

## Original Article

# The relationship between hope and perceived social support with academic wellbeing by mediating role of psychological hardiness

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## Abstract

**Background:** The aim of the present study was to evaluate the relationship between hope and perceived social support with academic wellbeing by mediating role of psychological hardiness.

**Methods:** This was a descriptive study and was designed to test the proposed model. The statistical sample was 334 students of the Islamic Azad University of Kerman in the academic year of 2019-2020. People selected by convenience sampling method. The research instruments were Hope Scale, Perceived Social Support Scale, Academic Wellbeing and Psychological Hardness Questionnaires. For data analysis, path analysis method was used in Amos and Spss-24 software.

**Results:** The overall response rate was 94.6%. Most of the respondents were between 18 and 27 years old. Women were almost 5 percent more than men. To achieve the desired fit in the initial model, the burnout component was eliminated due to low correlation with academic wellbeing and a new path of social support to academic well-being was added to the initial model. In the next steps, the components of social support were drawn with the suggestion of covariance software. The results of path analysis in the final model showed that the model has a good fit with the data. The results also showed that psychological hardiness plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between hope and perceived social support with academic wellbeing.

**Conclusion:** Social support and hope through their effect on psychological hardiness led to an increase in academic wellbeing.

**Keywords:** Health; Hope; Psychological; Resilience, Psychological; Social Support.

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## Introduction

One of the goals and tasks of education is to provide the conditions for comprehensive growth of the person and training healthy, efficient and responsible people to play a role in individual and social life. Since students play a special role and position in achieving the goals of the educational system as the

basic element of educational system, paying attention to this group of society in terms of education and training will lead to more prosperity of the educational system (1).

Academic wellbeing is one of the factors that can play a significant role in enhancing students' academic performance. Academic wellbeing is one of the newest concepts in

positive psychology. Garivani et al., argued that it includes components such as skill of doing the school tasks, and satisfaction in academic performance and academic motivation (2).

Hope can lead to higher mental wellbeing by creating optimism and positive thinking. According to Murray, hope is an important basis of life and is as essential for human beings as water and food, which is strongly associated with the concept of victory and beliefs, and is an unconscious cognitive behavior that gives energy for the person and leads to action and turns the crises to opportunities for growth. It also stimulates the person motivational system and is closely related to confidence, desire, faith and self-determination, and leads to better wellbeing (3).

Wellbeing in the general sense is an attempt to achieve perfection to realize one's potentials (4). To gain a better wellbeing, various determinants have been examined in the research literature. Hope is one of the characteristics of life that makes us search for a better tomorrow. Hope means success, a better future and a reason to live. When there is hope, joy will be present in life (5). Samdal et al., believe that hope is an active attribute that includes having a goal, planning power and will to achieve the goal, paying attention to barriers of achieving the goal and the ability to overcome them (6).

Hope is one of the mechanisms of life. According to the monotheistic worldview, hope is a divine gift and engine of effort and motivation in life. Lack of hope will result in depression and stagnation (7).

Hope is a state of mind in which the person is attached to the things he or she expects. Hope is waiting for something that most of conditions to achieve it have been provided. Usually, hope and desire are used together in Persian culture. It can be stated there is a wish in every hope, but every wish is not

considered hope (8). Review of literature suggests that the present research model or similar models regarding the internal relationship between the variables have not been studied.

This study aimed to assess the relationship between hope and perceived social support with academic wellbeing by mediating role of psychological hardiness.

## **Methods**

The present study was an applied research in terms of aim and correlational-descriptive, relational-explanatory type, based on research method.

### ***Statistical Population***

The statistical population of the present study included all students of the Islamic Azad University of Kerman in the academic year of 2019-2020 and the statistical sample of the study was 334 people selected by a convenience sampling method.

### ***Research Tools***

*Hope Scale:* This scale was developed by Samdal et al., to measure hope and has 12 items. It has two components of agent thinking (items 2, 9, 10, 12) and strategic thinking (items 1, 4, 7) and three (deviant questions 11, 6, 5). To score it, an 8-point Likert scale is used, which covers from completely disagree to completely agree (6).

Ajam Ekrami et al., obtained reliability of this questionnaire through Cronbach's alpha at 0.86 for the whole questionnaire, 0.82 for agent thinking, and 0.84 for strategic thinking and its concurrent validity was reported at desirable level (9).

The validity and the reliability of Persian version of this scale have been reported at appropriate level. Sheikh Shoaie et al., reported reliability of this scale at 0.71 for strategic thinking and 0.68 for agent thinking. Also, obtained the validity of hope scale at desirable level of 0.93. To assess the

reliability of this scale in the present study, Cronbach's alpha method was used and it was calculated as 0.80 (10).

*Perceived Social Support Scale:* This scale was developed by Zimet et al., to measure social support perceived by family, friends and important people in the person's life. This scale has 3 items and the respondent expresses his / her opinion on a 7-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (score 1) strongly agree (score 7) (11).

Alipour, reported the internal reliability of this tool at 86 to 90% for its subscales in a sample of 788 people using Cronbach's alpha method and they reported reliability of the whole scale at 86%. He reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of three dimensions of social support perceived from family, friends and important people in life at 89%, 86% and 82%, respectively. Also, Cronbach's alpha of this tool was obtained at 0.75 in the present study (12).

*Academic Wellbeing Questionnaire:* Tuominen-Soini et al., developed the Academic wellbeing Questionnaire by modeling the wellbeing psychology characteristics related to school context. This questionnaire is a self-assessment questionnaire that asks the respondent whether he or she agrees or disagrees with the 31 items that are about his or her opinions. The questionnaire included the dimensions of school value (9 items, answer based on a seven-point ranging from not at all true = 1 to completely true = 7), school burnout (9 items, answer based on a seven-point ranging from completely disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 7), academic satisfaction (4 items, response based on a five-point scale ranging from not at all = 1 to very high = 5) and involvement in school work (9 items, response based on a 7-point scale ranging from never = 1 to always = 7). Tuominen-Soini assessed the validity of the scale at favorable level. The researchers calculated Cronbach's alpha for

the four dimensions of school value, school burnout, academic satisfaction, and involvement in school work at 0.64, 0.77, 91, and 0.94, respectively (13).

Questions 1 to 8 measure school value and questions 9 to 18 measure school burnout and questions 19 to 22 measure academic satisfaction and questions 23 to 31 measure involvement in school work. In a study conducted by Moradi, Cronbach's alpha coefficients of school value, school burnout, academic satisfaction and involvement in school work and the whole scale were reported at 0.89, 0.87, 0.92, 0.90, and 0.92, respectively. The content and construct validities of the questionnaire were reported at favorable level (14).

*Psychological Hardiness Questionnaire:* This test was developed by Kobasa et al., to measure hardiness. This test consists of 20 questions with 4 options of never, rarely, sometimes, most of time (15). This test was standardized by Rizalar et al., the Cronbach's alpha for challenge, control, commitment, and the total score was obtained at 0.75, 0.82, 0.84, and 0.91, respectively. The content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed and its reliability was reported to be 0.82. The reliability of the questionnaire in this study was obtained at 0.87 using Cronbach's alpha method (16). Savari validated this questionnaire in Persian and reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 (17).

### **Methods and tools of data analysis:**

To test the research hypotheses and examine the model fit with the maximum likelihood estimation method, AMOS3 and SPSS-24 software were used. Indirect and mediating effects in the proposed model were also examined by the bootstrap method.

### **Results**

The overall response rate was 94.6%. Most of the respondents were between 18 and 27 years old. Two of them did not answer the age

Table 1. Frequency distribution of age, gender, marital status and education level of respondents (n=334)

Variables	Categories	Number	Percent
Age (Year)	18-27	292	94.6
	28-37	35	4.5
	38-48	5	0.6
	Unspecified	2	0.3
	Total	334	100
Gender	Male	158	47.2
	Female	176	52.8
	Total	334	100
Marital status	Single	274	84.4
	Married	56	14.8
	Divorced	4	0.8
	Total	334	100
Education level	BSc and lower	206	55.8
	higher than BSc	128	44.2
	Total	334	100

question; they were listed in the table as unspecified. Women were almost 5 percent more than men. 84.4% were single, more than 40% had education level higher than BSc (Table 1).

Table 2 shows the descriptive indices of research variables. The results obtained from the indices of mean, standard deviation, kurtosis and skewness indicate the normal distribution of research variables. Also, the assumption of collinearity was examined through the inflation of variance index, which confirmed the mentioned assumption in the study.

Amos software was used to examine the path model. The implementation of the initial model showed that the model does not have a good fit with the data. To achieve the desired fit, the burnout component was eliminated due to low correlation with academic wellbeing and a new path of social support to academic well-being was added to the initial model. In the next steps, the components of social support were drawn with the suggestion of covariance software. Figure 1 shows the final research model with the standard path coefficient (Table 3).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of study variables among respondents

Component	mean	SD	Kurtosis	Skewness
value of school	18.01	8.78	0.230	-0.234
School burnout	21.71	9.68	0.302	-0.690
Academic Satisfaction	12.15	5.84	0.304	-0.412
Involvement in school work	31.61	11.82	0.230	-0.234
Academic wellbeing	86.87	28.93	0.324	-0.272
Agent thinking	15.69	3.06	-0.382	0.461
Strategic thinking	11.93	2.34	-0.350	-0.668
Hope	27.66	5.27	-0.274	-0.744
Support of family	15.83	3.66	-0.273	0.559
Support of friends	13.67	4.23	-0.407	-0.290
Support of others	15.41	3.76	-0.359	0.748
Perceived Social Support	44.91	9.26	-0.472	0.452
Commitment	23.82	6.50	-0.263	-0.301
Control	19.30	5.58	-0.304	-0.299
Challenge	11.33	3.58	-0.253	-0.514
Psychological hardiness	54.45	14.30	-0.327	-0.477

One of the main goals in examining structural models was to investigate the mediating role between the variables. In the model proposed in the present study, the performance of psychological hardiness as a mediator between social support and hope with academic wellbeing were examined by Bootstrap statistical method. Table 4 shows the results of the bootstrap test to examine the mediating role.

Table 3. Final model fit indices

Index	Acceptable range	Reported value
CMIN/DF	<= 3	822.1
GFI	>= 0.9	902.0
AGFI	>= 0.9	0.884
NFI	>= 0.9	0.957
IFI	>= 0.9	0.971
TLI	>= 0.9	0.945
CFI	>= 0.9	0.957
RMSEA	<= 0.08	0.041

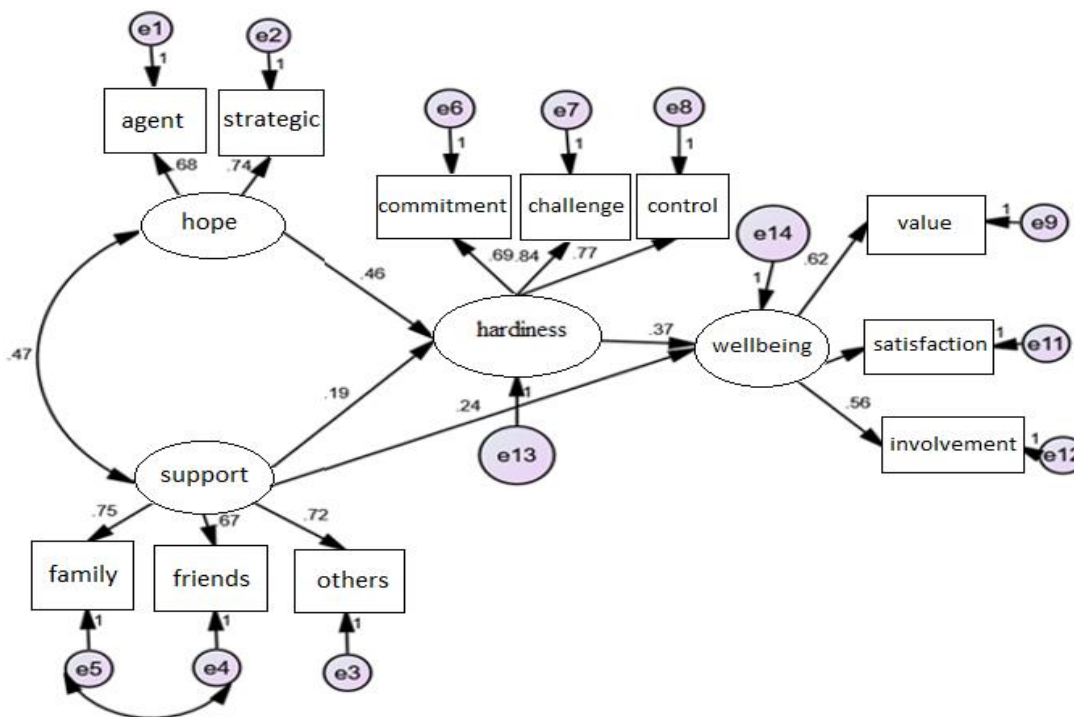


Figure 1. The final research model with the standard path coefficient

As the results from Bootstrap show, the range obtained in Bootstrap for mediator paths does not include zero, which means that the role of mediator is significant. In other words, it can be stated that social support and hope through their effect on psychological hardiness led to an increase in academic wellbeing.

**Discussion**

The present study examined the role of hope and social support and academic wellbeing mediated by psychological hardiness. The results of path analysis in the final model showed that the model has a good fit with data. The results also showed that psychological hardiness had a significant

mediating role in the relationship between hope and perceived social support and academic wellbeing. Review of literature suggests that the present research model or similar models regarding the internal relationship between the variables have not been studied. However, regarding the confirmation of the internal relationship of variables, the results of the present research support the results of previous studies, such as those conducted by Alipour, Babaei et al., Ryff and Keyes, Maddi (12, 18-20).

Our model showed the relationship of hope and social support with academic wellbeing.

Table 4. Bootstrap test results to investigate the mediating role

Path	value	Bootstrap	bias	Standard error	Upper bound	Lower bound
➡ Social support hardness academic wellbeing	0.182	0.176	0.0010	0.034	0.251	0.114
➡ Hope hardness academic wellbeing	0.0994	0.0932	0.003	0.0264	0.1472	0.0416

Researchers believe that higher understanding of social support is directly associated with involvement in health-related activities, including proper nutrition, exercise, relaxation, safety and health promotion. These results suggest a positive effect of social support on selecting healthy lifestyle (21). Some studies have shown that people who experience more perceived social support are more resilient to stressful situations, face challenges more effectively, and achieve greater psychological adaptation (22). Cieslak et al., believe that social support can act as a protection umbrella against harmful stress, since people with social support gain in-depth insights into their abilities and creativity, so they can have a positive assessment of barriers and challenges. Hope is the ability to believe in a better feeling of the future. Hope stimulates the system of activities so that the system can gain new experiences and create new forces in the human being, so hope makes man strive and brings high level of mental and behavioral functions for him or her. Hope is one of the signs of mental health (23).

Social support is another determinant of wellbeing in people. Social support means knowing that others like and care for a person, respect, and value him or her, and see him or her as part of a network of emotional connections and social commitments (24). Perceived social support has many impacts on physical, mental, life satisfaction and various aspects of quality of life and is known as an effective moderator in coping with stressful life conditions (25).

Social support affects a person's wellbeing because it provides the resources to cope with stress. In positivist psychology, variables such as hope, wellbeing in its various dimensions, optimism and positive thinking create psychological abilities such as resilience and hardiness. It can be stated that people with hardiness have higher characteristics of hope, optimism, and

wellbeing. Psychological hardiness is one of the influential factors in learning that plays a major role in students' academic success. Psychological hardiness is the most important modulators of stress in students. Hardiness is a set of personality traits that acts as a source of resistance to stressful life events (26).

The present study answered to the question of whether perceived hope and social support predict academic wellbeing considering the mediating role of psychological hardiness. Burpee and Langer, define hardiness as a combination of beliefs about oneself and the world, which consists of three components of commitment (the opposite of alienation), control (the opposite of inability), and challenge (the opposite of feeling threat or fear). Psychological hardiness is a protective factor that affects the students' way of facing with academic challenges and lack of readiness for other traumatic experiences. (27). Studies conducted on psychological hardiness suggest its major role in education. In this regard, Murray (3), Shams Nejad et al (5). and Ahmadi (8) showed that higher level of hardiness leads to greater academic success. The results of a study conducted by Kobasa et al., (15) showed that psychological hardiness positively and significantly predicts the students' academic vitality and among its dimensions, commitment dimension has more predictive power.

Yildiz et al. (21) also showed that the dimension of commitment to stressors acts as an integrated and single entity. Attempts to identify the factors related to academic growth of students that are the future makers of any society have been comprehensive and different studies have provided many different determinants to improve academic growth in different dimensions. Most previous studies have been conducted in a linear relationship and in the form of correlation and regression, and less attention has been paid to the internal relationship of

variables and the ways they affect the improvement of academic wellbeing.

Hopeful people see the ability to achieve lofty ideals and goals and draw a higher horizon for themselves. They are thinking of better tomorrows. There is the danger of falling into the trap of delusions. Hope is created by considering realities, facilities, and individual power, while dreaming lacks these characteristics. Through creating motivation and positive thinking in people, hope paves the way for more effort to achieve educational goals, and in the face of educational and training barriers, it increases their efforts and hardiness to achieve the goals. Hope strengthens one's hardiness by creating a challenging spirit and increases his or her chances of success in career and education. In general, based on the results of the present study, social support and hope prepare the person to respond positively to various challenges, including academic wellbeing, by improving his or her hardiness. Therefore, efforts to develop scientific protocols to improve psychological hardiness can help improve the quality of life and wellbeing of people. Like any field research, the present research suffers some limitations such as self-reporting nature of data collection form, lack of control over intervening variables on the criterion variable.

### ***Authors' contributions***

Study concept and design: ZVN, AMT, ZZM; Data gathering: AZN, AMT; Data analysis: AMT, MK; Writing manuscript: ZVN, AMT, ZZM, MK; Revise manuscript: ZVN, AMT, ZZM, MK; Approve manuscript: ZVN, AMT, ZZM, MK.

### ***Conflict of interest***

None declared.

### ***Source(s) of support***

There was no financial support

### ***Ethical statements***

The current study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and it was approved by the vice-chancellor of research and technology, to consider ethical issue, the collected data were not revealed to anyone, except for the researchers.

### ***Informed Consent***

In this study, the researchers used collected data using innominate questionnaires and the participants entered the study with informed consent.

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