



The Mediating Role of Achievement Motivation in the Perception of School Counseling Services and Academic Buoyancy among Junior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to explore the relationships among the perception of school counseling services (future planning, values, decision-making, and social-emotional skills), achievement motivation, and academic buoyancy among junior high school students, and to examine the potential mediating role of achievement motivation.

Method: This was a descriptive correlational study, and structural equation modeling was used to examine the relationships between variables. The statistical population of this study consisted of all 12- to 16-year-old junior high school students in the city of Sanandaj during the 2024-2025 academic year. A total of 450 students (197 girls and 253 boys) were selected based on Klein's rule for structural equation modeling through a convenience sampling method. Data were collected using the following questionnaires: Academic Buoyancy (Martin & Marsh, 2008), Perception of School Counseling Services (Ohert et al., 2022), and Achievement Motivation (Hermans, 1970). Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 26 and AMOS 24 software.

Results: The results revealed that the overall model fit was satisfactory. The direct effect of the subscales of the perception of school counseling services on academic buoyancy was as follows: The direct effect of the future planning ($\beta=0.321$, $p<0.001$), values, decision-making ($\beta=0.279$, $p<0.001$) and achievement motivation ($\beta=0.482$, $p<0.001$) on academic buoyancy was positive and significant, but the direct effect of the social-emotional skills ($\beta=0.168$, $p>0.05$) on academic buoyancy was not significant. The indirect effect of future planning ($\beta=0.113$, $p<0.001$), values and decision-making ($\beta=0.169$, $p<0.001$), and social-emotional skills ($\beta=0.097$, $p<0.05$) on academic buoyancy with the mediating role of achievement motivation was positive and significant.

Conclusions: Based on the results of this study, improving students' perception of school counseling services leads to enhanced achievement motivation and, consequently, improved academic buoyancy.

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Introduction

The education system in human societies plays a crucial role as the cornerstone of students' social, economic, and educational growth, and numerous factors influence the structure, objectives, and quality of this system (Richards et al., 2018). Investigating the changes and impacts during the educational journey can help enhance our understanding of the learning process and the individual development of students. Therefore, focusing on students as the central element of the educational system is of paramount importance (Tomaszewski, 2021). In this context, academic buoyancy functions as an effective construct. Academic buoyancy serves as a foundational structure for positive experiences in the educational life, and a precise understanding of this psychological concept can assist students in effectively overcoming academic obstacles and challenges (Colmar et al., 2019; Comerford et al., 2015). Academic buoyancy is a critical issue that warrants careful examination; students possessing this characteristic can acquire the ability to successfully return to their previous path and continue their educational growth after facing academic setbacks and failures (Martin & Marsh, 2008). Throughout their educational journey, students encounter numerous challenges and, like anyone else, seek solutions to these problems. Therefore, they require counseling and guidance services (Olanrewaju & Suleiman, 2019).

In the context of enhancing academic buoyancy, the construct of perceived school counseling services plays a significant role. School counselors provide effective services to address many of the students' issues, and their role becomes evident when timely counseling can alter the fate of an individual, a family, and sometimes even a community. Therefore, the lack of school counseling services brings about familial and social conflicts and, in some cases, academic underachievement. Additionally, motivation for academic progress influences academic satisfaction, and the level of academic satisfaction and motivation are indicators of improving academic performance (Zaheri et al., 2020). Hence, increasing motivation and academic progress contribute to academic buoyancy, and this applies equally and independently of age, gender, social, and economic status across different groups of students (Miller et al., 2013).

Academic buoyancy refers to the ability of students to overcome academic challenges and continue learning when faced with difficulties (Hirvonen et al., 2019). Academic buoyancy is not limited to overcoming major adversities; rather, it focuses on managing smaller, everyday problems that are an inseparable part of the educational experience. These issues include coping with negative feedback, managing challenging assignments, and maintaining consistent effort despite setbacks. Academic buoyancy reflects students' capacity to manage recurring pressures with determination and resolve. This ability enables students to maintain their motivation and continue striving toward their goals when confronted with typical academic stressors (Martin, 2014).

Moreover, academic buoyancy not only reduces the intensity of negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, boredom, and apathy but also mitigates their detrimental impact on academic performance (Putwain & Wood, 2023). Academic buoyancy belongs to the field of positive psychology and, instead of focusing on the risk of psychological harm, it emphasizes students' ability to cope with everyday academic challenges. It is defined as a skill that enables students to effectively confront daily school-related obstacles such as poor grades, exam-related stress, heavy and difficult assignments, negative feedback in teacher-student interactions, peer competition, and decreased motivation. This capacity can positively influence their academic performance (Putwain & Wood, 2023; Martin & Marsh, 2020).

In this context, understanding the variables that influence academic buoyancy is crucial. One such variable is the perception of school counseling services, which refers to students' understanding and interpretation of receiving specialized counseling services (Gallant & Zhao, 2011). Future planning refers to students' perceptions of the usefulness of school counselor services in identifying academic courses, selecting challenging academic goals, and coordinating courses, which is in line with the National Association of School Counselors Model Framework (Studer, 2015), which emphasizes the importance of counselors' roles as social agents in future planning and preparing students for academic success. Values and decision-making refer to how students perceive the support of the school counselor in exploring their goals, interests, abilities, and skills for career decisions. It also assesses the usefulness of the school counselor's services in helping students develop decision-making-related skills such as effective communication, use of technology and media, and setting personal goals. Social-emotional skills refer to the student's perception of the school counselor's support in helping students develop self-regulation skills, stress management, a sense of belonging, problem-solving, and greater independence. It also refers to the school counselor's assistance in resolving conflicts with peers, family, and teachers. In other words, strengthening students' social-emotional skills and helping them understand and manage emotions, value the perspectives of others, and acquire the ability to make responsible decisions is known as the counselor's role of emotional and social leadership, and students' perceptions of this role are assessed (Bowers et al., 2017). Guidance and counseling is a specialized field that offers a wide range of activities and services aimed at helping individuals understand themselves, their school environment, the world, and their problems (Olanrewaju & Suleiman, 2019). To date, limited research has been conducted on the assessment of counseling services from the perspective of students' perceptions (Gallant & Zhao, 2011). Therefore, it appears that the perception of school counseling services has a significant relationship with academic buoyancy.

In addition to the perception of school counseling services, it seems that achievement motivation also influences academic buoyancy (Martin et al., 2010). The concept of achievement motivation, which is one of the primary constructs for effective learning, refers to an individual's tendency, interest, and desire to engage in goal-oriented activities and self-improvement (Anderman, 2020). Achievement motivation involves the intelligence and intrinsic drive to complete a task, which is associated with success and the attainment of a certain level of competence in academic and professional fields (Kalaja et al., 2010). Achievement motivation in education refers to the needs, stimuli, and factors that encourage an individual to engage in an educational environment and pursue a degree (Clark & Schroth, 2010). Students' perceptions of their abilities and achievements serve as a fundamental motivator for their motivation (Jansen et al., 2022). Peer emotions such as pleasure, calmness, frustration, anger, and depression significantly impact students' achievement motivation and performance (Hu et al., 2024).

The results indicate that cognitive beliefs related to a growth mindset concerning the level of effort, on the one hand, and intrinsic and independent motivation, on the other, simultaneously act as complementary motivational resources, having a unique relationship with learning outcomes. In contrast, motivation driven by external sources and cognitive beliefs related to a fixed mindset led to inconsistent learning outcomes (Boncquet et al., 2024). Academic buoyancy is associated with factors related to academic motivation, including increased classroom engagement and self-confidence (Martin & Marsh, 2008). Academic buoyancy, through achievement motivation as a mediating variable, influences students' progress and learning (Rafsanjani et al., 2024).

Given that students face various academic challenges and obstacles in school, examining the concept of academic buoyancy is of particular importance. A review of the research literature reveals the existence of relationships between other variables and academic buoyancy (Dastbaz & Aslani, 2025). However, the relationship between variables such as the perception of school counseling services and academic buoyancy, considering the mediating role of achievement motivation, has been overlooked. No studies were found that examined the effect of these important variables on academic buoyancy while considering their mediating relationships in junior high school students, indicating a noticeable research gap in this area. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of the perception of school counseling services in future planning, values, decision-making, and social-emotional skills on academic buoyancy, with the mediating role of achievement motivation in junior high school students.

The theoretical framework of the present study was grounded in Expectancy Theory and Achievement Goal Theory. Expectancy Theory suggests that students' academic behaviors are influenced by their expectations of success and the perceived value of educational outcomes. Therefore, school counseling services that support future planning, goal clarification, and decision-making may strengthen students' expectations for academic success and enhance their persistence when facing academic challenges. In addition, Achievement Goal Theory emphasizes that students with stronger mastery and achievement-oriented goals are more likely to demonstrate adaptive learning behaviors, persistence, and resilience in educational settings. From this perspective, achievement motivation may function as an important psychological mechanism through which students' perceptions of school counseling services influence academic buoyancy. Based on these theoretical assumptions, the present study proposed that perceptions of school counseling services would positively predict academic buoyancy both directly and indirectly through achievement motivation. The hypotheses of this study included the following:

H1: Future planning has a positive and direct impact on academic buoyancy.

H2: Values and decision-making have a positive and direct impact on academic buoyancy.

H3: Social-emotional skills have a positive and direct impact on academic buoyancy.

H4: Achievement motivation has a positive and direct impact on academic buoyancy.

H5: Achievement motivation has a mediating role between future planning and academic buoyancy.

H6: Achievement motivation has a mediating role between values and decision-making, and academic buoyancy.

H7: Achievement motivation has a mediating role between social-emotional skills and academic buoyancy.

The conceptual model of the present study is shown in Figure 1.

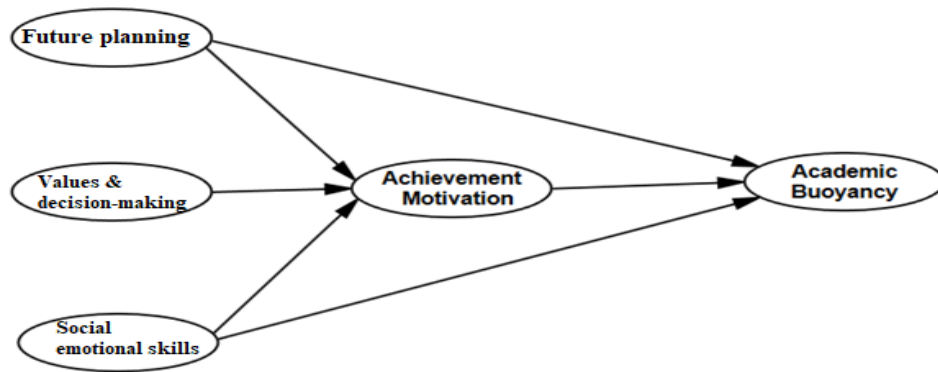


Figure 1: Conceptual model of the research

Research Methodology

This study was conducted with a quantitative approach and, in terms of data collection, falls under descriptive research using the correlation method. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the data in this research.

Study Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Method: The statistical population of this study included girls and boys in junior high school students in Sanandaj during the 2024-2025 academic year. The sample size was determined based on Kline's rule (Kline, 2015). According to this rule, the minimum required sample size for structural equation modeling depends on the number of observed indicators. Specifically, at least five participants are required for each observed indicator. In the present study, the total number of indicators for the measured variables was 62; therefore, the minimum required sample size was estimated to be 310 participants. Considering potential issues such as incomplete responses, single-response patterns, and invalid questionnaires, a total of 450 adolescents (197 girls and 253 boys) were recruited using a convenience sampling method.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria. Students were eligible to participate if they were enrolled in junior high school and had attended at least two school counseling sessions. The requirement of a minimum of two counseling sessions was established because the primary predictor variable was students' perceptions of school counseling services. Since the development of meaningful and stable perceptions of counseling services requires sufficient exposure, attendance at only one session was considered unlikely to provide an adequate basis for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of these services (Ohrt et al., 2022; Erekson et al., 2015). Therefore, a minimum of two counseling sessions was specified as an inclusion criterion to ensure that participants had sufficient experience to provide informed and reliable responses to the School Counseling Services Perception Questionnaire. Eligibility was verified through students' school counseling records, and only those who had attended at least two counseling sessions were included in the study. Exclusion criteria included unwillingness to continue participation in the study, incomplete questionnaire responses, and the presence of outlier data. Accordingly, data from participants who met any of these exclusion criteria were excluded from the final analyses.

Ethical considerations: In this study, the following ethical considerations were observed: obtaining informed consent from the participants, ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the information, allowing participants the right to withdraw from the study at any stage, and using the collected data solely for the purposes of the research.

Data analysis: For data analysis in the present study, after examining the statistical assumptions and removing outlier data, structural equation modeling (SEM) was performed using SPSS-26 and AMOS-24 software.

Data Collection Instruments and Assessment of Validity and Reliability: Data were collected using three standard and reliable questionnaires, each measuring a variable within the research model. The specifications for each instrument, including the number of items, source, and validity/reliability indicators, are detailed below:

Academic Buoyancy Questionnaire (ABS): This questionnaire was developed by Martin and Marsh (2008). It consists of 6 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scoring method is as follows: strongly agree receives a score of 5, somewhat agree receives a score of 4, neutral receives a score of 3, somewhat disagree receives a score of 2, and strongly disagree receives a score of 1. The highest possible score on this questionnaire is 30, and the lowest possible score is 6. In the study by Martin and Marsh (2008), the reliability of the questionnaire was reported as 0.89, and the validity for each of the items 1 through 4 was reported as 0.61, 0.67, 0.73, and 0.75, respectively. The validity of the instrument was confirmed by Razavi Motlagh et al. (2023), and its reliability was reported as 0.85 using Cronbach's alpha. In the present study, the reliability of this questionnaire was found to be 0.76 using Cronbach's alpha.

School Counselor Noncognitive Skill Scale (SCNSS): This questionnaire was developed by Ohrt et al. (2022), and it consists of 27 items, rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from completely useless to completely useful. The scoring method is as follows: completely useless receives a score of 1, useless a score of 2, somewhat useless a score of 3, somewhat useful a score of 4, useful a score of 5, and completely useful a score of 6. The highest possible score on this questionnaire is 162, and the lowest possible score is 27. The questionnaire includes three subscales: future planning (items: 1, 2, 3, and 4), values and decision-making (items: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16), and social-emotional skills (items: 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27). In the study by Ohrt et al. (2022), the overall reliability coefficient for the scale was reported as 0.97, and the reliability for the subscales was 0.95, 0.95, and 0.95, respectively. In the study by Dastbaz et al. (2024), the instrument's validity was confirmed, and its reliability, measured using Cronbach's alpha, was reported as greater than 0.86 for all subscales. In the present study, the reliability of this questionnaire was found to be 0.95 using Cronbach's alpha. And the reliability for the subscales was 0.79, 0.92, and 0.91, respectively.

Achievement Motivation Questionnaire (AMT): The Achievement Motivation Questionnaire was developed by Hermans (1970) and consists of 29 incomplete sentences with four Likert scale options. The scale measures nine features based on the intensity of motivation, either from high to low or vice versa, including desire level (items 15 and 25), intense motivation (items 3, 5, 22, and 24), high resistance when facing moderately difficult tasks (items 9, 10, and 27), willingness to make another attempt at incomplete tasks (items 7, 8, and 16), dynamic perception of time (items 12 and 28), future orientation (items 17, 20, and 29), criteria for selecting friends and colleagues (items 18, 19, and 23), recognition through good performance at work (items 1, 2, 11, and 14), and performing work excellently (items 4, 6, 13, 21, and 26). The scoring method assigns values based on two sets of items: for items 1, 4, 9, 10, 14–16, 23, and 27–29, the options are scored as A = 1, B = 2, C = 3, and D = 4; for items 2, 3, 5–8, 11–13, 17–22, and 24–26, the scoring is reversed with A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, and D = 1. In Hermans' (1970) study, the instrument's content validity was confirmed, and its reliability

was reported as 0.82 using Cronbach's alpha. The validity of the instrument was further confirmed by Khadivi & Vakili-Mafakheri (2011), with a reliability of 0.84 reported. In the current study, the reliability of the questionnaire was found to be 0.73 using Cronbach's alpha.

Results

The demographic distribution of the research sample included 253 boy participants, accounting for 56.2%, and 197 girl participants, representing 43.8%. Among the participants, 70 individuals (15.6%) were in the seventh grade, 62 individuals (13.8%) were in the eighth grade, and 318 individuals (70.7%) were in the ninth grade. The mean and standard deviation of the age range of the subjects were 14.43 years with a standard deviation of ± 1.11 years. The mean and standard deviation of the subjects' self-reported academic average were 17.74 with a standard deviation of ± 1.64 .

Before conducting the model analysis on the data, the necessary assumptions were tested. One of these assumptions was the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, where the significance levels were greater than 0.05. The next assumption was the skewness and kurtosis statistics, where the range for the research variables was between -2 and +2, indicating that the data were normal in this regard. Table 1 presents the results of the means and standard deviations of the study variables, along with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for examining the normality of the data distribution. Based on these results, the research variables exhibit a normal distribution.

Table 1. Results of the means, standard deviations, and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of the study variables

Variable	Mean	Std.	skewness	Kurtosis	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	P-Value
Future Planning	16.43	5.23	0.234	0.568	0.042	0.078
Values & Decision-Making	41.58	14.03	1.019	0.893	0.035	0.089
Social-Emotional Skills	49.55	12.88	0.572	0.641	0.045	0.053
Academic Buoyancy	82.34	10.24	-0.098	-0.083	0.047	0.051
Achievement Motivation	19.41	5.53	-0.290	-0.401	0.021	0.123

Table 2 presents the descriptive characteristics of the study variables, including the mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficients for the perception of school counseling services in future planning, values and decision-making, social-emotional skills, achievement motivation, and their components in relation to academic buoyancy. According to this table, the correlation coefficient for the perception of school counseling services in future planning ($r = 0.184$, $p < 0.01$), values and decision-making ($r = 0.205$, $p < 0.01$), and social-emotional skills ($r = 0.170$, $p < 0.01$) is positively and significantly associated with academic buoyancy. Additionally, the achievement motivation ($r = 0.367$, $p < 0.01$) has a positive and significant correlation with academic buoyancy.

Table 2. Correlation matrix of research variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Future Planning	1				
2. Values & Decision-Making	0.602 **	1			
3. Social-Emotional Skills	0.657 **	0.543 **	1		
4. Achievement Motivation	0.212 **	0.204 **	0.162 **	1	

5. Academic Buoyancy	0.184 **	0.205 **	0.170 **	0.367 **	1
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* p < 0.05 **p < 0.01

To assess the goodness of fit for the structural equation modeling in this study, several fit indices were utilized: the chi-square value, chi-square per degree of freedom (X^2/df), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), root mean square residual (RMR), normed fit index (NFI), incremental fit index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), Goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted Goodness of fit index (AGFI) and the normed adjusted fit index (NFI). For RMR and RMSEA, values of 0.08 or lower are considered good, and values of 0.06 or lower are considered optimal. For the relative fit indices, values of 0.90 or higher are acceptable (Kline, 2015). In Table 3, the model fit indices after necessary adjustments are provided. Based on the obtained fit indices, the overall structural model demonstrated an acceptable fit with the research data. Most fit indices, including RMSEA, CFI, IFI, TLI, and χ^2/df , were within the recommended ranges. However, the AGFI value was slightly below the commonly suggested cutoff value of 0.80, indicating that the model fit should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, considering the adequacy of the majority of fit indices and the theoretical consistency of the proposed model, the structural model was considered sufficiently acceptable for hypothesis testing.

Table 3. Fit indices of the research model after modification

Index	X^2/df	RMSEA	NFI	IFI	CFI	GFI	AGFI	TLI
Default model	1.59	0.056	0.912	0.943	0.961	0.907	0.864	0.935
Acceptable range	< 5	< 0.08	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.80	> 0.90

Figure 2 illustrates the structural model of the relationship between the perception of school counseling services on future planning, values and decision-making, and social-emotional skills on academic buoyancy, and the mediating role of achievement motivation in junior high school students, in its standardized form after the necessary adjustments.

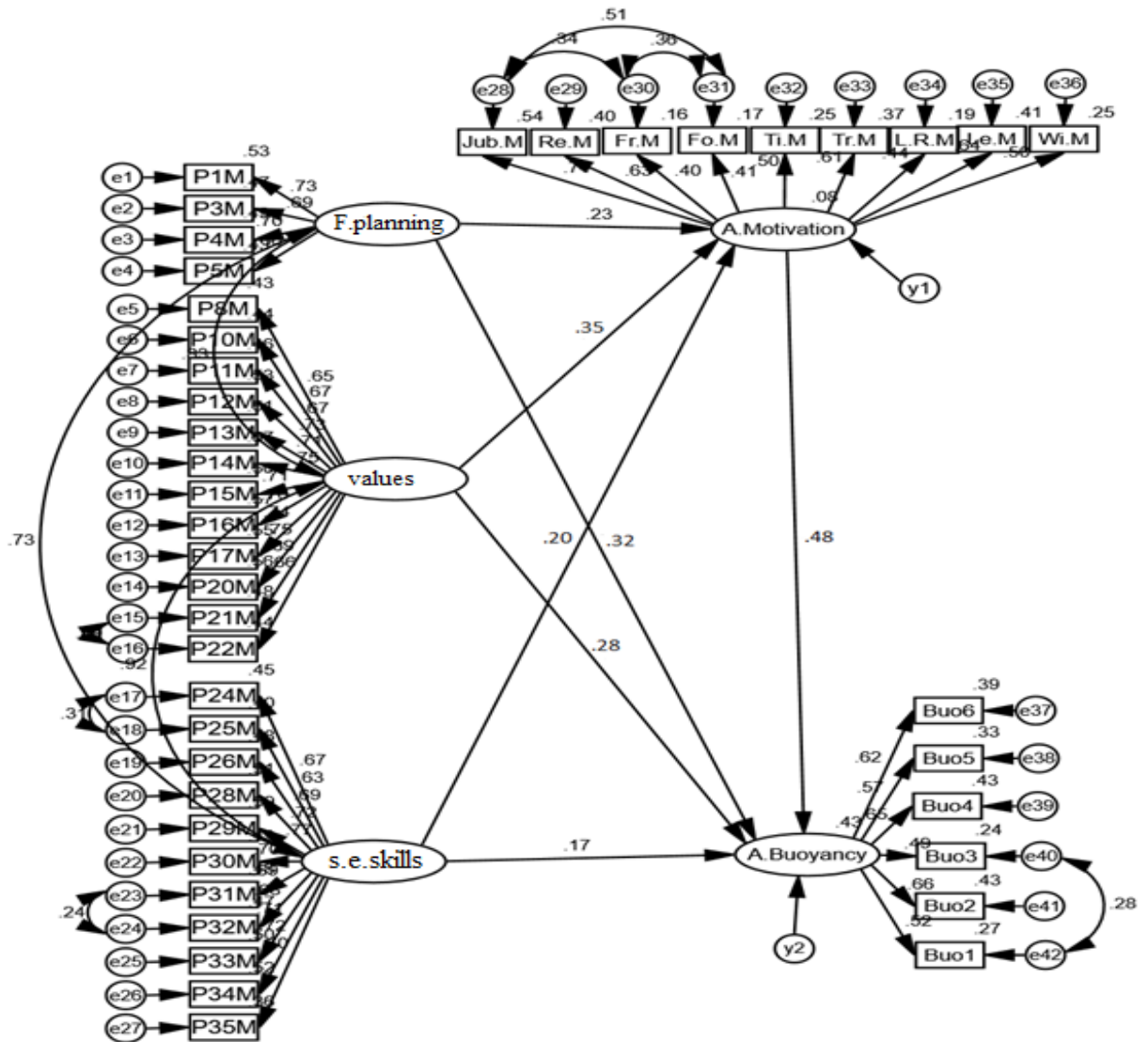


Figure 2. Testing the overall research model in its standardized form after adjustment.

The results of Table 4 show that the direct effects of future planning ($\beta= 0.321, p< 0.001$), decision-making ($\beta= 0.279, p< 0.001$), and achievement motivation ($\beta= 0.482, p< 0.001$) on academic buoyancy were positive and significant. But the direct effect of the social-emotional skills ($\beta= 0.168, p> 0.05$) on academic buoyancy was not significant.

The direct effect of future planning ($\beta=0.234, p<0.001$), values and decision-making ($\beta=0.352, p < 0.001$), and social-emotional skills ($\beta=0.203, p< 0.05$) on achievement motivation was positive and significant.

Table 4. Direct effects between the variables of the research

Variables		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	Sig	
Future Planning	→	A.Buoyancy	0.321	0.100	3.431	0.001 **
Values & Decision-Making	→	A.Buoyancy	0.279	0.209	2.971	0.001**
Social-Emotional Skills	→	A.Buoyancy	0.168	0.432	1.732	0.064
A.Motivation	→	A.Buoyancy	0.482	0.093	5.456	0.0001 **
Future Planning	→	A.Motivation	0.234	0.231	2.496	0.001 **

Values & Decision-Making	→	A.Motivation	0.352	0.098	3.671	0.001 **
Social-Emotional Skills	→	A.Motivation	0.203	0.112	2.092	0.023 *

*p < 0.05 **p < 0.01

In addition to examining the direct effects, Table 5 also assessed the indirect and mediating effects using the bootstrap test with a sample size of 1000 at a confidence interval of 95%. Based on these results, the indirect effect of future planning ($\beta = 0.113$, $p < 0.001$), decision-making ($\beta = 0.169$, $p < 0.001$), and social-emotional skills ($\beta = 0.097$, $p < 0.05$) on academic buoyancy with the mediating role of achievement motivation was positive and significant.

Table 5. Coefficients and significance of the effects of research variables indirectly

Predictor variable	Mediating variable	Dependent variable	Effect	Estimate	S.E.	Lower Bounds	Upper Bounds	Sig
Future Planning	A.Motivation	A.Buoyancy	indirectly	0.113	0.093	0.0971	0.167	0.001**
Values & Decision-Making	A.Motivation	A.Buoyancy	indirectly	0.169	0.098	0.126	0.237	0.008**
Social-Emotional Skills	A.Motivation	A.Buoyancy	indirectly	0.097	0.111	0.064	0.138	0.016 *

*p < 0.05 **p < 0.01

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study investigated the relationships between students' perceptions of school counseling services (future planning, values and decision-making, and social-emotional skills) and academic buoyancy among junior high school students in Sanandaj, with achievement motivation examined as a mediating mechanism. The structural model demonstrated satisfactory fit and supported the proposed associations among the study variables. Consistent with previous research (Soheili et al., 2025; Dastbaz & Aslani, 2025; Putwain et al., 2020), the findings indicate that positive perceptions of school counseling services are associated with greater academic buoyancy, both directly and indirectly through achievement motivation.

One of the principal findings was that future planning and values-based decision-making had significant direct effects on academic buoyancy, extending previous evidence on the contribution of counseling-related experiences to students' academic resilience and adaptive functioning (Soheili et al., 2025; Habibi et al., 2024; Shamsollahi, 2025). Future planning may provide students with a clearer sense of direction, enabling them to establish meaningful educational goals, regulate their learning, sustain effort, and remain committed when encountering routine academic setbacks. Consequently, academic challenges are more likely to be perceived as manageable rather than overwhelming.

Likewise, values-based decision-making may strengthen academic buoyancy by enabling students to make informed, goal-directed choices aligned with their long-term educational aspirations. Such competencies promote persistence, adaptive problem solving, and sustained engagement in learning, functioning as important psychological resources for positive academic adjustment. These findings are consistent with theoretical perspectives highlighting the role of goal-directed behavior, self-regulation, and personal agency in students' successful adaptation to everyday academic challenges (Martin et al., 2010; Bunkett et al., 2024). Collectively, the findings suggest that students' positive perceptions of school counseling services foster

academic buoyancy not only by addressing immediate academic concerns but also by enhancing future-oriented thinking and value-based decision-making. By supporting students in clarifying educational goals and making purposeful academic choices, counseling experiences promote the persistence, adaptability, and engagement required to effectively manage everyday school demands.

Another important finding of the present study is that the direct effect of social-emotional skills on academic buoyancy was not statistically significant, whereas their indirect effect through achievement motivation was significant. This indicates that social-emotional competencies do not directly enhance students' capacity to cope with everyday academic setbacks; instead, their educational value operates primarily through motivational mechanisms that support adaptive academic functioning. This pattern aligns with prior research showing that social-emotional competencies influence educational outcomes indirectly via motivational and self-regulatory pathways (Martin & Marsh, 2009; Boncquet et al., 2024).

From a theoretical perspective, this finding can be explained through Self-Determination Theory and Achievement Goal Theory. Self-Determination Theory suggests that adaptive academic functioning depends on satisfaction of students' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (McClelland & Cameron, 2011). Positive school counseling experiences may strengthen perceived competence and agency by supporting emotional regulation, self-awareness, informed decision-making, and supportive relationships, thereby fostering more autonomous achievement motivation (Deci, 2014; Sharma et al., 2023).

Achievement Goal Theory further explains that motivational gains from counseling are translated into adaptive goal orientations. Students with higher achievement motivation are more likely to adopt mastery goals, maintain engagement, and persist in the face of routine academic difficulties (Urdu & Kaplan, 2020). Thus, social-emotional skills may not directly enhance academic buoyancy, as they become educationally meaningful when they activate motivational processes that sustain effort, self-regulation, and persistence (Martin et al., 2010; Weiffenfels et al., 2023).

The significant indirect effect supports this mechanism, indicating that achievement motivation is a key mediator linking school counseling experiences to academic buoyancy. Overall, these findings extend prior research by emphasizing the primarily motivational rather than direct role of social-emotional skills in academic adaptation. Accordingly, school counseling programs may be more effective when social-emotional learning is integrated with interventions aimed at strengthening achievement motivation, mastery-oriented goals, and sustained academic engagement.

The next finding of the present study indicated that achievement motivation had a positive and statistically significant effect on academic buoyancy among junior high school students. This finding is consistent with previous research demonstrating that highly motivated students are more capable of adapting to academic challenges and maintaining persistence in demanding educational contexts (Dang & Middlemiss, 2025; Putri & Syaf, 2025; Boncquet et al., 2024; Dastbaz & Aslani, 2025; Datu & Yang, 2021).

This finding can be explained through both Expectancy Theory and Achievement Goal Theory. According to Expectancy Theory, students are more likely to invest effort and persist in academic activities when they believe they are capable of succeeding and perceive academic achievement as valuable and attainable. Achievement motivation strengthens students' expectations for success and increases their willingness to continue academic efforts despite setbacks and failures. Consequently, motivated students are more likely to cope effectively with routine academic pressures and maintain their academic functioning under stressful conditions, which reflects higher academic buoyancy (Boncquet et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Achievement Goal Theory proposes that students with mastery-oriented and achievement-focused goals tend to demonstrate greater persistence, adaptive coping strategies, and sustained engagement in learning activities (Bardach et al, 2020). Motivated students often focus on self-improvement, competence development, and goal attainment rather than avoiding failure. Such students are therefore more resilient when facing academic obstacles and are better able to recover from negative academic experiences (Martin & Marsh, 2008; Weißenfels et al., 2023). In line with this interpretation, motivated students dedicate greater effort and persistence to completing academic tasks, which ultimately strengthens their academic buoyancy.

Another finding of the present study indicated that students' perceptions of school counseling services (including future planning, values and decision-making, and social-emotional skills) had significant positive effects on achievement motivation. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the important role of counseling services in strengthening students' academic motivation and engagement (Habibi et al., 2024; Nurhidayat et al., 2024; Soheili et al., 2025).

This finding can be interpreted in light of the role of school counseling services in shaping students' motivational and cognitive appraisals of academic experiences. School counseling services may assist students in clarifying their educational goals, recognizing their strengths and limitations, and developing more realistic expectations regarding future academic success (Bardach et al, 2020). When students perceive counseling services as supportive and beneficial, they are more likely to develop stronger beliefs that their academic efforts can lead to desired outcomes, thereby enhancing their expectancy-related motivational beliefs and, in turn, their achievement motivation. In addition, counseling services may increase students' perceived value of academic success by explicitly linking educational activities to future aspirations and personally meaningful goals.

From the perspective of Achievement Goal Theory, school counseling services may also contribute to the development of more adaptive achievement goal orientations. Specifically, counseling interventions can encourage students to focus on learning, self-improvement, and long-term academic development rather than on normative comparison or performance-based evaluation. Through processes such as identifying personal strengths and weaknesses, strengthening self-regulation skills, and enhancing perceived competence and responsibility (Wibowo, 2018; Closson & Boutilier, 2017), counselors may facilitate the internalization of mastery-oriented goals. These motivational patterns are, in turn, associated with higher levels of achievement motivation and more sustained academic engagement.

The findings concerning the indirect effects further revealed that students' perceptions of school counseling services (including future planning, values and decision-making, and social-emotional skills) were indirectly associated with academic buoyancy through achievement motivation. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that motivational processes constitute an important mechanism through which educational support contributes to positive academic outcomes (Dang & Middlemiss, 2025; Putri & Syaf, 2025; Jia & Cheng, 2022).

A plausible interpretation of these findings can be derived from Self-Determination Theory and Achievement Goal Theory. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, students' positive perceptions of school counseling services may foster the satisfaction of their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci, 2014). Counseling experiences that help students clarify educational goals, make informed decisions, develop social-emotional competencies, and establish supportive relationships may strengthen their sense of competence and personal agency while promoting greater ownership of their academic

goals (Sharma et al, 2023). The fulfillment of these psychological needs is likely to enhance students' autonomous achievement motivation and sustained engagement in learning.

Achievement Goal Theory provides a complementary explanation by suggesting that counseling services may facilitate the adoption of adaptive, mastery-oriented goals. By encouraging students to focus on personal growth, continuous improvement, and meaningful educational aspirations, counseling interventions can promote motivational orientations that support persistence, effective self-regulation, and adaptive responses to academic challenges (Urduan & Kaplan, 2020). In this context, achievement motivation appears to represent an important mediating mechanism through which students' positive perceptions of school counseling services are translated into greater academic buoyancy.

Taken together, rather, students' positive perceptions of counseling services appear to enhance motivational processes that enable them to sustain effort, remain engaged in learning, and recover more effectively from routine academic setbacks. Accordingly, strengthening students' achievement motivation may constitute one of the principal psychological pathways through which school counseling interventions promote positive academic adaptation and academic buoyancy.

The findings also have practical implications for school counseling practice. They suggest that counseling programs are more effective when they go beyond immediate academic problem-solving and intentionally integrate future planning, value clarification, informed decision-making, and social-emotional development with strategies that foster achievement motivation (Ohrt et al, 2022). Such an approach is likely to enhance students' engagement and their ability to manage routine academic setbacks effectively (Van Pham, 2024). Although interpreted in light of methodological limitations, the results support the view that students' perceptions of school counseling services constitute an important educational resource for adaptive academic functioning. Overall, the study advances understanding of the psychological processes underlying academic buoyancy and highlights the importance of integrating motivational perspectives into both research and school counseling practice.

Regarding the limitations of the present study, several issues should be acknowledged. First, the use of convenience sampling among junior high school students in Sanandaj limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational levels, geographic regions, and sociocultural contexts. Furthermore, restricting the sample to students who had attended at least two counseling sessions, while ensuring adequate exposure to counseling services, may have introduced selection bias associated with help-seeking behavior, academic difficulties, or individual motivational characteristics.

Second, the exclusive reliance on self-report measures increases the risk of common method variance and response biases such as social desirability and recall bias. Future research should adopt multi-informant and multimethod designs, including teacher reports, counselor evaluations, classroom observations, and objective academic records, to improve measurement validity.

Third, the cross-sectional design limits causal interpretations; therefore, the observed relationships should be viewed as associative. Although the model showed good theoretical and statistical fit, longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to clarify temporal ordering and examine changes in achievement motivation and academic buoyancy over time.

Fourth, although the instruments demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties, some were culturally adapted, which may limit cross-cultural comparability. Thus, further validation across diverse cultural and educational contexts is necessary.

Finally, the model focused primarily on achievement motivation, whereas other relevant factors such as academic self-efficacy, school climate, teacher–student relationships, family

support, and socioeconomic conditions may also play important roles. Future studies should incorporate these variables into more comprehensive models.

Despite these limitations, the study provides evidence that students' positive perceptions of school counseling contribute to academic buoyancy through motivational processes and highlights implications for designing integrated counseling programs combining motivational, cognitive, and social-emotional components.

Ethical considerations

In the present study, ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality of participant information, were strictly adhered to throughout the study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of this study declare no conflict of interest.

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