



Original Article (Quantified)

Investigating the impact of thinking styles and social problem solving skills on academic performance with regard to the mediating role of academic enthusiasm

Hala Abdolhoseinnaser Alkhafaji¹ , Hasan Ghalavandi²

1- PhD student, Department of Educational Management, Urmia University, Urmia, Iran

2- Professor, Educational Management Department, Urmia University, Urmia, Iran

Receive:

08 January 2024

Revise:

29 April 2024

Accept:

27 May 2024

Keywords:

Thinking styles,
Social problem-
Solving skills,
Academic
performance,
Academic
Enthusiasm,
Students

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of thinking styles and social problem-solving skills on academic performance with the mediating role of academic enthusiasm. The current research is applicable in terms of purpose, and descriptive-correlative in terms of its nature, with path analysis approach. The statistical population of the research includes all 960 students of the 5th academic level of Diyali city, of which 288 were selected by random cluster sampling using Cochran's formula. To collect research data, four questionnaires of Sternberg's thinking styles (1991), social problem-solving questionnaire of Dzorilla et al. (2002), academic enthusiasm of Fredericks et al. (2004), and Pham and Taylor's academic performance (1999) was used. The face and content validity of the questionnaire was approved by experts, and confirmed through factor analysis. The reliability of the tool was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient in a preliminary study; 0.92 for the questionnaire of thinking styles, 0.89 for social problem-solving skills, 0.86 for academic enthusiasm, and 0.90 for academic performance. Data analysis was done using Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis and path analysis in SPSS and Lisrel statistical software. The results showed that the effect of thinking styles, social problem-solving skills, and academic enthusiasm have a positive and significant effect on the academic performance of students. It was also found that the mediating role of academic enthusiasm in the effect of thinking styles, and social problem-solving skills on academic performance is positive and meaningful.

Please cite this article as (APA): Abdolhoseinnaser Alkhafaji, H and Ghalavandi, H. (2026). Investigating the impact of thinking styles and social problem solving skills on academic performance with regard to the mediating role of academic enthusiasm. *Management and Educational Perspective*, 8(2), 65-86.



<https://doi.org/10.22034/jmep.2024.401214.1208>



Authors retain the copyright and full publishing rights.

Published by Research Center of Resource Management Studies and Knowledge-Based Business. This article is an open access article licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

Publisher: Research Center of Resource Management Studies and Knowledge-Based Business

Corresponding Author: Hasan Ghalavandi

Email: galavandi@gmail.com

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Today, students' academic performance is considered as an important indicator for evaluating educational systems. In addition, academic performance has always been important for teachers, students, parents, theorists, and educational researchers. For example, students' academic performance is one of the most important criteria for evaluating teachers' performance. For students, the academic average represents their academic abilities to enter the world of work and employment and higher education levels. Perhaps it is because of this importance that educational theorists have focused many of their researches on knowing the factors affecting academic performance (Hong et al, 2017). On the other hand, today, educational courses have become a basic goal to achieve comprehensive progress, and according to this, the academic performance of students is one of the important indicators in the evaluation of education, which aims to help in various fields; from the dimensions of cognitive, emotional, personality development to the growth and excellence of people (Garcia et al, 2019). On the other hand, one of the most important issues that the world's education systems are usually dealing with is the issue of academic failure, which has consumed a lot of human and financial resources. In addition to the financial aspect, this issue provides the background for the emergence of many behavioral problems, psychological pressures, emotional disorders, and social abnormalities (Moore et al, 2020).

Perhaps the most important issue that can play a role in the level of academic performance and solving social problems, and should be aware of it, is the existence of thinking styles (Aghaei, 2015). Identifying students' thinking styles can play an important role in the learning process, so using assessments of thinking styles can provide useful information that the student can benefit from as much as the teacher (Orhun, 2012). Along with this issue, one of the new paradigms that guides the values and beliefs of learners to reach their hopes and goals and high academic performance is academic enthusiasm (Pomerantz, 2006). This paradigm is a new stage in the evolution of learners' educational activities and requires new thinking about the amount of activity and effort outside the classroom environment that can affect their learning (Morton, 2018). Learners who have academic enthusiasm focus on and pay more attention to educational and learning issues; are more committed to the rules and regulations of their school; prohibit incompatible and undesirable behaviors; and have better academic success (Hamdan-Mansour et al, 2014). National context studies of academic enthusiasm in Australia and South Africa and other countries have mentioned academic enthusiasm as an indicator of the quality of educational systems (Eslami et al, 2016). According to the issues raised in this research, it tries to answer the question whether thinking style and social problem-solving skills have a significant effect on the academic performance of students with the mediating role of academic enthusiasm.

Theoretical Framework

Thinking style

Thinking styles enable people to realize their abilities and act accordingly. People with different thinking styles want to use their abilities in different ways and give different reactions according to their thinking style (Sternberg, 2001).

Solving a social problem

The skill of solving social problems is a set of learned behaviors that enables a person to provide practical solutions for social problems (Kirisici et al, 2020).



Education enthusiasm

Education enthusiasm refers to behaviors related to learning and academic progress. This concept refers to the quality of effort that learners spend on targeted educational activities to directly contribute to achieving desired results (Safari et al, 2016).

Academic Performance

Academic performance means the ability of students to answer questions related to the specific subject or topics foreseen for an educational course (Sepehvand, 2017).

Sabihabdollah Alharishavi et al, (2024) investigated the effect of learning and motivational strategies on the self-efficacy of physical education and sports science students with the mediating role of achievement goals and academic enthusiasm. The results showed that the effect of learning and motivational strategies, academic achievement goals, and academic enthusiasm on students' academic self-efficacy was positive and significant. It was also found that the mediating role of academic achievement goals and academic enthusiasm in the effect of learning and motivational strategies on academic self-efficacy was positive and meaningful.

Shafiq & Parveen (2023) investigated the use of social media: analyzing its impact on academic performance and participation of higher education students. The results indicated that when students use the knowledge sharing capabilities of social media, and are socially accepted; their academic performance improves.

Research methodology

The current research is applicable in terms of purpose, and descriptive-correlative in terms of its nature, with path analysis approach. The statistical population of the research includes all 960 students of the 5th academic level of Diyali city, of which 288 were selected by random cluster sampling using Cochran's formula. To collect research data, four questionnaires of Sternberg's thinking styles (1991), social problem-solving questionnaire of Dzorilla et al. (2002), academic enthusiasm of Fredericks et al. (2004), and Pham and Taylor's academic performance (1999) was used. The face and content validity of the questionnaire was approved by experts, and confirmed through factor analysis. The reliability of the tool was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient in a preliminary study; 0.92 for the questionnaire of thinking styles, 0.89 for social problem-solving skills, 0.86 for academic enthusiasm, and 0.90 for academic performance.

Research findings

Data analysis was done using Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis and path analysis in SPSS and Lisrel statistical software. The results showed that the effect of thinking styles, social problem-solving skills, and academic enthusiasm have a positive and significant effect on the academic performance of students. It was also found that the mediating role of academic enthusiasm in the effect of thinking styles, and social problem-solving skills on academic performance is positive and meaningful.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of investigating the effect of thinking styles and social problem-solving skills on academic performance with the mediating role of academic enthusiasm. The findings are consistent with the results of Sabihabdollah Alharishavi et al, (2024), Shafiq & Parveen (2023), Elgaml (2022), Ofosu-Brako (2022), Piri & Piri (2022), Pourghorbani et al, (2021), Aboutalebi (2021), Afshin (2021), Nouraldi (2021), Mehraniyan (2021), Stavoulaki et al, (2021), Siddiq et al, (2020), and Van Loan et al, (2019). Piri & Piri (2022) found that the relationship between academic skills and academic



performance is significant with the mediation of academic procrastination and absence from school in students.

According to the results of the research, the following suggestions are presented:

In order to effectively use different thinking styles in students, it is suggested to give them permission and independence so that they can solve the problems by providing suitable solutions. It is also suggested to check the steps of doing the work by the students, and take action to correct the work process at their own discretion. Also, a field should be provided for students to look at problems in a systematic way and provide solutions for problems with deep thinking.