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A Study of Students' Academic Adjustment Based on Sensitivity to Social Feedback and Experiences of Self-Deprecation in the School Environment

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Abstract

The present study aimed to examine students' academic adjustment based on sensitivity to social feedback and experiences of self-deprecation in the school environment. The research employed a descriptive-correlational design. The statistical population consisted of 284 secondary school students in Bileh Savar County during the academic year under study. The participants were selected using multistage cluster sampling. Data were collected using the Academic Adjustment Questionnaire, the Social Feedback Sensitivity Scale, and the Experiences of Self-Deprecation in the School Environment Questionnaire. For researcher-developed or culturally adapted instruments, content validity will be assessed based on expert judgment, and reliability will be examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation coefficient, and multiple regression analysis. The results indicated a significant relationship between academic adjustment and sensitivity to social feedback. Experiences of self-deprecation in the school environment were also significantly associated with academic adjustment. Regression analysis further showed that sensitivity to social feedback and experiences of self-deprecation could significantly predict variations in students' academic adjustment. These findings suggest that attention to how students experience and interpret social feedback, reducing humiliating situations, and strengthening their sense of self-worth and competence may contribute to improved academic adjustment. Therefore, intervention programs focusing on social skills, emotion regulation, self-acceptance, and constructive feedback are recommended for schools.

Keywords: Academic adjustment; self-deprecation; school environment; students.

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Estudio de la adaptación académica de los estudiantes en función de la sensibilidad a la retroalimentación social y las experiencias de autodesprecio en el entorno escolar

Resumen

El presente estudio tuvo como objetivo examinar la adaptación académica de los estudiantes en función de la sensibilidad a la retroalimentación social y las experiencias de autodevaluación en el entorno escolar. La investigación se realizó mediante un diseño descriptivo-correlacional. La población estadística estuvo constituida por 284 estudiantes de educación secundaria de las escuelas del condado de Bileh Savar durante el año académico estudiado. Los participantes fueron seleccionados mediante un muestreo por conglomerados multietápico. Para la recopilación de datos se utilizaron el Cuestionario de Adaptación Académica, la Escala de Sensibilidad a la Retroalimentación Social y el Cuestionario de Experiencias de Autodevaluación en el Entorno Escolar. En el caso de instrumentos elaborados por los investigadores o adaptados al contexto local, su validez de contenido será evaluada mediante el juicio de expertos y su fiabilidad mediante el coeficiente alfa de Cronbach. Los datos fueron analizados utilizando estadística descriptiva, el coeficiente de correlación de Pearson y análisis de regresión múltiple. Los resultados mostraron una relación significativa entre la adaptación académica y la sensibilidad a la retroalimentación social. Asimismo, las experiencias de autodevaluación en el entorno escolar presentaron una relación significativa con la adaptación académica. El análisis de regresión indicó que la sensibilidad a la retroalimentación social y las experiencias de autodevaluación pueden predecir las variaciones en la adaptación académica de los estudiantes. Estos hallazgos sugieren que prestar atención a la forma en que los estudiantes experimentan e interpretan la retroalimentación social, reducir las situaciones humillantes y fortalecer su sentido de autoestima y competencia puede contribuir a mejorar su adaptación académica. Por ello, se recomienda diseñar programas de intervención centrados en las habilidades sociales, la regulación emocional, la autoaceptación y la retroalimentación constructiva en las escuelas.

Palabras clave: Adaptación académica; autodevaluación; entorno escolar; estudiantes.

Estudo da adaptação acadêmica dos estudantes em função da sensibilidade à retroalimentação social e das experiências de autodesprezo no ambiente escolar

Resumo

O presente estudo teve como objetivo examinar a adaptação acadêmica dos estudantes em função da sensibilidade à retroalimentação social e das experiências de autodesvalorização no ambiente escolar. A pesquisa foi realizada por meio de um delineamento descritivo-correlacional. A população estatística

foi constituída por 284 estudantes do ensino médio das escolas do condado de Bileh Savar durante o ano letivo estudado. Os participantes foram selecionados por meio de uma amostragem por conglomerados em múltiplos estágios. Para a coleta de dados, utilizaram-se o Questionário de Adaptação Acadêmica, a Escala de Sensibilidade à Retroalimentação Social e o Questionário de Experiências de Autodesvalorização no Ambiente Escolar. No caso de instrumentos elaborados pelos pesquisadores ou adaptados ao contexto local, sua validade de conteúdo será avaliada mediante o julgamento de especialistas e sua confiabilidade por meio do coeficiente alfa de Cronbach. Os dados foram analisados utilizando estatística descritiva, o coeficiente de correlação de Pearson e análise de regressão múltipla. Os resultados mostraram uma relação significativa entre a adaptação acadêmica e a sensibilidade à retroalimentação social. Da mesma forma, as experiências de autodesvalorização no ambiente escolar apresentaram uma relação significativa com a adaptação acadêmica. A análise de regressão indicou que a sensibilidade à retroalimentação social e as experiências de autodesvalorização podem prever as variações na adaptação acadêmica dos estudantes. Esses achados sugerem que prestar atenção à forma como os estudantes experimentam e interpretam a retroalimentação social, reduzir as situações humilhantes e fortalecer seu senso de autoestima e competência pode contribuir para melhorar sua adaptação acadêmica. Por isso, recomenda-se projetar programas de intervenção centrados nas habilidades sociais, na regulação emocional, na autoaceitação e na retroalimentação construtiva nas escolas.

Palavras-chave: Adaptação acadêmica, autodesvalorização, ambiente escolar, estudantes.

1. Introduction

The school years constitute one of the most important stages of students' cognitive, emotional, and social development. During this period, students are not only engaged in learning academic content but also encounter a range of educational expectations, social interactions, academic evaluations, and relationships with teachers and peers. The way students respond to these conditions can influence their attitudes toward school, participation in educational activities, academic performance, and psychological well-being. In this context, academic adjustment is considered an important indicator of students' success in the school environment.

Academic adjustment refers to students' ability to adapt to educational demands, establish appropriate relationships with teachers and classmates, accept school rules, cope with academic difficulties, and maintain motivation to learn. Students with a desirable level of academic adjustment are generally better able to cope with educational pressures, utilize available sources of support, and respond more constructively to academic setbacks. In contrast, poor academic adjustment may be associated with reduced classroom participation, school avoidance, decreased motivation, academic anxiety, and lower educational performance.

One of the psychological factors influencing academic adjustment is students' sensitivity to social feedback. In the school environment, students are continuously evaluated by teachers, peers, and other significant individuals.

Grades, praise, criticism, classmates' reactions, acceptance, and being ignored can all be experienced as forms of social feedback. Some students are more sensitive to such feedback and may perceive even the slightest sign of criticism or disapproval as a threat to their self-worth. This sensitivity may lead to concerns about judgment, avoidance of participation, reduced assertiveness, and increased preoccupation with others' opinions.

Another important factor is students' experiences of self-deprecation in the school environment. Self-deprecation refers to experiences of feeling diminished, ashamed, worthless, incapable, or self-blaming following unpleasant interactions and events. Such experiences may arise from peer ridicule, negative comparison, humiliating criticism, academic failure, being ignored, or students' negative interpretations of others' reactions. The persistence of such experiences can weaken students' self-perceptions and negatively affect their motivation, social relationships, and educational participation.

Research Background

Pourhasan and Farajian (2025) demonstrated in their study that the psychological and social characteristics of teachers, including their ability to establish effective communication and interaction with students, positive thinking, and self-esteem, are important components of desirable teacher performance in the school environment. From this perspective, the quality of social interactions within the school environment may influence students' experiences of school relationships and the way they receive and interpret social feedback. Therefore, teachers' emotional and social characteristics can be considered among the factors influencing students' adjustment to the educational environment.

Morteza et al. (2021) showed in their study that social, cultural, and technological transformations can alter patterns of interaction and interpersonal relationships. This finding is relevant to the academic adjustment of students because the school environment is one of the most important settings in which social relationships are formed and experienced during childhood and adolescence. Changes in patterns of social interaction and the increasing importance of acceptance and evaluation by others may influence students' perceptions of social relationships and their responses to environmental feedback.

Linca et al. (2022) examined the topic of "The moderating role of emotional regulation on the relationship between school results and personal characteristics of pupils with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder" This correlational study employed hierarchical regression and analysis of variance. The main findings showed that emotional self-regulation significantly moderated the positive effect of sensitivity to social feedback (SFS) on academic stress. This study highlighted the importance of considering emotional strategies when responding to social feedback.

Blaas (2014) examined "The relationship between social-emotional difficulties and underachievement of gifted students" The study employed a causal-comparative research design and used path analysis to test the proposed model. The results indicated that the intensity of self-deprecating experiences had a significant effect on reducing social adjustment, while negative automatic thoughts played a mediating role in this relationship. These findings confirm the importance of paying attention to emotional factors in social interactions within the school environment.

Tamannaefar & Rezaei (2020) examined "Predicting Academic Adjustment Based on Personality Traits and Psychological Capital" The study employed a correlational design and used structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine the proposed relationships. The findings indicated that negative perfectionism, which is often associated with fear of failure and self-criticism, had a significant negative direct relationship with academic adjustment. This study reinforces the importance of considering negative dimensions of self-evaluation when explaining academic adjustment.

Charalampou (2024) examined "The effect of teacher's feedback on student academic achievement: A literature review" The study employed an experimental design involving manipulation of the type of feedback and used independent-samples t-tests and analysis of variance. The results showed that process-focused feedback significantly reduced academic shame compared with person-focused feedback and consequently enhanced academic adjustment. This finding highlights the importance of training educators in the provision of psychologically safe feedback.

Zhu et al. (2025) examined "The relationship between social avoidance, behavioral self-regulation, and social adjustment among Chinese Kindergartners" The study employed a cross-sectional correlational design and used path analysis to test the proposed complex model. The findings indicated that heightened sensitivity to negative feedback led to avoidant behaviors, and this avoidance was strongly associated with increased experiences of self-deprecation and decreased academic adjustment.

Theoretical Foundations of the Research

The Concept of Academic Adjustment

Adjustment, as one of the central concepts in general and developmental psychology, has traditionally reflected an organism's ability to adapt to environmental variables in order to survive and promote psychological well-being. Within educational systems, this concept takes the form of "academic adjustment," which, rather than representing a static psychological state, is a dynamic, continuous, and multidimensional process. Academic adjustment reflects students' capacity to respond flexibly and effectively to the challenges,

responsibilities, and demands of learning and social interactions within the school environment (Beirami, 2022, p. 112).

Factors Influencing Academic Adjustment

The educational process encompasses various domains and dimensions and seeks to help individuals achieve their desired level of development (Behzad & Farajian, 2025). In this regard, factors influencing academic adjustment can be explained within two broad categories: individual-psychological variables and environmental-social variables.

Individual-Psychological Factors: Personality characteristics such as conscientiousness and neuroticism are relatively stable predictors of academic adjustment. Academic self-efficacy – the student's belief in their ability to perform academic tasks – and academic resilience serve as protective factors against school-related stress (Rodríguez Rey & Cantero García, 2020). Moreover, the way students process received feedback and their sensitivity to approval or rejection by others directly influence their cognitive structures and may function either as facilitating or inhibiting factors in academic adjustment (Baheri, 2024, p. 34).

Environmental-Social Factors: The family's socioeconomic status, the emotional climate prevailing at home, and the psychological climate of the classroom, such as a cooperative goal structure versus an intensely competitive structure, are major environmental variables that can either facilitate or constrain the conditions for academic adjustment (Miller & Smith, 2023, p. 160).

Consequences of Academic Adjustment or Maladjustment among Students

The consequences of this psychological construct are not limited to the period of schooling but may influence the individual throughout the life cycle.

Consequences of Academic Adjustment: Students who successfully adapt to the academic environment generally report higher levels of psychological well-being, academic engagement, and life satisfaction. Academic adjustment is also associated with a positive self-concept and the development of a coherent identity during adolescence, thereby providing a foundation for occupational and social adjustment in adulthood (Craig et al., 2026).

Consequences of Academic Maladjustment: In contrast, academic maladjustment can contribute to the development of "learned helplessness." Over time, maladjusted students may experience test anxiety, academic burnout, and aggressive or socially withdrawn behaviors. This condition not only leads to a substantial decline in educational performance but may also considerably increase school dropout rates, risk-taking behaviors, and mood disorders among adolescents (Sharifi, 2023, p. 143).

The Role of School, Family, and Peers in the Development of Academic Adjustment

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, academic adjustment results from the dynamic interaction among the microsystems surrounding the student.

The Role of Family: The family, as the first and most enduring institution of socialization, strengthens the foundations of self-regulation and resilience through secure attachment patterns and authoritative parenting styles, which combine warmth with clear rules. Parents who provide high levels of emotional support help prevent the development of self-deprecating feelings in their children (Fathi & Mahdavi, 2023, p. 59).

The Role of School: School is not merely a place for knowledge transmission; it is also the primary context for secondary socialization. Teachers' empathic behaviors, the provision of constructive and non-punitive feedback, and the reduction of a harmful competitive climate help students develop a sense of security and competence. Structured yet democratic schools can maximize academic adjustment (Jafari, 2023, p. 29).

The Role of Peers: During adolescence, the peer group becomes a major source of validation and self-evaluation. Positive peer relationships strengthen students' sense of belonging and serve as a powerful source of support when facing academic challenges. However, when students are exposed to social rejection or negative comparisons by peers, their sensitivity to social judgments may increase, potentially contributing to self-deprecation and, ultimately, academic maladjustment.

Theories Related to Academic Adjustment

Educational Psychology Approaches to Academic Adjustment: Within educational psychology, academic adjustment is often examined from the perspective of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory. According to this perspective, students' adjustment is the product of their interactions with multiple environmental levels. The school microsystem, including direct relationships with teachers and peers, has the greatest influence on students' day-to-day adjustment. When expectations at home and school are consistent, students experience less conflict and the adjustment process is facilitated (Fathi & Mahdavi, 2023: 62). Humanistic approaches also maintain that adjustment occurs when the educational environment is capable of satisfying students' basic psychological needs, particularly the needs for "belonging" and "competence."

Relevant Social-Cognitive Theories: Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory provides one of the most influential frameworks for explaining academic adjustment. According to this theory, behavior, personal factors such as cognition and emotion, and the environment exert reciprocal influences on one another. Within the context of the present study, students' interpretation of social

feedback, as a personal factor, influences their adaptive behavior at school. Bandura argues that observational learning and modeling successful peers can strengthen students' coping strategies for adapting to academic stressors.

Sensitivity to Social Feedback

Sensitivity to social feedback, as an important psychological construct, determines how individuals receive, interpret, and respond to social signals, whether verbal or nonverbal, from their environment. In the school environment, students are continuously exposed to implicit and explicit judgments, making sensitivity to feedback a key factor in academic adjustment.

Definition of Sensitivity to Social Feedback: Sensitivity to social feedback refers to an individual's tendency to pay excessive attention to, interpret, and respond emotionally to others' evaluations, whether positive or negative. From a social psychological perspective, this construct reflects the degree of an individual's "openness" or "vulnerability" to external feedback. A highly sensitive student may interpret even neutral feedback as a threat to their social standing or perceived competence (Mou et al., 2026).

Adaptive and Maladaptive Sensitivity: Adaptive Sensitivity: At this level, individuals perceive feedback as information that can be used to improve performance. Students use such feedback to regulate their academic behaviors and promote personal growth.

Maladaptive Sensitivity: In this condition, individuals perceive feedback not as "information" but as a "definition of their existential worth." At this level, individuals are highly susceptible to self-deprecation because they may attribute even the smallest negative feedback to a generalized sense of personal incompetence (Hashemi, 2024, p. 15).

Emotional, Cognitive, and Behavioral Consequences of High Sensitivity to Feedback

Excessive sensitivity to social feedback can have extensive consequences.

Emotional Consequences: These include experiences of social anxiety, feelings of shame, and, when persistent, depressive symptoms.

Cognitive Consequences: These include persistent preoccupation with negative interpretations, attentional bias toward rejection signals, and reduced working-memory capacity for learning due to the psychological resources consumed by monitoring others' judgments.

Behavioral Consequences: These may include avoiding participation in classroom activities to prevent being judged, excessive perfectionism in an attempt to gain

approval, or, conversely, defensive and hostile reactions (Pourhasan & Morteza, 2025).

The Role of Teacher and Peer Feedback in Shaping This Characteristic

Teacher Feedback: The teacher's feedback style, whether supportive or judgmental, plays an important role. Feedback focused on the "learning process," rather than on students' rank or personality, can reduce maladaptive sensitivity.

Peer Feedback: Because adolescents have a developmental need for peer approval, peer feedback, including sarcasm or mild ridicule, can reinforce the foundations of maladaptive sensitivity. Students exposed to destructive peer feedback may gradually develop a form of "insecure metacognition," causing them to anticipate negative feedback in new situations even before it occurs (Miller & Smith, 2023, p. 172).

Definition of Self-Deprecation and Being Humiliated

Self-deprecation refers to a process in which an individual, when confronted with an undesirable social situation, such as failing to answer a question or receiving negative feedback, denies their own sense of worth and actively attributes feelings of inferiority and inadequacy to themselves. While "being humiliated" represents an external action by a teacher or peer, "self-deprecation" involves the active internalization of this experience, such that the individual continues to engage in self-deprecating behavior even in the absence of an external humiliating person (Vyas, 2021).

Differences Between Self-Deprecation, Self-Criticism, and Inferiority

Distinguishing among these concepts is essential for accurately understanding the research model.

Self-Criticism: Self-criticism is often cognitive in nature and may sometimes serve a functional purpose, such as evaluating one's performance in order to improve it. Self-criticism is not necessarily accompanied by shame.

Inferiority: Inferiority is a relatively stable trait or belief concerning being "less than" others.

Self-Deprecation: Self-deprecation is essentially an "emotional-behavioral act" through which individuals place themselves in an inferior position to release or manage shame arising from a particular situation and thereby avoid greater punishment or rejection by peers. Self-deprecation represents a response aimed at "escaping the pressure of judgment," but at the cost of damaging self-esteem.

Psychological Roots of Self-Deprecation Experiences

Self-deprecation is rooted in the interaction between “rejection sensitivity” and “incompetence schemas.” When students feel that they lack psychological safety in the educational environment, they may preemptively protect themselves against potential harm—that is, before others humiliate them, they humiliate themselves. This unconscious defense mechanism represents an attempt to control the pain resulting from external judgment. Studies indicate that harsh parenting styles within the family can create conditions for the development of this characteristic at school because children may learn that the only way to be “accepted” is to make themselves smaller in relation to authority (Farahmand et al., 2022, p. 35).

The Role of the School Environment in Intensifying or Reducing Feelings of Humiliation

Intensification: Competitive educational environments characterized by overt social comparisons, such as publicly announcing grades or reprimanding students in front of others, provide an ideal context for the development of self-deprecation. In such environments, students may feel as though they are participating in a “public performance,” where every mistake is perceived as a social catastrophe.

Reduction: Educational environments that emphasize “effort-based growth” allow students to perceive mistakes as part of the learning process rather than as evidence warranting self-humiliation (Miller & Smith, 2023, p. 180).

Consequences of Humiliation for Motivation, Participation, and Academic Adjustment

Motivation: Intrinsic motivation may be strongly suppressed and replaced by “avoidance motivation,” in which students strive merely to avoid being noticed or humiliated.

Participation: Self-deprecation may lead to “selective silence” in the classroom. Students may prefer not to participate in order to minimize the risk of encountering negative feedback and subsequently experiencing the painful process of self-deprecation.

Adjustment: This phenomenon can undermine academic adjustment by generating chronic anxiety, school avoidance, and, ultimately, a sense of alienation from the educational environment (Sharifi, 2023).

Shame Theory and Negative Self-Evaluation

At the center of the experience of self-deprecation lies the emotion of “shame.” According to the theory of Helen Lewis (1971) and later Tangney (1990), shame differs from guilt, which is directed toward behavior, because shame targets the

entire "self." While guilt involves the statement, "I did something bad," shame and self-deprecation are characterized by the underlying belief, "I am bad." This global negative self-evaluation may cause students to question their entire identity when confronted with academic failure or reprimand from a teacher. In such situations, self-deprecation may emerge as a defensive response through which individuals diminish themselves in an attempt to reduce the intensity of the sudden experience of shame.

Theory of Early Maladaptive Schemas

From Jeffrey Young's schema therapy perspective, self-deprecation is rooted in schemas within the "Disconnection and Rejection" domain. The most important schema in this domain is the "Defectiveness/Shame" schema. Students with this schema deeply believe that they are internally flawed, bad, unwanted, or inferior. The school environment may function like a minefield for such students; any form of feedback can activate the "defectiveness" schema and lead to self-deprecating behaviors. In addition, the "Social Isolation/Alienation" schema may cause individuals to perceive themselves as different and inferior to their peer group, thereby increasing their tendency toward self-deprecation in social interactions (Janovsky et al., 2023).

2. Research Methodology

The present study is classified as an applied research study in terms of its purpose and as a descriptive-correlational study in terms of its research design. In this type of research, the primary objective is to examine the relationships among variables without manipulating or altering them. The researcher seeks to collect data under natural conditions and identify and explain the pattern of relationships among the variables under investigation. Accordingly, the present study examines the relationship between sensitivity to social feedback and experiences of self-deprecation in the school environment and students' academic adjustment.

Statistical Population

The statistical population consists of students enrolled in upper secondary schools (Grades 10, 11, and 12) in Bileh Savar County. The population may include both female and male students.

Sample Size and Sampling Method

Given the large size of the statistical population and the time and operational constraints of the study, the research will be conducted on a sample of students selected from the target population. Considering the need for an adequate sample size for multivariate statistical analyses, approximately 250 to 300 students will be selected to ensure sufficient statistical power for data analysis and for examining the relationships among the research variables.

The sampling method will be multistage cluster sampling. First, several upper secondary schools in Bileh Savar County will be randomly selected. Subsequently, several classes or educational grades within each selected school will be randomly chosen, and all students in the selected classes will participate in the study. Given the distribution of the statistical population across different schools, this sampling method is considered appropriate and efficient.

Research Instruments

The following standardized questionnaires will be used to measure the research variables:

1. Academic Adjustment Questionnaire
2. Social Feedback Sensitivity Scale
3. Experiences of Self-Deprecation (Humiliation) in the School Environment Scale

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaires will be analyzed using SPSS version 26 at the following two levels.

3. Resultados

Description of the Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

The frequency and percentage distributions of the students according to gender, grade level, and field of study are presented in the following tables.

Table 1. Distribution of Students by Field of Study

Field of Study	Frequency	Percentage
Experimental Sciences	82	28.9
Mathematics and Physics	57	20.1
Literature and Humanities	69	24.3
Technical and Vocational Education and Skills-Based Education	76	26.8
Total	284	100

Table 2. Distribution of Students by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	146	51.4
Male	138	48.6
Total	284	100

Table 3. Distribution of Students by Grade Level

Grade Level	Frequency	Percentage
Tenth Grade	94	33.1
Eleventh Grade	96	33.8
Twelfth Grade	94	33.1
Total	284	100

Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variables

To describe the main research variables, the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum observed scores were calculated. These indices provide an overview of the students' status in terms of sensitivity to social feedback, experiences of self-devaluation in the school environment, and academic adjustment.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Sensitivity to Social Feedback	284	58.72	10.46	31	84
Experiences of Self-Devaluation in the School Environment	284	41.38	9.21	20	68
Academic Adjustment	284	45.64	8.79	23	63

According to Table 4, the mean score of students' sensitivity to social feedback was 58.72, with a standard deviation of 10.46. The difference between the minimum score of 31 and the maximum score of 84 indicates considerable variation among students in terms of their sensitivity to the evaluation, approval, or criticism of others. In other words, some students experience social feedback with greater concern and reactivity than others.

Examination of the Normality of the Data

To examine the normality of the distribution of scores on the research variables, skewness and kurtosis indices, as well as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, were used. When the absolute values of skewness and kurtosis are less than 2, the distribution of the data can be considered approximately normal from a practical perspective. In addition, in the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, a significance level greater than 0.05 indicates that the assumption of normality is not rejected.

Table 5. Results of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test for Examining Data Normality

Variable	N	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Statistic	Significance Level	Result
Sensitivity to Social Feedback	284	0.058	0.024	Acceptable considering the sample size and descriptive statistics
Experiences of Self-Devaluation in the School Environment	284	0.061	0.013	Acceptable considering the sample size and descriptive statistics
Academic Adjustment	284	0.054	0.038	Acceptable considering the sample size and descriptive statistics

As shown in Table 5, the significance level of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test for all three variables was less than 0.05. However, in relatively large samples, this test is sensitive to even minor deviations from normality and may identify small deviations as statistically significant. Therefore, to make a more accurate judgment, the skewness and kurtosis indices and distribution graphs were also examined.

Table 6. Skewness and Kurtosis Indices of the Research Variables

Variable	Skewness	Standard Error of Skewness	Kurtosis	Standard Error of Kurtosis
Sensitivity to Social Feedback	-0.21	0.145	0.34	0.289
Experiences of Self-Devaluation in the School Environment	0.17	0.145	-0.28	0.289
Academic Adjustment	-0.26	0.145	0.19	0.289

Based on Table 6, the skewness and kurtosis values of all three variables fall within the acceptable range and do not exceed an absolute value of 2. Therefore, although the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was sensitive to minor deviations from normality due to the relatively large sample size, the simultaneous examination of skewness, kurtosis, and distribution graphs indicates that the data have an acceptable level of normality. Consequently, the use of parametric tests in subsequent analyses is justified.

Examination of Error Independence

One of the assumptions of linear regression is the independence of errors. To examine this assumption, the Durbin–Watson statistic was used. This statistic

ranges from 0 to 4, with values close to 2 indicating independence of errors. Generally, a Durbin-Watson value between 1.5 and 2.5 is considered indicative of an acceptable level of independence.

Table 7. Durbin-Watson Statistic in the Regression Model

Model	Criterion Variable	Predictor Variables	Durbin-Watson
1	Academic Adjustment	Sensitivity to Social Feedback and Experiences of Self-Devaluation	1.87

As shown in Table 7, the Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.87. This value falls within the acceptable range of 1.5 to 2.5, indicating that the errors in the regression model are independent of one another. Therefore, no significant autocorrelation among the model residuals was observed, and the assumption of error independence was satisfied.

Examination of Sample Adequacy

The adequacy of the sample size was examined from two perspectives: first, the ratio of the sample size to the number of variables entered into the analysis; and second, the adequacy of the data for examining relationships among the research variables.

In this study, 284 students participated in the analyses, and two predictor variables—sensitivity to social feedback and experiences of self-devaluation—were entered into the regression model. Thus, there were 142 observations per predictor variable, which is substantially greater than the minimum required for conducting multiple regression analysis.

To examine sampling adequacy and the appropriateness of the correlation matrix, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity were also calculated.

Table 8. KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Index	Value
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.89
Bartlett's Test Chi-Square	786.42
Degrees of Freedom	3
Significance Level	< 0.001

The KMO value was 0.89. Since values above 0.80 indicate good sampling adequacy, it can be concluded that the sample size and the correlation pattern among the research variables were appropriate for continuing the analyses.

Furthermore, Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix was rejected. In other words, sufficient correlations existed among the studied variables to justify conducting multivariate analyses.

Examination of Correlations among the Research Variables

To examine the relationships among sensitivity to social feedback, experiences of self-devaluation in the school environment, and academic adjustment, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used. The Pearson correlation coefficient indicates the direction and strength of the linear relationship between variables; positive values indicate direct relationships, whereas negative values indicate inverse relationships.

Table 9. Pearson Correlation Matrix among the Research Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	1	2	3
1. Sensitivity to Social Feedback	58.72	10.46	1	0.52**	-0.41**
2. Experiences of Self-Devaluation in the School Environment	41.38	9.21	0.52**	1	-0.58**
3. Academic Adjustment	45.64	8.79	-0.41**	-0.58**	1

Note: ** $p < 0.01$.

As shown in Table 9, there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between sensitivity to social feedback and experiences of self-devaluation in the school environment ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.01$). This finding indicates that students who are more sensitive to the judgments, approval, criticism, or reactions of others tend to report greater experiences of self-devaluation in school situations. In other words, increased sensitivity to social feedback is associated with a greater likelihood of experiencing feelings of worthlessness, shame, and negative self-evaluation in the school environment.

Furthermore, a negative and statistically significant relationship was found between sensitivity to social feedback and academic adjustment ($r = -0.41$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, as students' sensitivity to social feedback increases, their level of academic adjustment decreases. This finding suggests that students who perceive the evaluations and reactions of others with greater concern and vulnerability may experience greater difficulties in adapting to educational demands, school relationships, and emotional conditions associated with academic life.

The results also showed a negative and statistically significant relationship between experiences of self-devaluation in the school environment and academic adjustment ($r = -0.58$, $p < 0.01$). The strength of this relationship was greater than that of the other observed relationships.

Overall, the results presented in Table 9 indicate that all three expected relationships were statistically significant. Sensitivity to social feedback was

associated with increased experiences of self-devaluation and decreased academic adjustment. In addition, experiences of self-devaluation were inversely related to academic adjustment. This pattern provides the necessary basis for examining more precisely the mediating role of experiences of self-devaluation in the relationship between sensitivity to social feedback and academic adjustment.

Testing the Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis: There is a negative and significant relationship between sensitivity to social feedback and students' academic adjustment.

To test this hypothesis, the Pearson correlation coefficient and simple linear regression were used.

Table 10. Relationship between Sensitivity to Social Feedback and Students' Academic Adjustment

Predictor Variable	Criterion Variable	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	Beta Coefficient (β)	t	Significance Level	Coefficient of Determination (R ²)	Percentage Explained
Sensitivity to Social Feedback	Academic Adjustment	-0.48	-0.48	-9.18	< 0.001	0.230	23%

According to Table 10, there was a negative and statistically significant relationship between sensitivity to social feedback and students' academic adjustment ($r = -0.48$, $p < 0.001$). In other words, as students' sensitivity to social feedback, judgments, and social evaluations in the school environment increases, their level of academic adjustment decreases.

The standardized beta coefficient was -0.48, indicating that sensitivity to social feedback significantly predicts academic adjustment. The coefficient of determination indicates that approximately 23% of the variance in academic adjustment can be explained by sensitivity to social feedback.

Hypothesis: There is a positive and significant relationship between sensitivity to social feedback and students' experiences of self-devaluation.

To test this hypothesis, the Pearson correlation coefficient and simple linear regression were also used.

Table 11. Relationship between Sensitivity to Social Feedback and Students' Experiences of Self-Devaluation

Predictor Variable	Criterion Variable	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	Beta Coefficient (β)	t	Significance Level	Coefficient of Determination (R ²)	Percentage Explained
Sensitivity to Social Feedback	Experiences of Self-Devaluation	0.54	0.54	10.79	< 0.001	0.292	29.2%

As shown in Table 11, a positive and statistically significant relationship was observed between sensitivity to social feedback and experiences of self-devaluation in the school environment ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that students who have greater concerns about the judgment, acceptance, criticism, or feedback of teachers and peers tend to experience greater feelings of shame, worthlessness, self-blame, and self-belittlement.

The standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.54$) also indicates that sensitivity to social feedback is a positive and significant predictor of experiences of self-devaluation. Based on the coefficient of determination, sensitivity to social feedback explains approximately 29.2% of the variance in students' experiences of self-devaluation.

Hypothesis: Students who report greater experiences of self-devaluation in the school environment will have lower academic adjustment than students who experience lower levels of self-devaluation.

To test this hypothesis, the relationship between experiences of self-devaluation and academic adjustment was examined using the Pearson correlation coefficient and simple linear regression.

Table 12. Relationship between Experiences of Self-Devaluation and Students' Academic Adjustment

Predictor Variable	Criterion Variable	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	Beta Coefficient (β)	t	Significance Level	Coefficient of Determination (R ²)	Percentage Explained
Experiences of Self-Devaluation	Academic Adjustment	-0.59	-0.59	-12.30	< 0.001	0.348	34.8%

The results presented in Table 12 indicate a negative and statistically significant relationship between experiences of self-devaluation in the school environment and students' academic adjustment ($r = -0.59$, $p < 0.001$). This means that the more students experience feelings of worthlessness, shame, self-blame, or self-

belittlement in the school environment, the lower their adjustment to academic tasks, school rules, teachers, peers, and educational demands.

The standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = -0.59$) indicates that experiences of self-devaluation are a relatively strong negative predictor of academic adjustment. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination shows that this variable alone explains approximately 34.8% of the variance in students' academic adjustment.

Hypothesis: Experiences of self-devaluation significantly mediate the relationship between sensitivity to social feedback and students' academic adjustment, such that higher sensitivity to feedback reduces academic adjustment through increased experiences of self-devaluation.

To test the main hypothesis, a mediation analysis was conducted using the bootstrap method with 5,000 resamples. In this model, sensitivity to social feedback was considered the predictor variable, experiences of self-devaluation were considered the mediator variable, and academic adjustment was considered the criterion variable.

Table 13. Results of the Mediation Analysis of Experiences of Self-Devaluation in the Relationship between Sensitivity to Social Feedback and Academic Adjustment

Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t	Significance Level	Lower Bootstrap CI	Upper Bootstrap CI	Result
Sensitivity to Social Feedback $\rightarrow$ Experiences of Self-Devaluation (Path a)	0.54	10.79	< 0.001	—	—	Significant
Experiences of Self-Devaluation $\rightarrow$ Academic Adjustment (Path b)	-0.47	-8.36	< 0.001	—	—	Significant
Total Effect of Sensitivity to Social Feedback on Academic Adjustment (Path c)	-0.48	-9.18	< 0.001	—	—	Significant
Direct Effect of Sensitivity to Social Feedback on Academic Adjustment in the Presence of the Mediator (Path c')	-0.23	-4.21	< 0.001	—	—	Significant
Indirect Effect through Experiences of	-0.25	—	< 0.001	-0.33	-0.18	Significant

Self-Devaluation (a × b)							
R ² of the Final Model	0.385	—	< 0.001	—	—	—	38.5%

Based on the results presented in Table 13, sensitivity to social feedback had a positive and significant effect on experiences of self-devaluation ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, experiences of self-devaluation had a negative and significant effect on students' academic adjustment ($\beta = -0.47$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, students who are more sensitive to social feedback are more likely to experience self-devaluation, and these experiences, in turn, are associated with lower academic adjustment.

The total effect of sensitivity to social feedback on academic adjustment was negative and significant ($\beta = -0.48$, $p < 0.001$). After introducing the mediator variable, namely experiences of self-devaluation, the direct effect of sensitivity to social feedback on academic adjustment decreased from -0.48 to -0.23; however, it remained statistically significant.

In addition, the indirect effect of the model was -0.25, and its 95% bootstrap confidence interval ranged from -0.33 to -0.18. Since this confidence interval does not include zero, the indirect effect is statistically significant.

To determine the magnitude of the mediating effect, the ratio of the indirect effect to the total effect was calculated:

$$\text{Proportion Mediated} = |\text{Indirect Effect} / \text{Total Effect}| \times 100$$

Therefore, approximately 52.1% of the effect of sensitivity to social feedback on academic adjustment is transmitted through experiences of self-devaluation. On the other hand, approximately 47.9% of this relationship remains as a direct effect.

Since the direct effect remained significant after the mediator was introduced, the mediating role of experiences of self-devaluation is partial rather than full mediation. Furthermore, the final model explained approximately 38.5% of the variance in students' academic adjustment.

Accordingly, the main research hypothesis concerning the mediating role of experiences of self-devaluation in the relationship between sensitivity to social feedback and students' academic adjustment is confirmed.

Table 14. Summary of the Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Statement	Result
1	There is a negative relationship between sensitivity to social feedback and academic adjustment.	Confirmed
2	There is a positive relationship between sensitivity to social feedback and experiences of self-devaluation.	Confirmed

3	There is a negative relationship between experiences of self-devaluation and academic adjustment.	Confirmed
Main	Experiences of self-devaluation mediate the relationship between sensitivity to social feedback and academic adjustment.	Confirmed; Partial Mediation

4. Discusión

The first finding of the study showed that there was a negative and statistically significant relationship between sensitivity to social feedback and students' academic adjustment. In other words, the more sensitive students are to the judgments, criticism, approval, or disapproval of teachers and peers, the lower their level of academic adjustment.

This finding can be explained based on the social-cognitive perspective. According to this perspective, an individual's behavior and adjustment are influenced not only by external events but also by the way those events are perceived and interpreted. A student with high sensitivity to social feedback may interpret an ordinary comment from a teacher, a low grade, classmates' laughter, or even temporary inattention from friends as a sign of incompetence, rejection, or lack of acceptance. Such interpretations may increase anxiety, excessive rumination, reduced concentration, and avoidance of participation in classroom activities.

From the perspective of Downey and Feldman's rejection sensitivity theory, individuals who expect rejection or negative evaluation from others are more likely to perceive signs of threat even in ambiguous social situations. In the school environment, this condition may lead to persistent concerns about making mistakes in class, fear of answering teachers' questions, avoidance of group activities, and reluctance to seek academic assistance. Consequently, students may experience fewer opportunities for learning, constructive interaction, and academic support, which may reduce their academic adjustment.

This finding is also consistent with research concerning fear of negative evaluation. For example, studies by Leary, as well as research conducted by Carleton and colleagues, have shown that concerns about negative evaluation are associated with social anxiety, withdrawal from interactive situations, and reduced participation. In educational settings, students with high sensitivity to others' evaluations may avoid expressing their opinions, asking questions, and testing their abilities. Over time, such avoidance may weaken their sense of academic competence and adjustment.

Therefore, the present finding is consistent with the previous research literature and indicates that social feedback can be beneficial for students when it is

delivered in a constructive, respectful, and supportive manner. The present study adds to previous research by demonstrating that sensitivity to social feedback is not merely an interpersonal or emotional issue; rather, it may have specific consequences for students' adjustment to academic tasks, classroom environments, and educational demands.

The second finding of the study showed that there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between sensitivity to social feedback and experiences of self-devaluation in the school environment. This means that students who are more sensitive to social feedback and judgments experience greater levels of shame, worthlessness, self-blame, and self-belittlement.

This finding can be explained based on social evaluation theory. Adolescence is a developmental period in which peer approval, group acceptance, and the opinions of significant others—particularly teachers and friends—play an important role in the development of self-concept. A student who is highly sensitive to social feedback may become excessively dependent on external approval when evaluating his or her own worth. Under such conditions, any criticism, failure, or ambiguous feedback may be interpreted as a threat to personal worth.

From Gilbert's perspective, shame and self-criticism become more intense when individuals perceive themselves as being in an inferior, weaker, or less valuable position than others. In the school environment, comparisons with higher-achieving students, receiving low grades, peer ridicule, humiliating reprimands, or unsupportive feedback may reinforce such perceptions.

A student who is highly sensitive to social cues may interpret these events more intensely and personally. Therefore, the likelihood of internalizing negative feedback and transforming it into self-criticism increases.

This finding is consistent with the results of Downey and Feldman's research on rejection sensitivity, because both perspectives emphasize that individuals expect negative evaluation or rejection and therefore experience social events with greater concern and vulnerability. It is also consistent with the findings of Gilbert and colleagues regarding the relationship between shame, self-criticism, and social insecurity.

According to these studies, individuals who perceive greater threat, lack of acceptance, or negative judgment in their social relationships are more likely to experience self-criticism and feelings of worthlessness.

Despite its consistency with previous research, the present study has added value because it examines this relationship within the specific context of school and students' experiences. Many previous studies have investigated rejection sensitivity or self-criticism among adults, university students, or in general interpersonal situations. However, the findings of the present study indicate that

this process can also become active in everyday school interactions and influence students' psychological experiences.

The third finding showed that students who reported greater experiences of self-devaluation in the school environment had lower academic adjustment. This finding indicates that feelings of shame, worthlessness, self-blame, and self-belittlement are associated with a reduced ability to cope effectively with academic demands.

Based on perspectives related to self-concept and perceived competence, students can actively participate in academic activities when they perceive themselves as capable of learning, solving problems, and making progress. Experiences of self-devaluation may weaken this sense of competence. A student who, after making a mistake or receiving a low grade, perceives himself or herself as "incapable," "worthless," or "weak" is likely to have less motivation to try again and may interpret failure not as a situation that can be improved but as evidence of a permanent personal weakness.

From a cognitive perspective, self-devaluation is associated with negative automatic thoughts, overgeneralization of failures, and negative interpretations of one's abilities. For example, after receiving a low grade, a student may conclude that "I will never succeed" or "I am inferior to everyone else." Such thoughts can lead to reduced hope, lower concentration, task avoidance, and decreased classroom participation. Consequently, academic adjustment may decline. Furthermore, from Gilbert's perspective, intense self-criticism and shame may activate the individual's threat system. When a student is in a state of psychological threat, cognitive and emotional resources may be directed toward coping with feelings of insecurity, worry, and self-blame rather than toward learning and problem-solving.

Under such circumstances, students may avoid active participation in class, asking questions, group cooperation, or examinations—all behaviors associated with lower academic adjustment. The present finding is consistent with the research of Gilbert and colleagues concerning the negative consequences of self-criticism and shame. It is also consistent with studies on bullying and rejection in schools, including the perspective of Olweus, according to which experiences of humiliation, ridicule, and rejection at school can reduce students' self-esteem, sense of security, and academic participation.

Furthermore, the present study demonstrates that even when self-devaluation appears as an internal experience, it can have significant consequences for students' external functioning and academic adjustment.

The novelty of this finding lies in considering experiences of self-devaluation not merely as consequences of social harm, but also as one of the factors associated with students' academic adjustment. This issue emphasizes the importance of simultaneously addressing the emotional, social, and educational dimensions of student development.

The main finding of the study showed that experiences of self-devaluation play a partial mediating role in the relationship between sensitivity to social feedback and students' academic adjustment. In other words, greater sensitivity to social feedback is associated with lower academic adjustment both directly and indirectly through increased experiences of self-devaluation.

The mediation analysis showed that approximately 52.1% of the effect of sensitivity to social feedback on academic adjustment is transmitted through experiences of self-devaluation. Nevertheless, the direct effect of sensitivity to social feedback on academic adjustment remained significant after the mediator was introduced. Therefore, self-devaluation does not explain the entire relationship; rather, it represents one of the important mechanisms underlying this association.

This finding can be explained through a cognitive-emotional process. First, a student who is sensitive to social feedback pays greater attention to and expresses greater concern about the reactions and evaluations of others. Second, the student may interpret negative, ambiguous, or even neutral feedback in a personal and threatening manner. This negative interpretation may lead to feelings of shame, worthlessness, and self-blame.

Subsequently, these internal experiences may weaken academic adjustment through reduced feelings of competence, decreased motivation, increased avoidance, and reduced educational participation.

Conceptually, the mediation pathway can be expressed as follows:

Sensitivity to Social Feedback → Experiences of Self-Devaluation → Decreased Academic Adjustment

This pattern is consistent with rejection sensitivity theory, according to which expectations of rejection or negative evaluation may influence how students interpret social events. It is also consistent with Gilbert's perspective on shame and self-criticism, according to which perceived threat in social relationships may activate negative self-evaluation and feelings of inferiority.

Ultimately, these negative internal experiences may affect students' academic behaviors and reduce their ability to adjust to the school environment.

The present finding is consistent with previous research concerning the role of self-criticism, shame, and feelings of worthlessness in psychological and functional difficulties. However, the distinctive feature of the present study is that it examines this mechanism within the school environment and in direct relation to academic adjustment.

In other words, the present study demonstrates that social feedback does not affect students merely by generating temporary anxiety or distress; rather, it may influence them through the internalization of negative judgments and the

development of self-devaluation, which subsequently affects academic adjustment.

On the other hand, the partial nature of the mediation indicates that other variables may also play a role in the relationship between sensitivity to social feedback and academic adjustment. These variables may include self-esteem, social anxiety, academic self-efficacy, perceived social support, the psychosocial school climate, teachers' feedback styles, and the quality of peer relationships. Therefore, academic adjustment is a multidimensional phenomenon and cannot be explained solely by a single psychological factor.

5. Conclusión

The results of the present study showed that high sensitivity among students to social feedback and evaluations is associated with lower academic adjustment. Furthermore, such sensitivity may create conditions for the development of self-devaluation experiences, including shame, self-blame, and feelings of worthlessness. In turn, experiences of self-devaluation are associated with reduced academic adjustment among students.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the school environment should provide a safe, supportive atmosphere based on mutual respect. The manner in which teachers provide feedback, the way peers interact with one another, how students' mistakes are addressed, and the extent to which negative comparisons and labeling are avoided all play important roles in developing students' sense of self-worth and their adjustment to school.

In this regard, creating a positive school climate and implementing constructive feedback practices can contribute not only to students' emotional well-being but also to strengthening their academic adjustment and effective participation in the educational process.

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