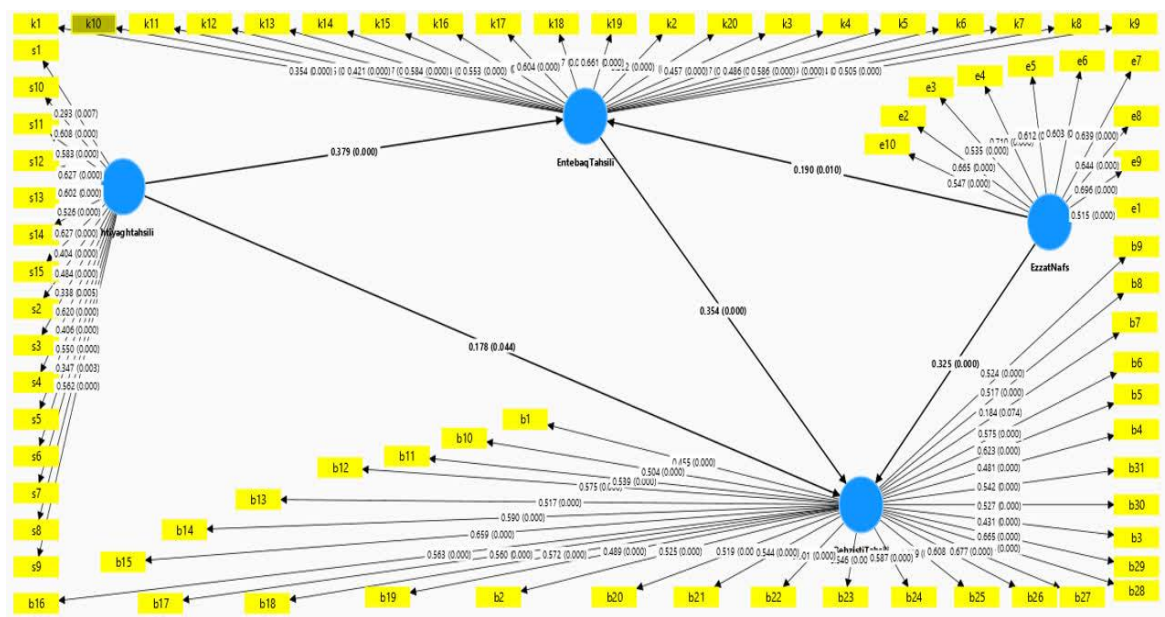


Figure 2. Fitted model based on standard scores

To evaluate the structural model's performance, the coefficient of determination (R^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2) were calculated. As shown in Table 1, these indices provide a measure of the model's capacity to account for variance in the endogenous variables and its overall predictive accuracy within the studied population.

Table 1. Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Quality of Prediction (Q^2)

Variable	R-square	Q^2 predict
Academic well-being	0.427	0.566
Social adaptation at school	0.397	0.427

In the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, model evaluation primarily emphasizes predictive accuracy rather than global goodness-of-fit indices. Accordingly, the coefficient of determination (R^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2) were employed to assess the explanatory and predictive power of the structural model. In this context, R^2 values above 0.25 are generally considered acceptable, while values around 0.50 indicate a moderate level of explanatory power. Regarding Q^2 , values greater than zero indicate the presence of predictive relevance, with benchmark values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 representing small, medium, and large predictive accuracy, respectively. In the present model, the R^2 values for academic well-being (0.427) and social adaptation at school (0.397) both exceed the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.25, indicating a moderate level of explained variance. Moreover, the Q^2 values (0.566 for academic well-being and 0.427 for social adaptation) are substantially higher than the 0.35 benchmark, demonstrating strong predictive relevance. Overall, these findings confirm that the proposed model exhibits adequate explanatory power and substantial predictive capability.

Table 2. Reliability and convergent validity

Variables	Reliability	Convergent validity (AVE)
Academic well-being	0.921	0.554
Social adaptation	0.859	0.624
Academic enthusiasm	0.802	0.520
Self-esteem	0.823	0.578

Reliability and validity: According to Table 2, the convergent validity (AVE) for the research variables is higher than 0.50, so the convergent validity is confirmed. Also, the reliability is higher than 0.70, which is also confirmed. The results of data analysis indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between the self-esteem variable and academic well-being ($p < 0.01$, $r = + 0.660$). There is also a positive and significant relationship between the school enthusiasm variable and academic well-being ($p < 0.01$, $r = + 0.526$). On the other hand, a positive and significant relationship was also obtained between the social adaptation variable and academic well-being ($p < 0.01$, $r = + 0.678$). Finally, a positive and significant relationship was found

between self-esteem and social adaptation ($p < 0.01$, $r = +0.494$), and a positive and significant relationship was found between self-esteem and school enthusiasm ($p < 0.01$, $r = +0.463$), and a positive and significant relationship was found between social adaptation and school enthusiasm ($p < 0.01$, $r = +0.644$).

According to Table 3, the results indicate that the direct effect of the self-esteem variable on academic well-being and social adjustment was positive and significant (validation criterion: $T > 1.690$ and $P < 0.05$). Also, the direct effect of school enthusiasm on academic well-being and social adjustment was positive and significant (validation criterion: $T > 1.690$ and $P < 0.05$). Finally, the direct effect of social adjustment on academic well-being was also positive and significant (validation criterion: $T > 1.690$ and $P < 0.05$).

Table 3. Standardized direct coefficients of the model paths

Hypothesis result	Probability value	T-value	Standard error	Path coefficient	Path	
Confirmation	<0.000	4.917	0.066	0.334	Academic well-being	Self-esteem
Confirmation	<0.010	2.567	0.074	0.202	Social adaptation	Self-esteem
Confirmation	<0.000	4.781	0.074	0.363	Academic well-being	Social adaptation
Confirmation	<0.044	2.018	0.088	0.183	Academic well-being	Passion for school
Confirmation	<0.000	5.634	0.067	0.407	Social adaptation	Passion for school

The indirect effect of self-esteem and school enthusiasm variables on academic well-being mediated by social adjustment is also presented in Table 4. The self-esteem and school enthusiasm variables indirectly affect academic well-being through the mediation of social adjustment (confirmation criteria: $T > 1.690$ and $P < 0.05$).

Table 4. Results of the analysis of the indirect effects of self-esteem and school enthusiasm variables on academic well-being mediated by social adjustment

Hypothesis result	Probability value	T-value	Standard error	Path coefficient	Path
Confirmation	<0.002	3.113	0.043	0.149	Passion for school ← Social adaptation ← Academic well-being
Confirmation	<0.032	2.141	0.032	0.073	Self-esteem ← Social adaptation ← Academic well-being

Discussion

The present study examined the relationships among academic well-being, school enthusiasm, and self-esteem in elementary school students, with social adjustment at school considered as a mediating variable. The findings of the present study indicated a positive and significant association between self-esteem and academic well-being. This result is consistent with previous research conducted in both international and Iranian contexts, including studies by Marubo et al. (2024), Haghighi and Namdar (2021), Shahriari et al. (2020), and Mishra (2017), which have highlighted the close relationship between self-esteem, academic functioning, and students' mental health.

From a psychological perspective, self-esteem reflects individuals' evaluations of their own worth and abilities and is closely related to emotional stability, motivation, and coping resources. Students with higher self-esteem tend to perceive academic challenges as more manageable and report greater confidence in their abilities, which is associated with lower academic stress and higher satisfaction with school experiences. However, given the cross-sectional design of the present study, these findings should be interpreted as associative rather than causal, and reciprocal relationships between self-esteem and academic well-being remain plausible.

Another finding showed a positive and significant relationship between school enthusiasm and academic well-being. This result is consistent with the findings of Khaleqkhah and Karimianpour (2020), Prihartini et al. (2023), Dalling-Boreham et al. (2024), and Ilma and Horiati (2024), which emphasize the importance of enthusiasm and engagement in students' well-being and academic adjustment. Similarly, Khanghahi et al. (2022) and Keramati and Zare-e-Mirakabad (2024) reported positive associations between enthusiasm and academic success. School enthusiasm encompasses students' interest, motivation, and emotional involvement in learning and social interaction within the school environment. Students who report higher levels of enthusiasm tend to participate more actively in academic activities and experience greater satisfaction with their educational experiences. Previous research suggests that emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement with school is closely associated with positive emotions, intrinsic motivation, and psychological well-being. Supportive school climates and engaging teaching practices may therefore be associated with both higher school enthusiasm and improved academic well-being, although the present findings do not support causal interpretations.

Another important finding of the study was the positive and significant relationship between self-esteem and social adjustment, as well as the indirect association between self-esteem and academic well-being through social adjustment. This finding is consistent with studies by Haghighi and Namdar (2021), Khosravi and Ghorbani (2020), Guha and Berry (2024), Fernandez et al. (2019), and Dorcas et al. (2024), all of which highlight the mediating role of social adjustment in students' academic and psychological outcomes. Monfared et al. (2021) also emphasized the role of social adjustment in enhancing social support and coping with academic challenges.

From a psychological perspective, self-esteem reflects individuals' evaluations of their own worth and abilities and is closely related to emotional stability, motivation, and coping resources. Students reporting higher self-esteem tend to view academic challenges as more manageable and express greater confidence in their abilities, which is linked to lower academic stress and higher satisfaction with school experiences. However, given the cross-sectional design of the present study, these findings should be interpreted as associative rather than causal, and reciprocal relationships between self-esteem and academic well-being remain plausible.

The findings also revealed a positive and significant relationship between school enthusiasm and social adjustment, along with an indirect association between school enthusiasm and academic well-being through social adjustment. This pattern is consistent with international research emphasizing the role of school belonging, peer support, and social relationships in students' well-being (Fernández-Lasarté et al., 2020; Pham, 2024; Selian et al., 2020). Studies by Viskermi et al. (2019) and Zinelli et al. (2020) similarly highlight the importance of social support in academic adjustment and well-being.

Students who report higher enthusiasm for school are generally more likely to participate in group activities, engage with peers, and adapt to school values and expectations. These social experiences are associated with higher levels of satisfaction, motivation, and psychological security, which are closely related to academic well-being. From a social-psychological perspective, social adjustment may enhance the association between school enthusiasm and academic well-being by providing students with social and emotional resources that help them cope with academic pressures.

Overall, the findings suggest that self-esteem, school enthusiasm, and social adjustment are interrelated constructs that are jointly associated with academic well-being among elementary

school students. Students who perceive themselves as valuable, feel motivated and enthusiastic about school, and are better socially adjusted tend to report more positive academic experiences. The proposed model demonstrated an adequate explanatory capacity for academic well-being, indicating that these factors coexist within a broader network of psychological and social influences. Despite these contributions, the present study has several limitations. Most notably, its cross-sectional design restricts the interpretation of the findings to associative relationships rather than definitive causal conclusions. Therefore, future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal and experimental or quasi-experimental designs to more accurately examine developmental changes in academic well-being and to evaluate the role of additional psychological variables such as resilience and self-regulation across different educational stages.

Based on the findings of the present study, it is recommended that future research extend the current model by examining additional psychological variables, such as resilience and self-regulation, which may further elucidate the mechanisms underlying academic well-being. Moreover, the use of longitudinal research designs is strongly suggested to more accurately capture changes and developmental trends in academic well-being and to examine the mediating role of social adjustment across different educational stages. In addition, employing experimental and quasi-experimental designs would be valuable for establishing causal relationships and for evaluating the effectiveness of educational and psychological interventions aimed at enhancing students' academic well-being. One of the main limitations of the present study is its cross-sectional design, which restricts the ability to draw definitive causal conclusions among the studied variables. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to adopt longitudinal and experimental methodologies in order to strengthen the validity and generalizability of the findings and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic relationships among self-esteem, school enthusiasm, social adjustment, and academic well-being.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of University of Mohaghegh Ardabili. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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