

Original Article

Presenting the Relationship Model of Perceived Social Support and Communication Skills with the Academic Achievement of Secondary School Female Students

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Abstract

Background and Aim: This study investigates the relationship model of perceived social support and communication skills with academic achievement among female secondary school students in Damghan city. Recognizing academic achievement as a pivotal indicator of educational effectiveness and societal growth, the research focuses on how social and communicative factors contribute to students' success.

Materials and Methods: A descriptive-correlational design was employed with a sample of 265 female students selected via multi-stage cluster random sampling in the academic year 2022-2023. Data were collected using validated questionnaires: The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), Barton's Communication Skills Questionnaire, and students' GPA records.

Results: Findings reveal significant positive correlations between perceived social support and academic achievement ($r = 0.256$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, all dimensions of communication skills—feedback, verbal, and listening skills—showed significant positive associations with academic outcomes, with feedback skills exhibiting the strongest correlation ($r = 0.382$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, perceived social support correlated positively with communication skills indicators, highlighting a reciprocal relationship. Structural equation modeling confirmed the proposed model's acceptable fit (RMSEA=0.098; CFI=0.873; GFI=0.907), demonstrating that perceived social support directly influences academic achievement and indirectly affects it through communication skills. These results align with contemporary international research underscoring the mediating role of self-efficacy and psychological resources in translating social support into academic success.

Conclusion: The study emphasizes the necessity of fostering supportive social networks alongside enhancing communication competencies to promote educational achievement among female adolescents. Educational stakeholders should consider integrated interventions that build relational support systems and communicative capacity, ultimately boosting students' motivation, engagement, and academic performance. This research enriches the understanding of social-cognitive dynamics in academic achievement and provides practical recommendations for policy and educational programming aimed at optimizing female students' scholastic outcomes.

Keywords: Academic achievement; Perceived social support; Communication skills; Female Secondary students; Educational psychology

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Introduction

Academic performance is a vital indicator for measuring the Success of an educational system in achieving its goals. The decline in academic performance among learners poses a significant challenge for educational systems, resulting in wasted resources, a sense of hopelessness among students, and substantial negative impacts on families, universities, and society (1). Academic Achievement is the extent to which students meet their academic goals, measured by tests or teacher judgment, and may include social contributions (2). Academic Achievement may be defined as the accomplishment of Success in any educational task or an individual's ability to reach a set goal through effort, skill, or courage within the school context. Traditionally, two different indicators are used to determine academic Achievement: high school grades (or Grade Average Point – GPA) and standardized achievement tests (e.g., SAT, GRE, GMAT, PISA, TIMSS, etc.). Standardized achievement measures are designed to assess the degree of knowledge and/or skill acquisition attributed to classroom instruction. They are norm-referenced and adhere to established standards and norms for administration and scoring (3). Achieving academic Success is not only pivotal for students' acceptance by peers, teachers, and family, but also critically influences their self-esteem, self-efficacy, and overall life satisfaction.

Conversely, Psychological issues, such as academic failure, can lead to feelings of incompetence and diminished self-esteem, adversely affecting students' academic motivation and mental health. Furthermore, feelings of loneliness and psychological pressures significantly contribute to reduced motivation and academic Success (4). Among the multifaceted determinants of academic Achievement, perceived social support represents a significant factor. It is defined as the perception that an individual is cared for, valued, and integrated into a supportive social network (5). This cognitive appraisal includes emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support received from significant others such as family, friends, and teachers (6). Social support plays a crucial role in unlocking individual potential and influencing motivation. Individuals who perceive

higher levels of social support are more likely to experience increased motivation and achieve their goals. Perceived social support has been shown to directly improve psychological well-being and academic motivation (7, 8). Social support serves as a resource to buffer against academic-related pressures, thereby directly promoting resilience and effective coping strategies (9).

Communication skills constitute another vital component closely associated with academic Achievement. Defined as the ability to express and receive messages effectively in interpersonal interactions, communication skills facilitate social integration and adaptability. These skills enable students to participate actively in classroom discussions, seek academic assistance, and collaborate effectively with peers and educators (10). Importantly, communication competencies empower learners to articulate their needs and thoughts coherently, positively influencing oral presentation skills, learning engagement, and overall academic Achievement (11). Research consistently demonstrates that students with proficient communication skills achieve better academic outcomes due to enhanced instructional interactions and peer collaborations (12-14). However, in recent decades, there has been a shift in educational priorities. Rather than focusing solely on academic Achievement, modern education now seeks to enhance students' overall competencies, including psychological, social, and academic dimensions (15). Recent international studies further elucidate the interplay between perceived social support, communication skills, and academic Achievement. Tortosa Martínez et al. (9) emphasized that perceived social support not only predicts academic engagement but also indirectly influences academic Achievement through self-efficacy enhancements. Their findings underscore the mediating role of self-efficacy, which bolsters motivation and persistence among secondary students. Similarly, Wang and Zhang (16) found that perceived social support has a positive impact on learning engagement and academic performance, with academic self-efficacy serving as a significant mediator. Their research highlights the mechanism through which a supportive environment fosters student confidence and academic involvement. Also, Hassanzadeh Moghaddam et al. (17) have shown in

their study titled "The Role of Adverse Childhood Experiences and Attachment Style in Predicting Pain Perception in Women with Breast Cancer; The Mediating Role of Perceived Social Support" that with the increasing prevalence of depression, anxiety, and adjustment disorders in cancer patients, research has focused on intrapersonal factors that lead to psychological distress, one of which is the perception of social support, which is a key factor in coping with stress in patients with breast cancer.

Amir et al. (12) investigated the moderating effect of academic adjustment on the relationship between perceived social support and academic Achievement in secondary school students. Their results indicate that psychological capital, including self-efficacy and resilience, alongside social support, significantly enhances academic performance.

It suggests that while social support creates a facilitative context, individual psychological resources play a critical role in determining academic outcomes. They explored the relationship between communication levels and academic performance among university students, finding that higher communication competence correlates with superior academic outcomes. It bolsters the premise that communication skills, by improving interpersonal engagement, serve as facilitators of academic excellence.

Dangi et al. (18) conducted a correlational study on high school students, revealing significant positive associations between communication skills and academic Achievement. Their study affirms the critical role of communicative competence in knowledge acquisition and intellectual development. Guo (19) investigated undergraduate students' use of communication skills in online learning contexts, finding that effective communication significantly contributed to academic Achievement, especially when social support was perceived. Lastly, Tortosa Martínez and Espejo (20) reported gender differences in the association between perceived social support and academic engagement, mediated by self-efficacy, which illuminates nuanced dynamics influencing educational outcomes.

Similarly, Mohammadpour (21) concluded in her study that social and emotional skills training can reduce the symptoms of oppositional defiant disorder

in adolescents by helping them correctly recognize their own and others' emotions, thereby improving communication skills with others and increasing adolescents' adaptation in society.

Integrating these insights, a conceptual model emerges wherein perceived social support positively relates to academic Achievement, both directly and indirectly through communication skills. Social support serves as a motivational and resourceful scaffold, helping students manage academic stress, enhance their self-efficacy, and engage actively in learning. In parallel, communication skills empower students to seek help, interact effectively, and express academic needs, thereby fostering deeper engagement and knowledge construction.

The development of communication competencies is itself facilitated by supportive social interactions, which provide safe platforms for practice and feedback. Thus, perceived social support and communication skills are intertwined contributors to educational Achievement, especially among female secondary school students who may benefit from and respond to social-environmental cues differently due to gender-specific psychosocial factors.

Given the profound implications of academic Achievement for individual and societal development, understanding the mechanisms involving social support and communication skills is essential for educational stakeholders. By identifying these factors and their interrelations, educators can design interventions and cultivate learning environments that optimize academic outcomes. This research aims to present a relationship model that elucidates the roles of perceived social support and communication skills in promoting academic Achievement among female secondary school students, contributing valuable knowledge to the educational psychology literature and guiding practical applications (Figure 1).

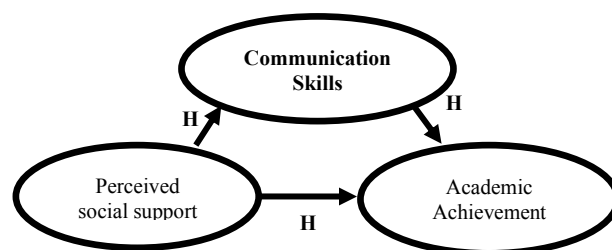


Figure 1. Conceptual research model

Methods

The current research is applied in terms of purpose, and descriptive-correlational in terms of data collection. The statistical population of the present study comprises all female secondary school students in Damghan city for the academic year 2022-2023, which is approximately 2,350 people. To determine the number of samples, Krejci and Morgan's table was used, and a sufficient number of samples was estimated to be 265 people. A multi-stage cluster random sampling method was used to select the sample. In the first stage, the city of Damghan was geographically divided into three regions: north, south, and center. In the second stage, one school was selected from each region, and in the next stage, three classes were randomly selected from each of these schools. The data collection tools in this research include the Perceived Social Support Questionnaire (MSPSS). The Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale is a 12-item tool designed to evaluate perceived social support from three sources: family, friends, and important people in one's life. This scale was developed by Zimet et al. (22). It measures an individual's level of perceived social support in each of the three areas, using a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from "completely disagree" to "completely agree". The validity and reliability of this scale have been reported by Karimi and Afrasiabi (23), who obtained Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the social support subscales ranging from 0.76 to 0.89.

Communication Skills Questionnaire

The Communication Skills Questionnaire was prepared and revised by Barton in 1991. This questionnaire comprises 18 questions and has three components, with the purpose of helping individuals gain insight into their communication skills. This questionnaire has three dimensions (feedback skill, verbal skill, and listening skill). The reliability and validity of the Manager's Communication Skill Questionnaire have been confirmed in Raisi et al.'s research (11). Also, its reliability is reported as 0.82 in Amir Same's research (12). Academic Achievement questionnaire: To measure the academic Achievement of students, the GPA from the last semester is used. Research data were analyzed using Amos 16 and SPSS 24 software.

Results

Two hundred fifty people participated in this research, and the information about their fathers' education is as follows: 54 people (7.2 percent) have a diploma and sub-diploma, 39 people (9.4 percent) have a postgraduate diploma, 126 people (66.7 percent), and 31 people (16.7 percent) have a doctorate. Additionally, 172 people (68.8%) were 15-16 years old, 57 people (22.8%) were 16-17 years old, and 21 people (8.4%) were 17 years old and above. Table 1 shows the descriptive indices of the research variables.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the key variables of the study, including means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis indicators. The skewness values close to zero suggest that the data distributions are fairly symmetrical, while the kurtosis values indicate moderate peakedness.

The overall communication skills variable exhibits moderate variability (mean = 53.02, SD = 11.57), indicating a range of communication abilities among participants.

These descriptive statistics confirm the suitability of the data for further inferential analyses.

For the validity of each structure, divergent validity and convergent validity have been used. For internal consistency reliability, two criteria of Cronbach's alpha coefficient and construct reliability (composite reliability) were used for the appropriateness of the measurement model. According to the results presented in Table 2, Cronbach's alpha values for all variables are greater than 0.7, indicating acceptable reliability. Additionally, this table indicates that the values of all extracted mean variances are greater than 0.5, and as a result, the model presented in this research demonstrates good convergent validity.

Cronbach's alpha, reliability coefficient, and extracted average variance of the research variables are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 presents reliability and validity indicators for key research variables, including Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Cronbach's Alpha values range between 0.701 and 0.775 across variables, indicating acceptable to good internal consistency reliability according to commonly accepted thresholds in social sciences research (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Table 1. The descriptive indices of the research variables.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Academic Achievement	14.61	2.17	0.23	0.55
Perceived Social Support	40.24	4.82	0.36	1.36
Feedback Skill	19.20	3.98	0.91	0.50
Verbal Skill	17.33	3.88	0.42	0.87
Listening Skill	15.76	4.08	0.37	0.44
Communication Skills (Overall)	53.02	11.57	0.20	0.51

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha, Reliability Coefficient, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of the Research Variables

Variable	(AVE)	(CR)	Cronbach's Alpha
Academic Achievement	0.612	0.825	0.775
Perceived Social Support	0.563	0.786	0.758
Feedback Skills	0.602	0.811	0.773
Verbal Skills	0.551	0.755	0.722
Listening Skills	0.521	0.748	0.701
Communication Skills	0.541	0.772	0.725

Values above 0.7 suggest the items measuring each construct are sufficiently correlated, supporting scale reliability. Composite Reliability (CR) values are all above 0.75, further confirming the internal consistency of the latent constructs. CR is considered a more precise estimate than Cronbach's Alpha as it accounts for differing item loadings in structural equation modeling (Hair et al., 2010). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, ranging from 0.521 to 0.612, demonstrate adequate convergent validity of the constructs. AVE above 0.5 suggests that more than 50% of the variance in observed variables is explained by the latent construct, indicating that the measurement model captures the intended construct well. Together, these indicators validate the psychometric properties of the research instruments, providing a solid foundation for further hypothesis testing and structural model analysis. This rigorous validation process boosts confidence in the robustness and credibility of the research findings.

First hypothesis: There is a relationship between perceived social support and Academic Achievement in female high school students.

The hypothesis posited that there is a relationship between perceived social support and academic Achievement among female high school students. The correlation matrix shows a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.256, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This positive correlation indicates a modest but meaningful association; as students

perceive higher levels of social support, their academic Achievement tends to improve. This finding supports the hypothesis, suggesting that social support plays a beneficial role in students' educational outcomes, aligning with existing literature that emphasizes the importance of social networks and emotional support in fostering Academic Achievement ($p < 0.01$) (Table 3).

Second hypothesis: There is a relationship between communication skills and Academic Achievement in female high school students.

The correlation matrix reveals significant positive relationships between various communication skills and academic Achievement among female high school students.

Notably, feedback skills, verbal skills, listening skills, and overall communication skills all show statistically significant correlations with academic Achievement, with coefficients ranging from 0.283 to 0.382 at the 0.01 significance level. It suggests that students with more developed communication competencies perform better Academic ally. Verbal skills, strongly correlated with overall communication skills ($r = 0.432^{**}$), also exhibit a meaningful connection to Academic Achievement ($r = 0.372^{**}$). These findings confirm the hypothesis, suggesting that communication skills are critical contributors to students' academic performance. Effective communication likely facilitates better comprehension, information exchange, and learning engagement, reinforcing educational Achievement ($p < 0.01$) (Table 4).

Third hypothesis: A relationship exists between communication skills and perceived social support among high school female students.

Table 5 presents the correlation coefficient matrix between communication skills and perceived social support among female high school students. The variables include perceived social support, feedback skills, verbal skills, listening skills, and overall communication skills. Significant positive correlations are observed between perceived social support and all communication skills variables, with coefficients ranging from 0.263 to 0.362 at the 0.01 significance level. ($p < 0.01$).

The highest correlation is between perceived social support and feedback skills ($r = 0.362$). It indicates that better communication skills are associated with higher perceived social support among these students, supporting the hypothesis of a significant relationship between communication skills and perceived social support.

Fourth hypothesis: The relationship model between perceived social support, communication skills, and academic achievement in female high school students has a sufficient fit.

To investigate this hypothesis, structural equation

modeling method was used using Amos software. The results related to the indicators of the communication model of perceived social support and communication skills with Academic Achievement for each of Thompson's proposed indices (quoted from Mears, Gamest and Garino, 2006) a subset of general fit indices including chi square, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), adjusted fit index (GFI) are the most important fit indices (Table 6, Figure 2).

The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) index indicates the average residuals between the observed sample covariance correlation and the expected model estimated from the population.

Loehlin (cited by Mears, Gast, and Garino, 2006) considers values less than 0.08 to indicate good fit, 0.08 to 0.10 to indicate moderate fit, and values above 0.10 to indicate poor fit. RMSEA was obtained for the present study at 0.098, indicating a good fit of the model to the data.

Additionally, the comparative fit index (CFI) is 0.873, and the adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) is 0.907. In general, according to the obtained indices, it can be said that the mentioned model has an acceptable fit with the data and is approved.

Table 3. Correlation Coefficients Matrix Between Perceived Social Support and Academic Achievement in Female High School Students.

Row	Variables	1	2
1	Academic Achievement	1	
2	Perceived Social Support	0.256**	1

* Significant at the 0.05 level. ** Significant at the 0.01 level

Table 4. Correlation Coefficients Matrix Between Communication Skills and Academic Achievement in Female High School Students.

Row	Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1	Academic Achievement	1				
2	Feedback Skills	0.382**	1			
3	Verbal Skills	0.372**	0.165*	1		
4	Listening Skills	0.283**	0.217**	0.304**	1	
5	Communication Skills	0.379**	0.315**	0.432**	0.366**	1

* Significant at the 0.05 level ** Significant at the 0.01 level

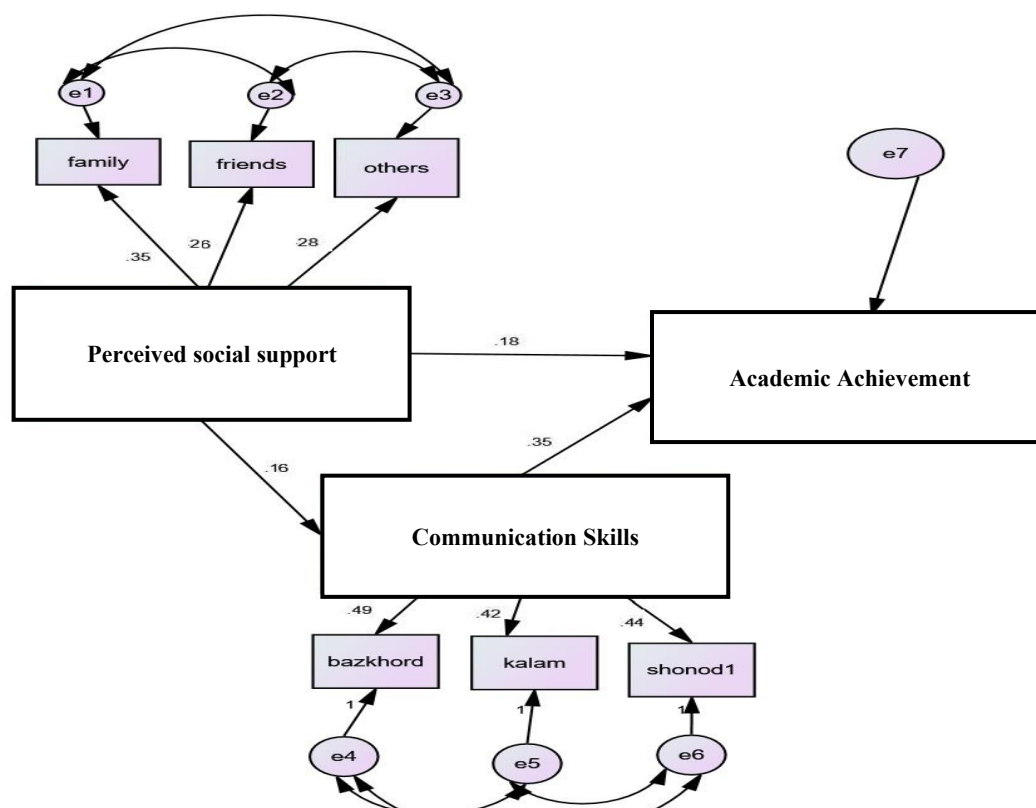
Table 5. Matrix of correlation coefficients between communication skills and perceived social support in female students

Row	Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1	Perceived Social Support	1				
2	Feedback Skills	0.362**	1			
3	Verbal Skills	0.353**	0.145*	1		
4	Listening Skills	0.263**	0.192**	0.289**	1	
5	Communication Skills	0.353**	0.285**	0.412**	0.347**	1

*Significant at 0.05 level, **Significant at 0.01 level

Table 6. Statistical indicators of model fit

RMSEA	AGFI	GFI	CFI
0/098	0/873	0/907	0/873

**Figure 2.** Paths of the fitted model with standardized coefficients

Discussion

This study examined the interrelationships among perceived social support, communication skills, and Academic Achievement in female secondary school students, revealing important theoretical and practical implications.

The findings support the hypothesized positive associations whereby perceived social support is directly and indirectly related to Academic Achievement through communication skills. These findings align consistently with prior international research, adding robust evidence to the literature on empowering student success through social and communicative resources.

The first key finding is the significant positive correlation between perceived social support and Academic Achievement ($r = 0.256$, $p < 0.01$). It corroborates the extensive body of literature affirming the vital role of social support in enhancing students'

educational outcomes. For example, Tortosa Martínez et al. (9) demonstrated that students reporting higher perceived support from family, peers, and teachers experienced greater academic engagement and success, primarily mediated by increased self-efficacy and motivation.

Similarly, Wang and Zhang (16) highlighted that social support directly fosters learning engagement, which subsequently translates into improved academic performance. This study's findings reinforce that a nurturing social network serves as an emotional and instrumental scaffold, buffering academic stress and facilitating persistence and achievement among adolescents (22).

Thus, educational stakeholders must recognize social support not only as a protective factor for mental health but also as a critical determinant of scholastic success. The positive relationships found between communication skills subdomains (feedback, verbal, and listening) and Academic Achievement further

illuminate communication as a fundamental mechanism enabling students to capitalize on their learning environments.

Feedback skills exhibited the strongest relation with Academic Achievement ($r = 0.382$, $p < 0.01$), emphasizing the importance of reciprocal interactions in educational settings. This finding aligns with Amir, Jusoh, and Yacob's (12) research, which identified communication competence as a salient predictor of academic performance, facilitating effective information exchange and problem-solving in classrooms. Moreover, Dangi and Yadav (18) confirmed that proficient communicators benefit from enhanced peer collaboration and instructional clarity, resulting in improved learning outcomes.

Guo (19) expanded on this by showing that effective communication is especially crucial in modern digital and online learning modalities, where clarity and responsiveness can mitigate barriers imposed by physical distance. Overall, the study confirms that communication skills are essential academic tools that reinforce cognitive and motivational engagement, which are critical for success.

The third significant insight is the strong positive correlation between communication skills and perceived social support, ranging from 0.263 to 0.362 ($p < 0.01$).

It suggests a dynamic reciprocal relationship in which supportive social environments foster communication competence, and enhanced communication skills enable students to access better and utilize social support networks more effectively. Tortosa Martínez et al. (20) similarly reported that self-efficacy mediated the association between social support and communication, which was modulated by gender-specific psychosocial factors.

This nuanced interplay illustrates that programs aiming to augment Academic Achievement should holistically address social and communicative domains to maximize efficacy. Schools can foster social environments that are conducive to practicing and receiving feedback on communication skills, thereby amplifying social support and, in turn, enhancing academic success.

The structural equation modeling analysis confirmed that the proposed relationship model of perceived social support and communication skills adequately

fits the data (RMSEA = 0.098; CFI = 0.873; GFI = 0.907). The model elaborates that perceived social support directly promotes Academic Achievement and indirectly influences it through the enhancement of communication skills.

The mediating role of communication skills highlights their critical function as conduits that translate social support into academic gains. Such integrative frameworks are consistent with contemporary educational psychology theories emphasizing the social-cognitive mechanisms underlying academic engagement (12).

The model's acceptance underscores the imperative for educators and policymakers to craft interventions that cultivate both supportive relationships and communicative competence, particularly for female students who may benefit from tailored strategies addressing societal and cognitive gender-related factors (21).

This research holds valuable applied implications. First, educational programs should incorporate social support enhancement strategies, such as mentoring, peer support groups, and family engagement initiatives, to build robust relational networks around students (7). Second, communication skills training should be integrated into curricula, focusing on feedback, active listening, and verbal expression, to empower students in academic discourse and collaboration. Third, educators should receive professional development in fostering classroom climates that stimulate positive interactions, reinforce social support, and promote communication competency (18). Such comprehensive approaches can collectively bolster students' academic trajectory and psychological well-being.

Conclusion

This study presents limitations that warrant cautious interpretation and suggests avenues for future research. The correlative design precludes causal inference; therefore, longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to verify the directional and temporal effects of social support, communication skills, and academic achievement.

Additionally, the sample was exclusively drawn from female secondary school students in a specific geographic region, which limits the generalizability of

the findings. Future studies should examine diverse populations, including male students and various cultural contexts, to explore gender-specific and socio-cultural moderations (21). Finally, inclusion of psychological constructs such as self-efficacy, motivation, and resilience as mediators or moderators would refine the explanatory power of relationship models (4).

In conclusion, this study confirms that perceived social support and communication skills are intricately linked and collectively contribute to the academic achievement of female secondary school students. The empirical validation of their direct and indirect effects provides a compelling case for integrated educational strategies that enhance social resources and communication competencies.

By nurturing environments that promote care, respect, connectedness, and communicative effectiveness, educators can facilitate students' motivation, engagement, and achievement, thereby supporting broader societal advancement through education. This research makes a theoretical contribution to the understanding of social-cognitive dynamics in academic success. It offers pragmatic and relevant insights for policy and practice, aimed at fostering holistic educational attainment among young people.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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