

# Structural Modeling of the Relationships Between Academic Perfectionism and the Psychosocial Structure of the Classroom on Feelings of Academic Incompetence with the Mediating Role of Academic Self-Handicapping in Secondary School Students

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## 1. Round 1

### 1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The sentence “limited research has examined their simultaneous mediating roles within a comprehensive structural model” is problematic because the actual model includes only academic self-handicapping as mediator, not procrastination. Please revise this gap statement so it accurately reflects the tested model.

The use of the Durbin–Watson statistic is not well justified. Durbin–Watson is typically relevant to autocorrelation in regression residuals, not independence in cross-sectional SEM data. Please clarify why it was used and whether clustering effects from multistage sampling were considered.

In Table 4, the standard error for the path “Academic self-handicapping → Academic incompetence” is reported as 0.590, which appears unusually large compared with other SE values. Please verify whether these are standardized or unstandardized estimates and report CR/t values consistently.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

### 1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the Methods section, the sample description reports 405 students from Gorgan, but the sampling procedure is insufficiently detailed. The authors should specify the number of selected districts, schools, classrooms, and students per cluster, as well as how gender imbalance was handled analytically.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria are missing from the “Study Design and Participants” subsection. Please specify eligibility criteria such as grade level, consent conditions, incomplete questionnaire handling, psychological/educational exclusion criteria, and whether students with diagnosed learning disorders were included.

The ethical procedure requires more detail. The paragraph states that “informed consent was obtained from all participants,” but because the participants are secondary school students, the authors should clarify whether parental consent and student assent were obtained.

In the Measures section, the researcher-made Feelings of Academic Incompetence Questionnaire requires stronger validation evidence. A pilot sample of 30 students is not sufficient for establishing construct validity; the authors should report expert review procedures, item development logic, exploratory factor analysis, and CFA results separately.

Table 2 reports “Cronbach’s Alpha / Factor Loading” in one column, which is confusing because item-level values appear to be factor loadings, while subscale values are alpha coefficients. These should be separated into distinct columns.

The social comparison subscale has Cronbach’s alpha of 0.528, which is below acceptable reliability thresholds. The authors should not describe the instrument as psychometrically adequate without addressing this weakness and its implications for model estimation.

Table 3 shows extremely poor CFA fit for the academic incompetence scale, including RMSEA = 0.182 and CMIN/DF = 14.43. The authors should not claim that factor loadings and internal consistency support “relative adequacy” unless they provide a defensible explanation for retaining a poorly fitting measurement model.

The structural model fit is also unacceptable, with GFI = 0.666, RMSEA = 0.156, RMR = 0.259, and CMIN/DF = 10.872. The authors should avoid interpreting path coefficients as substantive findings when the global model fit indicates that the proposed model is not supported.

The Results section states that “the distribution of the variables was normal or close to normal” based on Shapiro–Wilk values greater than 0.05. With  $N = 405$ , the authors should also report skewness and kurtosis values and clarify whether multivariate normality was assessed, because SEM assumptions extend beyond univariate normality.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

## 2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.