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Action Control and Mental Health in Islamic Teachings and the Academic Achievement of Entrance Exam Students: The Mediating Role of Self-esteem

Farimah Farrokhi [1], **Qamar Kiani** [2,*], **Afsaneh Sobhi** [2]

[1] Ph.D Student of Educational Psychology, Zanjan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Zanjan, Iran

[2] Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Zanjan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Zanjan, Iran

*Corresponding author: Qamar Kiani, Department of Psychology, Zanjan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Zanjan, Iran. E-mail: qamarkiani@iau.ir

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Abstract

Introduction: The aim of the present study was to investigate the mediating role of self-confidence in the relationship between action control and mental health based on Islamic teachings and students' academic progress.

Methods: The current research was applied in terms of purpose and in terms of nature, method, and design of correlation and structural equations. The statistical population of the current study was all female students of the second secondary level in Zanjan city in the academic year 2022-2023, of whom 550 were selected by the random cluster method. In order to collect data, action-control questionnaires were used: this one was used by Diefendorf et al.'s. for mental health based on the Islamic teachings of Abol-Maali al-Husseini and Mousazadeh; Gilbert et al.'s self-confidence; and Pham and Taylor's academic achievement questionnaire. In order to analyze the data, SPSS version 25 and SmartPLS version 3.3 and the structural equation method were used.

Results: The direct effect of action control on academic achievement and self-confidence is significant ($p< 0.05$). The direct effect of mental health based on Islamic teachings on academic progress and self-confidence is significant ($p < 0.05$). The indirect effect of action control on academic achievement through self-confidence is not significant ($p < 0.05$). The indirect effect of mental health based on Islamic teachings through self-confidence on academic achievement is not significant ($p < 0.05$). The results of the goodness of fit indices of the model showed that the research model had a good goodness of fit (SRMR = 0.000, 1 = NFI, GOF = 0.38).

Conclusions: Based on the findings of the present research, it is suggested that school counselors provide the means for students' academic progress by strengthening their mental health based on Islamic teachings and their self-confidence.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the beginning of physical, psychological, and social changes that affect a person's performance in adulthood and may be associated with problems such as sexual problems, depression, alcohol and drug use, suicidal thoughts, creating problems at school, conflict with parents, and Peers and concerns about the future of education and career are accompanied [1, 2]. One of the activities and tasks of the teenage period is learning and studying, and the academic performance in this period is as important as in other periods. In other words, trying to succeed in education and academic progress during this period provides the foundation for future success for the teenager. The educational progress of teenagers is one of the indicators of success in scientific activities. From this survey, the factors affecting it are among the major issues that have attracted the attention of researchers [3, 4]. Although one of the most important predictors of students' success in school is their ability level, nevertheless, ability cannot completely predict academic performance alone [5-7]. In recent years, it has become more important to pay attention to the factors that affect academic progress because of how important it is to find out how performance and academic progress affect the university entrance exam (konkor). According to the research, academic progress is influenced by social, family, school, and individual

factors. While focusing on the individual factors affecting the academic progress of the students, the present research has tried to examine the variables that have been less investigated as individual factors affecting the academic progress.

According to the research, there are many psychological and environmental factors that play a role in the academic progress of the students, and the current research has tried to provide a model of the variables that affect the academic progress of the students, with an orientation toward the intrapersonal and psychological factors, and has selected the variables for which less attention has been paid to their role in academic progress. One of these variables is action control [8, 9]. Action control, as one of the types of social skills, can determine the level of success in life. [10] Action control has a significant positive relationship with mental health, interpersonal relationships, progress in tasks, and academic performance [11]. Likewise, there is a significant positive relationship between action control and mental health in male and female students [12]. Researchers such as Hirtenlehner, H., & Kunz, F [13]; Moran-Soto and Benson [14]; and Olivares and Segli [15] confirmed the relationship between action control and ethics among students. Action control is important because it regulates behavior; therefore, ethical behavior is considered a prerequisite and is very important for academic progress and well-being [16].

According to the results of the studies, it seems that people with low action control face many problems due to defects in the system of executive functions and the inhibition and regulation of their behaviors, which ultimately lead to unhealthy and deviant behaviors[17, 18]. Studies show that people with more self-control, compared to people with less action control, have characteristics such as less motor, cognitive, and non-aggressive manifestations; higher self-confidence; fewer health problems; more coordination in interpersonal relationships; and more appropriate expression. anger, extroversion, less impulsivity, and better personality traits; less psychoticism and neuroticism; and proper rational organization without focusing on perfectionism [17, 18]. According to researchers, as many theories claim, a high level of action control is associated with various benefits in human life. Nikolova, Lamberton, and Hawes [19] showed that people show more action control when recalling successes than when recalling failures due to the avoidance of unpleasant emotional consequences. Research by authors such as Dariyazadeh and colleagues [20].

Based on Islam's teachings, mental health is another factor that can be studied to see how it affects students' academic progress. In Islamic teachings, health is very important. God himself is the essence of health and the source of health [9]. Research shows that culture and religious beliefs play a very important role in the development of personality traits and mental health. Religious beliefs are associated with an overall increase in mental health status, a low level of mental disorders such as depression, greater physical health, and a decrease in death anxiety [21]. Many studies have shown a positive relationship between religion and spirituality and physical health (for example, Koenig [22]; Reed & Neville [23].

When teens have problems with their mental health, they often have trouble going to school, trouble doing their homework, and more problems with adults and other teens. Also, teens' mental health problems hurt their ability to do well in school and hurt their relationships with other people [24]. Although the relationship between mental health and academic achievement has been investigated and confirmed (for example, in the research of Bas [25]; Pervizrad et al.[26] , in the research conducted in this field, mental health was not based on the teachings of Islam. And there is a research gap in this field as well. In the study of Marzband, Zakavi, Hosseini, it was determined that one who trusts in God can attain personal coherence by believing in the unity of divine acts. Moreover, one's tolerance can be reinforced by giving meaning to world's catastrophic events and sufferings. Strong willpower for decision-making, adaptation to the environment, inner peace and confidence, freedom from disappointment and despair, return from wrongdoing, patience, and hope for God's blessings and forgiveness are among other major effects of faith in God on mental health [27].

The assumption is that Islamic teachings can also play a significant role in this relationship. Islamic teachings encompass concepts and values of the Islamic religion, such as faith, reliance on God, Islamic ethics, and the fulfillment of religious duties [28]. Additionally, this model assumes that self-confidence mediates the relationship between action control, mental well-being, and the academic progress of students. Based on this assumption, self-confidence as a mediating variable explains the impact of action control and mental well-being on academic progress through an intermediate pathway. Some studies have also examined and confirmed the variables of the current research conceptual model. In the study by Rafahi and Azizy, it was found that self-confidence mediates the relationship between action control, mental well-being, and academic progress of students, demonstrating that self-confidence plays an important role in this relationship [29]. Rahimi and Aghayari showed in their research that Islamic teachings can contribute to the promotion of mental well-being and academic progress of students [30]. In the study by Mohammadi, it was demonstrated that Islamic teachings have a positive influence on the academic progress and self-regulation of students [31].

Considering the review of related scientific articles and texts and realizing the research gap and the lack of a

comprehensive study on the mediating role of self-confidence in the relationship between action control, mental health based on the teachings of Islam, and academic achievement, the present research seeks to answer the question that the effect of self-confidence How is the practical control of mental health based on Islamic teachings on academic progress with the mediating role of self-confidence in female students of Zanjan city? (Figure 1)

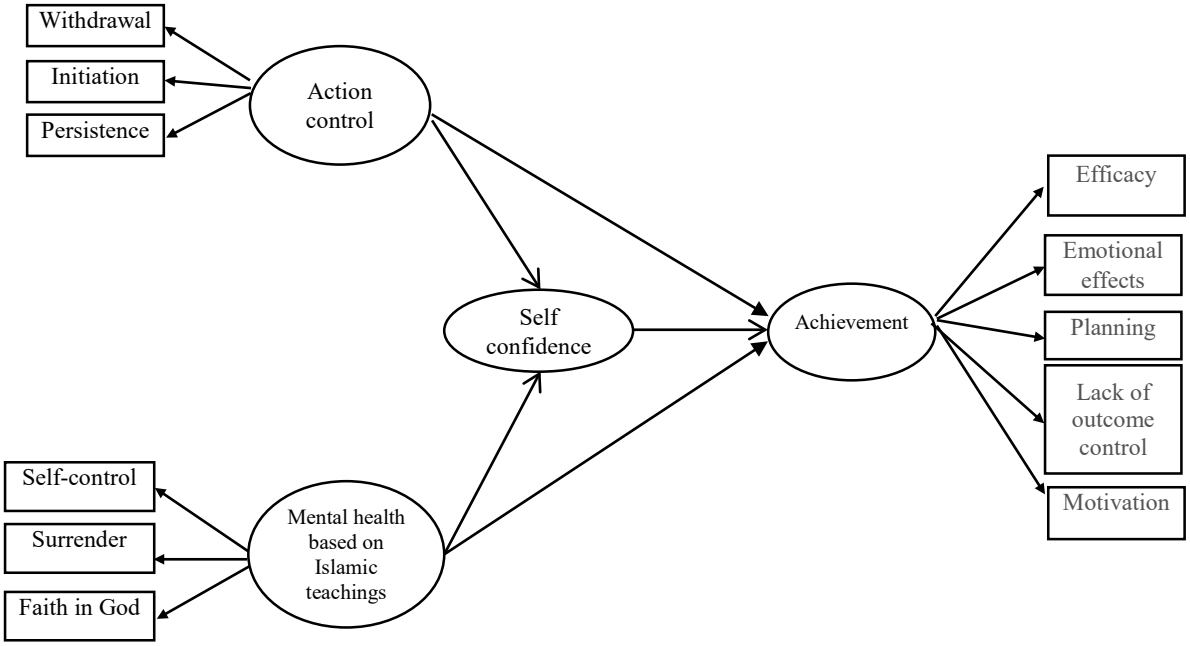

Figure 1. The conceptual model of the relationship between action control and mental health based on Islamic teachings and students' academic progress with the mediating role of self-confidence

METHODS

The current research was applied in terms of the purpose and in terms of the nature and method of correlation and structural equation design in which the relationships between exogenous variables (action control and mental health based on Islamic teachings), a mediating variable (action control), and an endogenous variable (progress) were investigated. The population of the present study was all female students of the second secondary level in Zanjan city in the academic year 2022-202023. According to the statistics obtained from the General Administration of Education in Zanjan, their number is 1946 (704 people from the first district and 1242 people from the second district). Although there is no general agreement about the sample size required for structural models, according to many researchers, a minimum sample size of 500 people is recommended [32]. Therefore, 500 samples were considered for the current research, but in order to achieve the adequacy of sampling and the possibility of defects in responding to the questionnaires and the existence of outlier data, 20% of the determined sample size, i.e., 600 questionnaires, were distributed among the students.

To carry out the research, after referring to the General Directorate of Education and confirming the questionnaires for girls' attendance in districts 1 and 2 of the second secondary school under the protection of the General Directorate of Education in Zanjan, and after obtaining permission from nine secondary girls' high schools of the second district and nine secondary high schools of the district, one from each district of four high schools was selected by cluster random method. Cluster sampling is a possible sampling method of heterogeneous communities that cannot form homogeneous classes. A heterogeneous society means a wide statistical society whose elements are scattered. Since the statistical population of the present study was wide, cluster sampling was used. After determining the community and the number of sample members, and after necessary coordination with the officials of the Department of Education and the letter issued for each district, a 12th grade humanities class, a 12th grade math class, and a 12th grade experimental class were selected. The students were informed about confidentiality and obtaining their consent to participate in the research, the necessary explanations were given. Questionnaires were distributed among the students. The students were asked to answer the questionnaires using the self-report method. The response time was 25 to 30 minutes, then the questionnaires were collected, 50 questionnaires were removed due to incompleteness, and 550 questionnaires were included in the statistical analysis. During the implementation of the research and completing the questionnaires, if it was determined that

a student felt tired and bored, he was given a rest period, or the questionnaires were completed in two times for such students.

Measuring Tools

Action Control Questionnaire: This questionnaire was designed and compiled by Diefendorf et al.'s [32]to measure action control and has 22 questions and three withdrawal-mental preoccupation components (questions 20, 18, 16, 13, 10, 8, 6, 5, 3), initiative-hesitation (questions 21, 17, 15, 11, 7, 4, 1), and persistence-instability (questions 22, 19, 14, 12, 11, 9, 2), and is scored based on a five-point Likert scale. Mati, Teria, and Verano [33] calculated the self-reliability of the revised action control scale of Diefendorf et al.'s, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the dimensions of withdrawal/preoccupation, initiation/hesitancy, and persistence/instability in research are They reported 0.66, 0.84, and 0.51, respectively. This questionnaire has been validated in Iran by Farkhi and Hossein Chari [34]. For this purpose, the Persian translation of the action control scale was implemented on 244 undergraduate students at Shiraz University. The reliability of the scale was calculated by the method of internal consistency, and its validity was calculated by the methods of factor analysis and convergent validity (through the correlation of the scale with the self-regulation questionnaire). The calculation of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicated the desired reliability of the instrument (0.81). Investigating the factorial structure of the scale. It also indicated the presence of three factors: withdrawal or mental preoccupation, initiation or hesitation, and persistence or instability, which explained 33.33% of the total variance. The internal consistency of this questionnaire in the present study was calculated using Cronbach's alpha method of 0.82.

Mental health questionnaire based on Islamic teachings: This scale was created and validated by Abul Maali al-Hussaini and Musa Zadeh [35], in 2016, in order to examine mental health based on Islamic teachings. It has 33 items. The scoring is on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all true of me" (1) to "completely true of me" (5). The mental health questionnaire based on Islamic teachings was implemented in three versions: the preliminary version (with 122 items), the experimental version (with 96 items), and the final version (with 90 items), which remained 33 items after the final analysis. Through exploratory factor analysis, three factors were extracted, which explained 32.6, 9.8, and 7.05 of the total variance of the test, respectively. These three factors include belief in God (questions 33, 32, 31, 29, 28, 27, 26, 23, 22, 21, 20, 19, 18, 17, 16, 15, 14, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6), action control(questions 25, 13, 12, 11, 3, 2, 1), and submission agent (questions 24, 5, 4). In addition, the total explained variance was equal to 49.5. A confirmatory factor analysis also showed a good fit of the model with the data. Also, the correlation of this questionnaire with two other questionnaires, GHQ and SCL90, was significant. On the other hand, the difference between the total score and its factors in two groups of people with and without mental health indicated the differential validity of this questionnaire. The internal consistency of the entire questionnaire and the mentioned factors was equal to 0.932, 0.942, 0.696, and 0.628, respectively, and the reliability of the whole test was obtained at 0.946 by the retest method [35]. The internal consistency of this questionnaire in the present study was calculated using Cronbach's alpha method of 0.79.

Self-confidence/self-confidence scale: The self-confidence/self-confidence scale was created by Gilbert, P., and colleagues [36] in 2004 and has 22 items in two subscales of self-confidence and self-confidence. The self-confidence subscale (questions 21, 19, 16, 13, 11, 8, 10, 5) measures a person's tendency to have high expectations of himself and to strive to progress and achieve high-level goals, and the self-confidence subscale (questions 22, 18, 14, 7, 6, 4, 2, 1) measures people's belief or degree of confidence in their abilities to achieve success in different fields [37]; The response to each item on this scale is arranged in a 5-point Likert-type spectrum, from completely disagreeing (zero) to completely agreeing (four). In this scale, the maximum and minimum score range from zero to 88, respectively. Gilbert and colleagues [36] reported the reliability coefficient of this scale as 0.90 and the internal consistency coefficient of this scale as 0.83. In the Iranian sample, the internal consistency was acceptable to excellent, with Cronbach's alpha coefficient between 0.69 and 0.77 [38]. In the present study, according to the research objectives, the self-criticism subscale was used. The internal consistency of this questionnaire in the present study was calculated using Cronbach's alpha method of 0.80.

Educational Achievement Questionnaire: This questionnaire is an adaptation of Pham & Taylor, research [39] in the field of academic achievement and includes 48 items. This questionnaire measures five functional areas: self-efficacy (questions 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36), emotional effects (questions 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19), planning (questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 40, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48), lack of outcome control (questions 5, 6, 37, 38), and motivation (questions 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 39, 41, 42, 47). In the scoring method, each item has 5 answers. In the none categories, the score is 1; low, 2; partially, 3; A lot is given a score of 4, and very much is given a score of 5, and in 11 questions (9, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 31, 32, 35, 36, and 43) that are negative, the scoring method is the opposite. The maximum score that can be obtained is 240, and the minimum score is 48. The reliability of this test was 0.74 using Cronbach's alpha method, and its validity was obtained using construct validity and factor analysis, and the results are as follows: self-efficacy 0.92, emotional

effects 0.93, planning 0.73, lack of control over consequences 0.64, and motivation 0.72 [40]. The internal consistency of this questionnaire in the present study was calculated using Cronbach's alpha method of 0.78.

RESULTS

The academic average of the studied students was 16.97; 11 (20.4%) of the students were studying mathematics, 232 (40.5%) in experimental science, and 215 (39.1%) in humanities. 31.91% of the fathers had a bachelor's degree, 33.6% a diploma, 9.6% an associate's degree, 14.4% a bachelor's degree, 9.1% a master's degree, and 0.4% a doctorate. 37.81% of the mothers had a bachelor's degree, 36.5% a diploma, 8% an associate's degree, 12.9% a bachelor's degree, 4.4% a master's degree, and 0.4% a doctorate. As the results of Table 1 show, the average action control, mental health based on Islamic teachings of self-criticism, and academic progress of students were favorable. The values of skewness and kurtosis also indicate the normality of the data distribution. Because it can be obtained between +2 and -2, and the values obtained in that range indicate the normality of the given distribution [40]. The results of figures 1 and 2 show that from the paths of the fitted model, two significant paths (1- action control on academic progress and self-confidence, 2- mental health based on Islamic teachings on academic progress and self-confidence) and two The path is also non-significant (1- action control on academic progress through self-confidence, 2- mental health based on Islamic teachings through self-confidence on academic progress).

Table 1. Minimum, maximum, average, standard deviation, skewness, and elongation of research variables

	Min	Max	Average	Standard deviation	skewness		kurtosis	
					Statistics	Standard deviation	Statistics	Standard deviation
Withdrawal - mental occupation	9.00	17.00	13.31	1.408	-0.012	0.104	-0.391	0.208
Initiation - hesitance	7.00	14.00	10.16	1.299	-0.038	0.104	-0.273	0.208
Persistence - instability	7.00	13.00	10.16	1.067	-0.041	0.104	.193	0.208
Overall score of action control	27.00	41.00	33.64	2.618	0.124	0.104	-0.360	0.208
Faith in God	0	88	69.11	14.78	-1.04	0.1	1.42	0.21
Self-control	0	26	10.06	5.86	0.48	0.1	-0.43	0.21
Surrender	0	12	8.01	2.35	-0.31	0.1	-0.03	0.21
Mental health based on Islamic teachings	15	119	87.17	14.9	1	0.1	1.96	0.21
self confidence	8.00	16.00	12.11	1.34	-0.141	0.104	-0.430	0.208
Efficacy	8	40	26.38	6.15	0.04	0.1	-0.22	0.21
Emotional effects	8	40	22.89	7.86	0.24	0.1	-0.68	0.21
planning	18	65	44.73	8.12	0.06	0.1	-0.18	0.21
Lack of outcome control	4	20	10.95	3.48	0.26	0.1	-0.36	0.21
motivation	17	51	37.58	5.29	-0.09	0.1	0.14	0.21
overall academic achievement score	84	183	142.54	15.08	-0.17	0.1	0.03	0.21

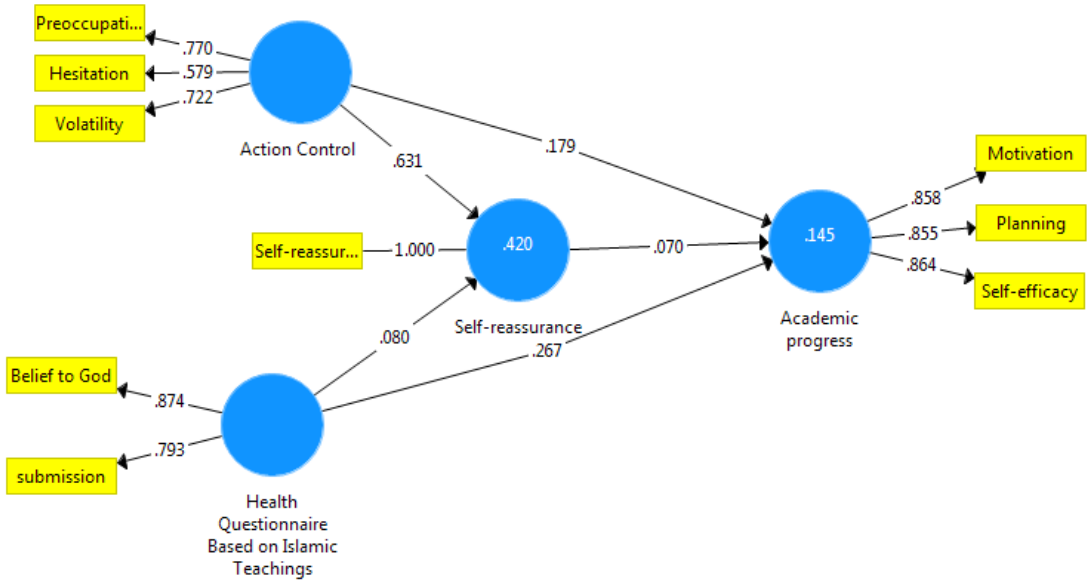

Figure 2. The fitted model of the mediating role of self-confidence in the relationship between action control and mental health based on Islamic teachings with the academic progress of entrance exam students in the form of standard coefficients

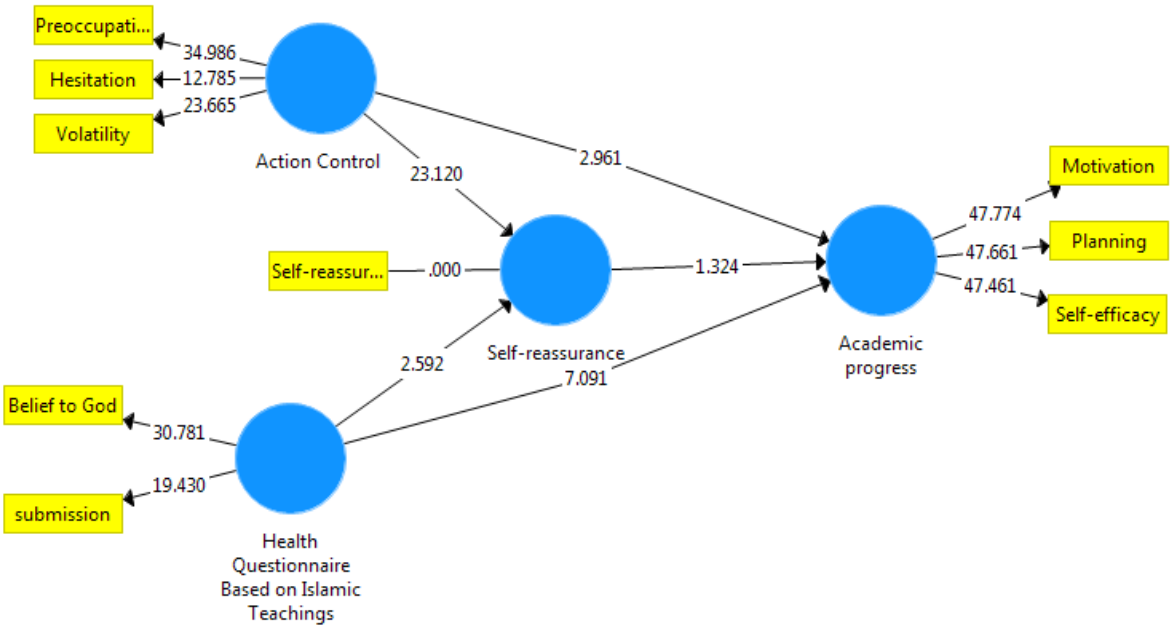

Figure 3. The fitted model of the mediating role of self-confidence in the relationship between action control and mental health based on Islamic teachings with the academic progress of entrance exam students in the form of t coefficients

Table 2. Direct and indirect effects of action control and mental health based on Islamic teachings and self-confidence on the academic progress of entrance exam students

Routes	β	t	P Values
		Direct effects	
Action Control → Academic progress	0.179	2.961	0.003
Action Control → Self-reassurance	0.631	23.120	0.0001
Health Questionnaire Based on Islamic Teachings →Academic progress	0.267	7.091	0.0001
Health Questionnaire Based on Islamic Teachings → Self-reassurance	0.080	2.592	0.010
Self-reassurance → Academic progress	0.070	1.324	0.186
		Indirect effects	
Action Control -> Self-reassurance → Academic progress	0.044	1.330	0.183
Health Questionnaire Based on Islamic Teachings →Self-reassurance → Academic progress	0.006	1.096	0.273

As shown in Table 2, the direct effect of action control on academic progress and self-confidence is significant ($p < 0.05$). The direct effect of mental health based on Islamic teachings on academic progress and self-confidence is significant ($p < 0.05$). The indirect effect of action control on academic achievement through self-confidence is not significant ($p < 0.05$). The indirect effect of mental health based on Islamic teachings through self-confidence on academic achievement is not significant ($p < 0.05$).

Regarding the goodness of fit of the model, although there is no absolute standard for the aforementioned indices in the theoretical literature, SRMR ≤ 0.09, NFI > 0.7 and Q2 > 0.02 are acceptable [41]. The values obtained from SRMR = 0.000, NFI = 1, and Q2 for self-confidence are equal to 0.034, and for academic achievement, it is 0.16, which indicates the appropriate fit of the model. In addition to the mentioned indicators, the goodness of fit index (GOF) was used. This index shows the compromise between the quality of the structural model and the measured model. It is the main model fit index in PLS and is equal to:

$$GOF = \sqrt{\text{COMMUNITITY}} \times \sqrt{R^2}$$

↓

$$\text{GOF} = \sqrt{\frac{1+.078}{2}} \times \sqrt{\frac{.42+.14}{2}} = .38$$

The high goodness-of-fit index of 0.36 shows the good fit of the model. The value of this fit index in the current research is equal to 0.38, which is larger than the value of 0.36 and shows the appropriate fit of the model.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to investigate the mediating role of self-confidence in the relationship between action control and mental health based on Islamic teachings and students' academic progress. The results showed that the direct effect of mental health based on Islamic teachings on academic progress is significant. This finding is in line with the results of Shahabi et al.'s studies [42]. In explaining this finding, it can be said that psychologists have mainly pointed to the positive effects of religion in real human life. In Islam, the characteristics of a perfect human being with mental health have been taken into consideration, and based on verses and traditions, it is based on the three factors of

faith in God, self-control, and surrender [35], which relate to lifestyle. With Islam and the index of religious thinking, it provides a basis for correct decision-making because making decisions based on religious principles is also logically correct and therefore reduces negative attitudes towards various issues, including education [42].Belief in God and reliance on Him can create a sense of security and mental tranquility in students. This sense of security can significantly improve concentration, propensity for learning, and academic performance. Islamic ethical teachings encompass values such as honesty, justice, good management, and collaboration. These values can assist students in establishing healthy and positive relationships with their educational environment, classmates, and teachers. These improved relationships can foster encouragement and support in the academic journey, leading to academic progress. Fulfilling religious duties, such as performing prayers, fasting, and engaging in charitable acts, can strengthen the sense of commitment and responsibility in students. This commitment and responsibility can help students progress in their academic path in a constructive and organized manner. Overall, Islamic teachings can contribute to students' academic progress by promoting mental well-being, positive relationships, a sense of security and commitment, and the reinforcement of ethical values[15].

Another result of the research showed that the direct effect of action control on academic progress is significant. This finding is in line with the results of Hirtenler and Kunz [13], Moran-Soto and Benson ([14], and Olivares and Segli [15] in line with the results of Hirtenler and Kunz [13], Moran-Soto and Benson [14], and Olivares and Segli [15]. In explaining this finding, it can be said that action control or self-control, as one of the types of social skills, can determine the level of success in life. Action control is defined as the ability to resist temptations, to change one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, or to ignore impulses and habits, which allows a person to monitor and regulate himself to meet expectations. In action control, three components—withdrawal—mental preoccupation, initiation—hesitancy, and persistence—instability—are measured [36]. Action control has a significant positive relationship with mental health, interpersonal relationships, progress in tasks, and academic performance. Also, the researchers showed that mental health decreases with the loss of self-control. Likewise, there is a significant positive relationship between action control and mental health in male and female students [12].

Furthermore, control of action refers to the ability to plan, manage, and regulate one's performance. In an educational context, control of action can help shape and effectively manage students' learning and academic activities. This control of action can have positive effects on academic progress. Control of action assists students in having effective planning for their studies. Through proper planning, they optimize their time, energy, and resources, and focus on setting priorities and developing time management skills. These skills help students effectively engage in their studies and demonstrate commitment to updating and completing their academic tasks. Control of action helps students enhance their concentration and inclination towards learning. They can concentrate on their tasks and academic activities, preventing attentional distractions. This focus leads to improved learning and optimal utilization of study time and resources. Control of action helps students effectively manage and cope with academic stress and pressures. They can employ effective strategies and solutions to reduce stress through time management, utilizing relaxation techniques, and fostering positive interactions with their academic environment [15].

CONCLUSIONS

The present study had limitations. Since the current research is of the descriptive-correlation type, and in such research it is not possible to control all intervening variables, the participants may have been affected by conditions beyond the researcher's control, caution should be observed in generalizing the results. The present study was conducted on female students of the second secondary level in Zanjan city, so it is suggested to repeat the study on other samples of students from other cities and compare the results with the present study. The present study determined the significant role of mental health, based on Islamic teachings and self-confidence, on the academic progress of students. Based on the findings of the present research, it is suggested that school counselors provide the means for their academic progress by strengthening mental health based on Islamic teachings and the self-confidence of students.

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ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article is taken from the doctoral thesis of Educational Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Zanjan branch. The current research was approved by the ethics committee of the Islamic Azad University, Rodhan branch, under the code of ethics with the reference number IR.IAU.Z.REC.1401.046. Ethical standards include obtaining the code of ethics from the ethics committee at the university and obtaining consent from the participants in order to distribute questionnaires and implement trainings. Respecting honesty and scientific trustworthiness, informed consent to participate in the research, respecting the right to anonymity of the scales and the subjects, and

keeping their information confidential have been taken into consideration.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

All the authors of the article have collaborated in the design of the study, compilation, data analysis, and interpretation of the results of the draft and manuscript versions of the article, have read and approved them, and accept responsibility for all aspects of the research.

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