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Predicting the academic adaptation of high school students based on coping strategies, parental support and belonging to school in the post-corona era

Atefeh Sedaghat Khah*

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran

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***CORRESPONDENCE**

Atefeh Sedaghatkhah

Sedaghatkhah@gmail.com

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Abstract

Academic adaptation is defined as a process in which students try to adapt themselves to the academic environment of the school, to achieve better learning including learning habits, use of learning resources, learning motivations, learning satisfaction, learning styles. and so on. The present study was conducted with the aim of predicting the academic adaptation of high school students based on coping strategies, parental support and belonging to school in the post-corona era. The research method was descriptive correlation type. The statistical population included all high school students in Shiraz city in 2022 (Iran), based on the Krejcie and Morgan table, 380 students were selected by random cluster sampling. In order to collect data, questionnaires of academic adaptation, coping strategies, parental support and belonging to school were used. The results showed that the research model explained 47% of the variance of academic adaptation. Based on the findings, coping strategies, parental support and belonging to school significantly predict students' academic adaptation. The results have useful implications for increasing the academic adaptation of high school students in the post-corona era.

Keywords
academic adaptation, coping strategies, parental support, belonging to school, of high school students

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Introduction

Academic adaptation is defined as a process in which students try to adapt themselves to the academic environment of the school, to achieve better learning, including learning habits, use of learning resources, learning motivations, learning satisfaction, learning styles, etc. adjust (Ramsay et al., 1999). The degree of academic adjustment of students may influence their subsequent educational choices and opportunities, as well as their future growth and mental well-being (Longobardi et al., 2016; Song et al., 2015). Academic adaptation is one of the important tasks in adolescence. Adolescents are expected to learn and complete more difficult and challenging academic tasks (Wentzel, 1994) and thus have better future lives (Ryan et al., 2013). Considering the importance of learning on the developmental outcomes of adolescents, it is necessary to identify the factors affecting academic adjustment. Previous literature has shown that social and emotional support factors seem to have stronger effects on academic adjustment than intelligence-related factors (Asadi Hieh et al., 2022; Chen, 2017).

One of these variables is parental support. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979) has provided a theoretical framework for understanding the child-parent emotional bond with children's willingness and ability to explore the physical and social world (Ainsworth, 1978). According to this theory, children with a secure attachment relationship may perceive relationships with parents as supportive and reliable, and hence explore environments more confidently, which may, in turn, promote children's adaptive developmental outcomes (Dykas & Cassidy, 2011). Although attachment theory was originally developed by examining children's attachment to parents in early childhood, Bowlby (1969) suggested that attachment relationships should be considered for psychological and behavioral adjustment across the lifespan. During middle childhood and adolescence, although individuals may show relatively less frequency and intensity of attachment behaviors, their secure attachment relationships with parents are still one of the main sources of support for their growth and adjustment (Gillath et al., 2009).

The importance of attachment theory for child and adolescent development has been very high. Research on attachment and social-emotional and personality development has developed with a fairly extensive literature consistent with predictions derived from attachment theory (Cooper, 2008; Vrtička et al., 2012). However, relatively less attention has been paid to how attachment to parents is related to cognitive and academic development. High quality attachment relationships contain important social support that may encourage active and competent adolescent exploration

in learning-related environments (Duchesne & Larose, 2007; Moss & St-Laurent, 2001). Therefore, adolescents' attachment to their parents and receiving support from them may have a direct relationship with their academic adjustment.

There is evidence that parental support is related to academic motivation (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005), academic engagement (Wong et al., 2002), mental health and psychological adjustment (Simons et al., 2013). These evidences mainly show that adolescents with high parental support are more involved in exploring the educational environment and therefore have more academic involvement. The relationship between parents and children becomes increasingly important during adolescence. Communication has been identified as a protective factor in the family environment for healthy adolescent development. Adolescents from families with better communication had higher self-esteem, were more socially competent, engaged in more health-promoting behaviors, and experienced fewer internalizing and externalizing problems (Moran & Ghate, 2005). Adolescents with parents who discussed their career plans with them more and were more willing to listen to their thoughts had higher academic achievement (Hsu et al., 2011). Research has also shown that parents who communicate their expectations for academic performance and behavior in schools and encourage their children through supportive communication have children who are more adjusted to the transition to school ((Taylor et al., 2004). In various researches, the relationship between parental support and students' academic adjustment has been examined and confirmed (Kuperminc et al., 2008; Liebkind et al., 2004). For example, Parsa and Soudani (2021) investigated the relationship between parental supervision and social skills with academic adjustment in first and second elementary school boys in Ahvaz city. The findings showed that there is a relationship between parental supervision and academic adjustment, between the skill of appropriate social behavior and academic adjustment, between the non-aggression skill variable and impulsive behavior and academic adjustment, between the skill of having a lot of self-confidence and academic adjustment and between the variable of communication skill with peers. There was a significant and direct positive relationship with academic adjustment.

Many studies have been conducted to identify the effective factors related to school and classroom on students' learning and academic outcomes. One of the known factors is belonging to school. Belonging to school is described as a psychological state in which students consider themselves supported, trusted and cared for by school adults (Akar-Vural et al., 2013). According to this

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definition, a person's connection with school is independent of his effort and involvement in class assignments. This construct is a representation of a student's sense of attachment and commitment to school and includes the student's experiences of being noticed in school and having a sense of closeness to the staff and the school environment (Prince & Hadwin, 2013).

The presented definitions of belonging to the school are rooted in several theoretical perspectives. Theories of attachment and group membership are theories that partially explain the roots and contributing factors in the structure of belonging to school; Although each of these theories conceptualizes this structure from a different point of view and emphasizes different developmental and personality consequences.

Attachment theory considers belonging to school as an expanded form of the concept of attachment. According to the attachment theory, expressing love and care of parents helps to satisfy children's developmental needs in the emotional field. Children who successfully pass the attachment process consider their parents as a reliable source of trust and security. This primary link with parental symbols affects behavior and perceptions and as an internalized model helps to develop and maintain the child's relationship with others. Barber and Olsen (1997) believe that attachment to adult symbols in school is an expanded state of primary parental relationships. Based on this, ideally, the school can provide opportunities for students to increase their primary positive attachments to adults, or to compensate and restore weak and damaged attachments through connecting with adult models in school.

In this regard and from the point of view of group membership, social development theory and social cognitive theory have presented another theoretical framework to explain belonging to school. According to the theory of social development, strong links with social institutions, such as schools, increase the cost of engaging in problematic behaviors, thereby reducing inappropriate behaviors. In this model, it is assumed that students behave in a socially accepted way in school, which is promoted and displayed by adults and important people in the school. Based on this, researchers consider belonging to the school as consisting of attachment, integration and commitment to the school along with believing in the school's values and rules (Zeinalipour, 2022). Students who accept and internalize these components are likely to display behaviors that are considered desirable in the school environment and show higher academic adaptability (Zeinalipour, 2022).

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Bandura's social cognitive theory (Devi et al., 2017) is another theoretical framework that explains school membership in the form of group membership. This theory suggests that people accept behaviors and attitudes that are valuable to them. In the case of school, this theory points out that students are likely to model behaviors and adopt values that belong to people who are important in school and to whom students feel a sense of belonging. Therefore, supportive relationships with others indirectly increase learning and healthy growth and cause learners to interact more with their educational environment. In numerous researches, the relationship between belonging to school and students' academic and psychological adaptation has been confirmed (Arslan, 2019; Devi et al., 2017; Pittman & Richmond, 2007).

Along with factors related to family and school, certain personal factors are also related to academic adaptation of students. Coping strategies are one of the determinants of students' academic adaptation. Many studies have examined the physical and mental health consequences of COVID-19 on individuals in severely affected countries (Shanbehzadeh et al., 2021). Most of these studies reported symptoms of anxiety, depression, and sleep problems among participants (Mazza et al., 2020; Özdin & Bayrak Özdin, 2020). Despite this, few studies have been investigated about the coping strategies used by these people. Due to the fact that the use of positive coping strategies can reduce the adverse effects of the epidemic, it is necessary for people whose health is threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic to use an effective coping strategy (Yu et al., 2020). One of the groups that have faced psychological problems such as stress, anxiety and depression during the Corona period and after, are high school students. Some students use coping strategies such as working hard, seeking help, trying to understand study material and finding solutions to problems. Other students turn to self-protection strategies such as self-handicapping and avoiding stressful situations. Adaptive coping strategies lead to better learning and increasing academic adaptability. In contrast, self-protection strategies do not, by themselves, enhance student learning and understanding. Therefore, these strategies are considered incompatible. If they are not replaced with adaptive strategies, they may lead to academic maladjustment over time. After the relative control of the corona epidemic and the reopening of schools, one of the challenges facing schools is adaptation problems, especially academic adaptation in students. Therefore, the study of factors related to academic success can help to better identify this structure. On the other hand, identifying family, school and individual factors related to academic adaptation can provide a suitable perspective for intervention research and help to design educational and

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therapeutic packages effective on academic adaptation. Therefore, the present study was conducted with the aim of predicting the academic adaptation of Shiraz high school students based on coping strategies, parental support and belonging to school in the post-coronavirus era.

Material and Methods

The current research was descriptive of the correlation type. The studied population included all high school students in Shiraz city in the academic year of 2022, based on the table of Karjesi and Morgan (1971), 380 students were selected by cluster random sampling. The following questionnaires were used to collect data:

Student adaptation to college questionnaire: Baker and Siryk (1989) Student adaptation to college questionnaire was used to measure academic compatibility. This academic adaptation questionnaire has 24 questions, which was designed and made by Baker and Siryk (1989), and is single-component and scored based on a 7-point Likert scale. The respondent should specify his opinion about each of the items based on this 7-point spectrum. Therefore, the range of scores is between 24 and 168. Baker and Siryk (1989) reported the reliability of this questionnaire as 0.80. In Iran, Michaeli Monee et al. (2015) translated this questionnaire and reported its validity at an appropriate level and calculated its reliability as 0.78. In the present study, the reliability of this questionnaire was obtained by Cronbach's alpha method equal to 0.81.

Coping Strategies Questionnaire: Moos (1995) Coping Strategies Questionnaire was used to measure coping strategies. This questionnaire has 32 questions and a four-choice Likert scale (0 to 3), which was compiled and designed by Moos. It is focused on two parts: problem-oriented coping strategy and emotion-oriented coping strategy. Therefore, the range of scores is between 32 and 96. Moos (1995) reported the reliability coefficient based on Cronbach's alpha and its content validity as 0.78 and 0.88, respectively. The validity of this scale has been proven in many researches. In the present study, the reliability of this questionnaire was obtained by Cronbach's alpha method equal to 0.79.

Social support questionnaire (family scale): Social support questionnaire (family scale) was used to measure parental support. This questionnaire has 20 questions that were designed and prepared by Procidano and Heller (1983). The response scale of the Likert spectrum is five degrees, and based on this, the range of scores is between 5 and 100, and a higher score indicates more parental support. The validity of this questionnaire has been reported by the creators as

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satisfactory, and its reliability has been reported as 0.88 by Cronbach's alpha method. The validity of this scale has been proven in many researches. In the present study, the reliability of this questionnaire was obtained by Cronbach's alpha method equal to 0.78.

Students' sense of connectedness with school scale: In order to measure school belonging, the students' sense of connectedness with school scale created by Brew et al. (2004) was used. This questionnaire has 27 questions and six components of teacher's support, community participation, sense of respect and justice in school, positive feeling towards school, individual's belonging to school and scientific participation and based on five Likert scale. The range of scores is between 27 and 135 and higher scores indicate more belonging to the school. In Iran, this questionnaire has been validated by Makian and Kalantarkoosheh (2015). In the present study, the reliability of this questionnaire was obtained by Cronbach's alpha method equal to 0.83.

The method of data collection was that first, a list of all high schools in Shiraz city was prepared, and then the researcher, after obtaining permission from the Education Department, attended the schools and coordinated with the principals and teachers of the relevant schools, while giving explanations about the objectives of the research, and distributed the questionnaires. Ethical considerations in this research also included the informed consent of the students to complete the questionnaire, maintaining the confidentiality of their personal information and characteristics, and leaving the study at any time during the research. For data analysis, Pearson correlation and multiple regression tests were used with SPSS-22 software.

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Results

Before examining the research hypothesis, the assumption of normality of variables was tested and established. Descriptive findings including mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficients of research variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive findings and correlation coefficients between parental support, belonging to school and coping strategies with academic adjustment

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. academic adjustment	89.52	4.51	1			
2. emotion-oriented coping strategies	25.41	3.22	-0.28	1		
3. problem-oriented coping strategies	33.09	5.01	0.41	-0.48	1	
4. parental support	65.87	6.81	0.66	-0.42	0.56	1
5. belonging to school	105.69	7.57	0.38	-0.27	0.35	0.44

According to Table 1, all correlation coefficients between research variables are significant. Based on this, the correlation between parental support, belonging to school and problem-oriented coping strategies with academic adjustment was positive and significant, while the correlation of emotion-oriented coping strategies with academic adjustment was negative and significant.

In order to predict the academic adjustment of high school students based on coping strategies, parental support and belonging to school, multiple regression test was used. Durbin-Watson statistic was used to check the independence of the residuals. Considering that its value (2.09) is between 1.5 and 2.5, it can be said that the assumption of independence of the residuals was met. Tolerance indices and variance inflation factor (VIF) were used to check the presence of multiple collinearities between predictor variables, and according to the obtained results, no deviation from the multiple collinearity assumption was observed.

Table 2

Multiple regression analysis to predict the academic adjustment of high school students based on coping strategies, parental support and belonging to school.

	B	S.E	Beta	t	p	R	R^2	F	p
Constant	6.415	2.936		2.185	0.030	0.692	0.479	96.809	0.01
positive coping strategies	0.256	0.072	0.149	3.555	0.001				
parental support	0.788	0.101	0.404	7.837	0.001				
belonging to school	0.564	0.095	0.307	5.948	0.001				
negative coping strategies	0.281	0.074	0.112	3.41	0.001				

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In Table 2, the F value was 96.809, which was significant at the alpha level of less than 0.01, which showed that the proposed model was able to significantly explain academic adjustment. The R-squared value was equal to 0.479. which showed that coping strategies, parental support and belonging to school explain 47.9% of the variance of academic adjustment. Beta value for positive coping strategies (β=0.149, $p<0.01$), parental support (β=0.404, $p<0.01$), belonging to school (β=0.307, $p<0.01$) and negative coping strategies ($p<0.01$, β=0.112). Based on this, positive coping strategies, parental support and belonging to school positively and significantly and negative coping strategies predict academic adjustment negatively and significantly.

Discussion

Identifying the antecedents and influencing factors on students' academic adjustment can have useful implications for counseling with students. Based on this, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the role of coping strategies, parental support and belonging to the school in predicting the academic adjustment of high school students. The results showed that positive coping strategies, parental support and belonging to school positively and negative coping strategies negatively predict students' academic adjustment. The findings are consistent with the results of previous studies (Moran & Ghate, 2005; Simons et al., 2013; Taylor et al., 2004; Yu et al., 2020; Zeinalipour, 2022).

Students' academic adjustment refers to the process of adapting to changes in the learning environment, curriculum, and teaching style that are necessary as a result of various factors such as a pandemic, relocation, or switching schools. It involves developing and implementing strategies and routines to manage academic responsibilities effectively, cope with challenges, and meet academic expectations. Adjusting academically requires students to be flexible, resilient, and able to adapt to new learning situations. In essence, academic adjustment enables students to thrive and succeed in their academic pursuits despite changes in their learning environment or academic pressures. COVID-19 has changed education for students of all ages. Past studies indicated the increased anxiety and depression associated with the changes. The pandemic has disrupted almost every aspect of our lives, including education. As a result, many students have had to adapt to new

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ways of learning and cope with the challenges that come with it. Overall, post-corona students need to be flexible, adaptable, and proactive in their academic pursuits.

In addition to the obtained findings, the present study has been associated with limitations that should be considered in the generalization of the findings. The use of self-report questionnaires has been one of these limitations. The answers of the participants to these questionnaires can be accompanied by bias, and this possible bias should be taken into account in the generalization of the findings. Therefore, it is suggested to use other research methods such as interview and observation to collect data. Also, conducting a study on the students of Shiraz city, the generalization of the findings should be done with caution. Based on the findings, it is suggested to design and implement interventions to increase academic adaptation of students based on coping strategies, parental support and belonging to school.

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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 ethics committee of University.

Author contributions

AS 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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