

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ON SELF-ESTEEM AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Saima Nasir^a & Syeda Hoor Fatima^b, Atif Mahmood^{c*}, Ijaz Khan^d, Tahir Ahmed^e, & Ghazanfar Nawaz^f

^{a,b,c,d,e,f}Department of Education, The University of Lahore, Sargodha Campus, Pakistan

*Correspondence to: Mr. Atif Mahmood, MPhil Scholar, Department of Education, The University of Lahore, Sargodha Campus, Pakistan. E-mail: atifniceperson@gmail.com.

KEYWORDS

Social Support, Self-Esteem, Academic Performance

CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Nasir, S., Fatima, S. H., Mahmood, A., Khan, I., Ahmed, T., & Nawaz, G. (2025). The mediating role of social support on self-esteem and academic performance among university students. *Pakistan Journal of Positive Psychology*, 2(4), 6-10.

ARTICLE DETAILS:

Received on 09 Jan, 2026

Accepted on 01 Feb, 2026

Published on 25 Mar, 2026

ABSTRACT

The study explores the mediating role of social support on self-esteem and academic performance among university students. The main objective of the study was to explore the mediating role of social support on self-esteem and academic performance among university students. The main research question was, to what extent are social support and self-esteem important for the academic performance of graduate students? All the universities of the Sargodha district were the population of the study. 300 respondents were selected through a multistage sampling technique. This study was quantitative in nature; hence, for the collection of data, a self-developed questionnaire was used. For the data analysis, descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) were used. Inferential statistics such as regression were used to draw conclusions. Based on the conclusions, it is recommended that institutions should implement targeted programs and support services aimed at increasing self-esteem and social support among female graduate students. This may include mentoring programs, women's support groups, and workshops focused on confidence-building and networking.

I. INTRODUCTION

The subjective evaluation of one's own value, or self-esteem, has long been acknowledged as a significant determinant of university students' academic achievement. Higher self-esteem in students is associated with increased resilience, drive, and confidence—all of which are critical for academic achievement. Nonetheless, there are many aspects and complexities to the connection between academic achievement and self-esteem. Academic results can be directly impacted by self-esteem, but other elements, such as social support, can also have an impact (Yu et al., 2022). Conversely, the idea of social support—a group of people who care for and support one another—has become a key mediator in the connection between academic achievement and self-esteem. Self-esteem is stronger among students who have good social support from peers, family, and friends. Consequently, their academic performance may benefit from this. On the other hand, students without social support could have low self-esteem, which could have a detrimental effect on their academic performance (Demir, 2023).

Another role that has been explored in several studies is the facilitating role of social support in the relationship between self-esteem and academic performance. For example, Shafi et al. (2017) discovered that among Pakistani university students, social support proceeded as a partial mediating factor in the association between academic achievement and self-esteem. In a similar vein, Demir's (2023) study discovered that among Turkish university

students, social support improved the connection between academic drive and self-esteem. According to these research, social support has a significant impact on university students' self-esteem and, in chance, their academic achievement. In addition to these studies, the significance of social support for university students' academic achievement has been underlined by recent studies. According to a study by Özdemir and Adıgüzel (2021), among Turkish university students, social support significantly predicts both academic success and self-esteem. Nguyen-Viet and Nguyen (2024) discovered in another study that the association between academic engagement and self-esteem among Vietnamese university students was mediated by social support. These results highlight how important it is for colleges to establish nurturing spaces that encourage interpersonal relationships and advance the wellbeing of their students.

According to recent studies, social support can both mediate the association between academic achievement and self-esteem and significantly impact both academic performance and wellbeing on its own (Rueger, Malecki, & Demaray, 2010). This implies that students with high self-esteem would encounter or experience more social support, which improves their academic performance and motivation. There aren't many empirical studies, nevertheless, that look at the mediating function of social support in university students' environments in various cultural and educational situations. This relationship between academic performance, social support, and self-esteem contributed to the development of successful psychological and educational treatments in the face of growing student concerns about mental health and academic stress in higher education. In order to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of academic success, this study will investigate the ways in which social support mediates the relationship between university students' academic performance and self-esteem. The objectives of the current study are given below;

1. To identify the levels of self-esteem among university students.
2. To find the levels of social support among university students.
3. To explore the mediating role of social support on the self-esteem and academic performance among graduate students.

II. METHOD

Participants

In the study quantitative methods with descriptive and inferential research approach was used. For the data collection, Population of the study contained of all public and private universities in district Sargodha. Multistage sampling technique was used in the research. The procedure of sampling was carried out as:

- 1) First, one government and one private university were selected from all the universities in Sargodha district.
- 2) Then from each university five faculties (Social Sciences, Information Technology, Allied Health Sciences, Management Sciences and Languages) were selected.
- 3) From each faculty of both universities a strata 60 students were formed and a total of 300 students were selected.

Measures

The data was collected through questionnaire. The tool was developed by the researcher. A 5-point Likert 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3= undecided, 4=agree, 5= strongly agree. Questionnaire for students to measure the mediating role of social support on self-esteem and academic performance in university students consisted of 2 constructs. In which 16 statements were for self-esteem and 18 for social support. This scale was filled by the students at graduate level. Instrument was administered through self-visits for collecting the data. Respondents were 300 in number including 60 students from faculties of social sciences, 60 students from faculties of information technology, 60 students from faculties of allied health sciences, 60 students from faculties of management sciences and 75 students from faculty of languages. Questionnaire containing covering letter and demographic information were handed over to every respondent on personal basis. From which the response from the students from faculty of social sciences was 80 %, from faculty of information technology was 82%, 85 % from students from faculty of allied health sciences, response from students from faculty of management sciences

was 81% and 84.5% responses from faculty of languages which was considered according to the recommendations of Larossi (2006) that 80-85% of the responded questionnaires return rate is at the good level.

Table 1: Response Rate of Research Respondents

Category of Respondents	Questionnaires Handover	Questionnaires Received	Respondents Rate
Faculty of social sciences	75	60	80 %
Faculty of information technology	73	60	82 %
Faculty of allied health sciences	70	60	85 %
Faculty of management sciences	74	60	81%
Faculty of languages	71	60	84.5%

Procedure

Informed consent was taken from all participants before administering the questionnaires. Firstly, the data were organized in SPSS software. SPSS software was used to analyse the data. In descriptive statistics, frequency, mean and standard deviation were measured and inferential statistics were used. Data collected from the students categorized on their mean score basis.

RESULTS

Table 2: Pearson Correlation among Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3
Self-Esteem	—	.31**	.56**
Social Support		--	.33**
Students' Academic Performance			--

**p < .01

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among self-esteem, social support, and students' academic performance. The results show that self-esteem has a significant positive correlation with social support ($r = .31$, $p < .01$) and a stronger positive correlation with students' academic performance ($r = .56$, $p < .01$). Additionally, social support is also significantly and positively correlated with students' academic performance ($r = .33$, $p < .01$). These findings indicate that higher levels of self-esteem and social support are associated with better academic performance among students.

Table 3: Regression analysis of the impact of Self-esteem and the Mediating Role of Social Support on Students' Academic Performance

Model	B	SE	β	F	R ²	p
Self-Esteem	.67**	.29	.56**	5.063	.859	.001
Social Support	.63**	.299	.51**			

**p < .01

Table 3 shows significant mediating role of social support between self-esteem and students' academic performance $F(299) = .63$, $p < 0.05$ indicated that the significant impact of self-esteem and the mediating role of social support on students' academic performance has been observed.

III. DISCUSSION

The results presented in Tables 2 and 3 reveal the intricate interrelationships among self-esteem, social support, and academic performance, aligning with recent research trends. The significant positive correlations among these variables suggest that students with higher self-esteem tend to perceive greater social support, which subsequently enhances their academic outcomes. Similar patterns were observed in a 2024 study by Liu et al.

(2024) in *Frontiers in Psychology*, which found that self-esteem positively predicted academic achievement through social connectedness. Moreover, Ahmed and Malik (2023) in *Educational Psychology* reported that social support acts as a psychological buffer, fostering motivation and resilience that contribute to better academic engagement and grades. These findings collectively underscore the interplay of internal (self-esteem) and external (social support) factors as crucial determinants of academic success.

Furthermore, the mediation results in Table 3 strengthen the argument that social support serves as a vital pathway linking self-esteem to academic performance. This mediating role reflects that students who experience affirming social environments are more likely to translate self-confidence into tangible academic outcomes. Consistent with this, Zhang et al. (2023) demonstrated that perceived social support partially mediated the association between self-worth and academic engagement among university students. Similarly, Chen and Wang (2024) found that the mediating influence of social support is especially significant in collectivist educational contexts, where peer and family backing reinforces self-efficacy. Overall, the data suggest a synergistic framework: enhancing both self-esteem and social support systems can create a robust foundation for sustained academic excellence.

IV. CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study highlight the crucial roles that self-esteem and social support play in shaping students' academic performance. The strong positive correlations among these variables demonstrate that students who possess higher self-esteem not only experience greater perceived social support but also achieve better academic outcomes. Moreover, the mediating role of social support underscores its function as a significant psychological and social mechanism that bridges the impact of self-esteem on academic success. This suggests that confidence and self-worth alone are not sufficient for optimal academic achievement; rather, they must be complemented by a supportive social environment that nurtures motivation, resilience, and engagement.

In light of these results, educational institutions should prioritize developing programs and interventions that simultaneously strengthen students' self-esteem and foster supportive peer and mentor relationships. Such initiatives could include mentoring systems, counseling services, and collaborative learning environments that enhance students' sense of belonging and self-efficacy. By cultivating these internal and external resources, universities can create a more holistic learning environment conducive to both academic and personal growth. Ultimately, this study reaffirms that academic excellence is a multifaceted construct influenced not only by individual abilities but also by the quality of social connections and psychological wellbeing.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

The author received no funding from any organizations.

V. REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S., & Malik, R. (2023). The role of social support and self-esteem in academic success: A cross-sectional analysis. *Educational Psychology*, 43(2), 321–335.
- Chen, L., & Wang, Q. (2024). The mediating role of social support in the relationship between self-esteem and academic motivation. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 29(1), 58–72.
- Demir, M. (2023). Exploring the role of social support in the relationship between self-esteem and academic motivation among Turkish university students. *Educational Psychology Research and Practice*, 9(1), 45–60.
- Hassan, F., & Li, X. (2023). Emotional support and self-efficacy as predictors of student achievement. *Contemporary Educational Research Journal*, 10(3), 205–219.

- Larossi, G. (2006). *The power of survey design: A user's guide for managing surveys, interpreting results, and influencing respondents*. World Bank Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-0-8213-6392-8>
- Liu, X., Zhang, L., & Yu, J. (2024). The mediating effect of social connectedness on the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement. *Frontiers in Psychology, 15*, 1452123.
- Morales, J., & Ortega, P. (2023). The buffering role of social networks in academic stress and performance. *Psychology in Education, 57*(3), 298–312.
- Nguyen-Viet, H., & Nguyen, T. M. (2024). The mediating effect of social support on the association between self-esteem and academic engagement among Vietnamese university students. *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher, 33*(2), 145–157.
- Özdemir, M., & Adıgüzel, A. (2021). The predictive role of perceived social support on self-esteem and academic achievement among Turkish university students. *International Journal of Educational Studies, 18*(4), 315–329. <https://doi.org/10.18844/jes.v18i4.5894>
- Rueger, S. Y., Malecki, C. K., & Demaray, M. K. (2010). Relationship between multiple sources of perceived social support and psychological and academic adjustment in early adolescence: Comparisons across gender. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 39*(1), 47–61. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-008-9368-6>
- Shafi, M., Khan, M. A., & Raza, H. (2017). The mediating role of social support in the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement among university students in Pakistan. *Journal of Educational Research, 20*(2), 112–126.
- Torres, E., & Kim, J. (2024). Interpersonal factors and academic resilience: A multi-country study. *Learning and Individual Differences, 111*, 102348.
- Wang, Z., & Park, S. (2024). Social relationships, self-esteem, and student outcomes in higher education. *Educational Review, 76*(1), 89–104.
- Yu, C., Li, X., & Zhao, M. (2022). Self-esteem and academic achievement among university students: The mediating role of social support and resilience. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 843912. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.843912>
- Zhang, Y., Liu, M., & Chen, H. (2023). Self-esteem, social support, and academic engagement: A mediation model among college students. *Journal of Educational Research, 116*(4), 410–422.