



Research Article

The Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Relationship Between Moral Education and Social Responsibility of High School Students

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the mediating role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between moral education and the social responsibility of male High school students in district 4 of Shiraz. The research was descriptive-correlational. The statistical population consisted of all first high school students in district 4 of Shiraz during the 2023-2024 academic year. A sample of 380 students was selected by using cluster random sampling based on calculating Cochran formula. Data were collected using three standardized questionnaires: Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (1995), Gregory et al.'s Moral Education Questionnaire (2000), and Khadivi and Elahi's Social Responsibility Questionnaire (2018). Validity was confirmed by experts, and reliability was established via Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.77, 0.81, and 0.85, respectively. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS software, employing both descriptive and inferential statistics such as Pearson correlation and structural equation modeling. The correlation matrix revealed significant relationships between moral education, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility. Ultimately, structural equation modeling results demonstrated that emotional intelligence plays a mediating role in the relationship between moral education and social responsibility. Result showed that emotional intelligence acts as a significant mediator, enhancing the positive impact of moral education on students' social responsibility.

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Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; Moral Education; Social Responsibility

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1. Introduction

Schools mirror societies and social structures through the educational system, operating within a continuously changing and dynamic social environment and consistently impacting society through both formal and informal channels. Generally, responsible behavior is a hallmark of a healthy individual in any social system, and the importance of social responsibility is paramount for progress in many fields, especially in public and commonwealth organizations. Social responsibility refers to a sense of accountability for one's decisions and actions, trust in others, and having agency over actions under one's

control. Consequently, socially responsible individuals are active agents in their own advancement. Social responsibility involves activities for the benefit of the general public, which differ from organizational interests and legal requirements. To realize this participation and interaction, fostering responsible behavior among students and teachers to achieve educational goals is an important organizational priority (Bagheri, 2023). Moral education and emotional intelligence are among the factors related to social responsibility. The moral education of students must be based on society and its future requirements. Students seriously need moral education for their future lives because future conditions will see individuals increasingly

under the sway of technologies, to the extent that this technological dominance may even lead to a crisis of identity (Shafiehpour Motlagh & Maleki, 2023). Given the importance of moral education, especially for elementary students who are in their most impressionable years, attention to this crucial goal in education is vital and undeniable. Educational institutions and families are concerned with how to implement moral education within the formal school environment. In other words, a school's function is not solely to cultivate intelligent individuals who can outperform competitors, but it is also expected to educate students to distinguish right from wrong in moral issues (Alborzi et al., 2023).

2. Literature Review

The 20th century's emphasis on purely cognitive and academic aspects as key success factors has been supplemented by more socio-emotional approaches where emotional intelligence is considered essential. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings, discriminate among them, and use this information to guide thinking and action. While different models have been proposed, most share the idea that it is a structure revealing important and necessary relationships between cognition and emotion. The literature distinguishes between "trait" and "ability" models. In ability models, emotional intelligence is considered a mental ability, specifically, an individual's actual capacity to perceive, process, and utilize emotion-laden information (Hedayati, 2022). It is a general Emotional-cognitive ability involving skills like perceiving, expressing, understanding, and regulating emotions. This conceptualization is primarily represented by the model of Mayer and Salovey (Mayer et al., 2002). Trait (or mixed) models conceptualize emotional intelligence as a set of psychological constructs including emotional skills, personality traits, motivational factors, and social factors. Rather than just a cognitive ability, it is represented as a set of self-perceptions related to emotion, referring to an individual's competence in using, understanding, and regulating emotions. Both models rely on sufficient empirical support and coexist in empirical and applied research domains (Nieto-Carracedo et al., 2024, Koç et al. 2024). In recent years, the issue of emotional intelligence has been used to organize the efforts used to teach the various types of skills needed by students and to create self-monitoring capabilities and the development of social relationships (Taghvaei Yazdi & Sadeghi, 2023). Moradi shekhjan et al. (2014) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and social responsibility among male middle school students. Results indicated a positive and significant relationship between emotional intelligence and social responsibility, as well as between interpersonal

relationships, optimism, happiness, empathy, and social responsibility.

Ghasemi et al. (2024) analyzed educational and moral components related to responsibility and professional ethics based on the Quran and narratives. Results indicated that monotheistic moral systems consider divine providence the ultimate criterion for humans and emphasize a world of components for human perfection. In Islamic teachings, humans are responsible before God, themselves, and other creatures and must follow all Islamic commandments.

Momennai et al. (2023) analyzed the impact of emotional intelligence training on the responsibility and coping skills of preschool educators. Findings showed that emotional intelligence training significantly affected the responsibility and coping skills of preschool educators.

Nikraftar and Ebrahimi (2022) examined the relationship between social intelligence and student responsibility. Results showed a strong, positive, and direct Pearson correlation, meaning that as social intelligence increases, so does student responsibility.

Sheybanifar et al. (2021) predicted responsibility based on academic motivation and emotional intelligence among elementary students. Correlation coefficient and regression analysis confirmed the relationship between responsibility and academic motivation and between responsibility and emotional intelligence. Regression coefficients indicated that academic motivation and emotional intelligence can predict student responsibility.

Ghanshyam (2024) examined the integration of moral education and social responsibility in higher education. Results indicated that educational policies aimed at improving moral education increased social responsibility.

Antika Ajeng (2024) analyzed moral education as a foundation for shaping student character. Moral education plays a crucial role in shaping student character. In education, ethics encompass moral values and principles that form the basis of individual behavior and character. The primary goal of moral education is to cultivate students with integrity, virtue, and responsibility.

Mahrous (2023) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence, academic motivation, and student social responsibility. Results showed a direct and significant relationship between emotional intelligence, academic motivation, and social responsibility.

Hamedi (2022) showed significantly positive relationship between moral education, moral intelligence and responsibility of school teachers.

So, based on the literature review the research question is:

Does emotional intelligence play a mediating role in the relationship between moral education and the social responsibility of male High school students in district 4 of Shiraz?

3. Method

Based on its purpose, this research is applied, and based on data collection, it is a survey. The design is descriptive-correlational and cross-sectional. The statistical population consisted of all first high school students in district 4 of Shiraz during the 2023-2024 academic year. A sample of 380 students was selected by using cluster random sampling based on calculating Cochran formula.

Data were collected using three questionnaires:

a. Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire: [Goleman's \(1995\)](#) questionnaire with 72 items, covering dimensions of Self-Awareness, Self-Management (Self-Control), Social Awareness, and Relationship Management.

b. Moral Education Questionnaire: [Gregory et al.'s \(2000\)](#) questionnaire with 58 items, comprising Behavioral, Cognitive, and Emotional dimensions, designed to assess Islamic moral education in students.

c. Social Responsibility Questionnaire: [Khadivi and Elahi's \(2003\)](#) questionnaire based on 5 dimensions (Sense of Security, Self-Esteem, Sense of Belonging, External Commitment, and Internal Commitment) measured by 12 items.

Content validity was established through expert opinion and previous research after several revisions. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of the Likert scales. Results showed Cronbach's alpha for all items was above 0.70, indicating high reliability. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and path analysis in SPSS. Structural equation modeling (SEM) in AMOS was used to test the main hypothesis.

4. Results

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to study variables normality. Results ([Table 1](#)) showed that the test statistics for emotional intelligence, moral education, and social responsibility were statistically non-significant ($p > 0.05$), indicating that the assumption of normality was met for all three variables.

Hypothesis 1: Moral education has a significant relationship with the social responsibility of male High school students in district 4 of Shiraz. Pearson correlation was used. Results ([Table 2](#)) showed a positive and significant relationship between moral education and social responsibility ($r = 0.502$, $p < 0.01$). Significant positive relationships were also found between all dimensions of moral education (Behavioral, Emotional, Cognitive) and social responsibility.

Hypothesis 2: Emotional intelligence has a significant relationship with the social responsibility of male High school students in district 4 of Shiraz. Pearson correlation was used. Results ([Table 3](#)) showed a positive and

significant relationship between emotional intelligence and social responsibility ($r = 0.476$, $p < 0.001$). Significant positive relationships were also found between all dimensions of emotional intelligence (Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Management) and social responsibility.

Hypothesis 3: Moral education has a significant relationship with the emotional intelligence of male High school students in district 4 of Shiraz. Pearson correlation was used. Results ([Table 4](#)) showed a positive and significant relationship between moral education and emotional intelligence ($r = 0.423$, $p < 0.01$). Significant positive relationships were also found between all dimensions of moral education and emotional intelligence.

Main Hypothesis: Emotional intelligence plays a mediating role in the relationship between moral education and the social responsibility of male High school students in district 4 of Shiraz. Structural equation modelling used for studying the mediating role in the relationship between moral education and the social responsibility of students. [Table 5](#) shows the results of the structural equation modeling for the final research model. The path coefficients indicate that the path coefficient from emotional intelligence to critical to social responsibility is 0.476, from moral education to emotional intelligence is 0.423, and from moral education to social responsibility is 0.589. The absolute t-statistic values for all paths are higher than 1.96, indicating significant relationships. Therefore, significant relationships exist between moral education, emotional intelligence, and Social responsibility among male High school students in district 4 of Shiraz. Moral education not only has a direct effect on social responsibility but also has a significant indirect effect on social responsibility through emotional intelligence, with a value of 0.201. The fit indices for the structural model are presented in [table 6](#).

As observed in [Table 6](#), the normed chi-square (CMIN/df) is 2.351, where values below 3 indicate acceptable model fit. The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) is 0.959. The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) is 0.962, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is 0.937, and the Normed Fit Index (NFI) is 0.917.

Values exceeding 0.90 for these indices indicate a good model fit. Furthermore, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.046, which also signifies a well-fitting model.

Table 1. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for Normality of Research Variables

variable	Statistic	p-value
Social Responsibility	0.17	0.85
Emotional Intelligence	0.21	0.77
Moral Education	0.09	0.81

Table 2. Correlation Matrix between Moral Education and Students' Social Responsibility

Variables	Moral Education	Feeling of Value	Feeling of Awareness	Mystical Feeling	Social Responsibility
Moral Education	1	-	-	-	-
Behavioral Dimension	0.449**	1	-	-	-
Emotional Dimension	0.458**	0.338**	1	-	-
Cognitive Dimension	0.471**	0.345**	0.287**	1	-
Social Responsibility	0.502**	0.381**	0.471**	0.445**	1

** p < 0.01

Table 3. Correlation Matrix between Emotional Intelligence and Students' Social Responsibility

Variables	Emotional Intelligence	Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Social Awareness	Relationship Management	Social Responsibility
Emotional Intelligence	1	-	-	-	-	-
Self-Awareness	0.38**	1	-	-	-	-
Self-Management	0.372**	0.318**	1	-	-	-
Social Awareness	0.453**	0.322**	0.295**	1	-	-
Relationship Management	0.412**	0.386**	0.384**	0.305**	1	-
Social Responsibility	0.476**	0.41**	0.397**	0.421**	0.402**	1

** p < 0.01

Table 4. Correlation Matrix between Moral Education and Students' emotional intelligence

Variables	Moral Education	Feeling of Value	Feeling of Awareness	Mystical Feeling	Emotional Intelligence
Moral Education	1	-	-	-	-
Behavioral Dimension	0.399**	1	-	-	-
Emotional Dimension	0.428**	0.325**	1	-	-
Cognitive Dimension	0.418**	0.375**	0.383**	1	-
Emotional Intelligence	0.423**	0.412**	0.391**	0.405**	1

** p < 0.01

Table 5. Results of the Structural Equation Modeling for the Research Variables

Model Path	Direct Effect	Standard Error (SE)	t-value	Indirect Effect via Emotional Intelligence
Emotional Intelligence → social responsibility	0.476**	0.698	5.219	0.201
Moral Education → Emotional Intelligence	0.423**	0.702	4.69	-
Moral Education → social responsibility	0.502**	0.195**	5.12	-

Table 6. Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the Structural Relationship Model

Index	Value
CFI	0.937
TLI	0.962
NFI	0.917
GFI	0.959
RMSEA	0.046
CMIN/DF	2.351

5. Discussion

Results of the first hypothesis results indicate a close relationship between moral education and social responsibility. Moral education, which involves teaching

individual's ethical values and principles, establishes a foundation for the development of social responsibility. Individuals with proper moral education possess a better understanding of their duties and commitments towards society and demonstrate a greater inclination for active participation in improving social conditions. Overall, moral education is a continuous process that begins in childhood and continues throughout life. By strengthening moral education in individuals, we can build a healthier, more just, and more responsible society. These results align with [Ghasemi et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Ghanshyam \(2024\)](#).

Results of the second hypothesis show that emotional intelligence and social responsibility are two related concepts, both essential for successful functioning in personal and social life. Emotional intelligence refers to

the ability to perceive, use, manage, and regulate one's own emotions and those of others, while social responsibility refers to an individual's commitment to the welfare of the community and the fulfillment of social duties and obligations. In general, high emotional intelligence can lead to greater social responsibility, as individuals with high emotional intelligence have a greater capacity to understand the needs of others, empathize with them, and respond appropriately to social issues. These results align with [Moradi shekhjan et al \(2014\)](#) and [Momennai et al.\(2023\)](#) Results of the third hypothesis implies as the levels of dimensions of moral education increase, the social responsibility of students also increases. It can be concluded that if students possess work discipline; have a spirit of accepting criticism and forbearance; are truthful and possess honesty; their words and actions are consistent; they have work conscience; avoid pride and arrogance; strive for self-knowledge; endeavor for the gradual growth of their knowledge; strive to familiarize themselves with learning methods and techniques, etc., these activities contribute to enhancing their emotional intelligence. Moral education, by forming a strong ethical and value framework within the individual, helps them better understand their own emotions, empathize with others, and exhibit appropriate and ethical behavior in various situations. On the other hand, high emotional intelligence helps individuals manage their own emotions and those of others, consequently enabling them to act more successfully in social interactions and ethical decision-making. These results align with [Hasani Najjar \(2023\)](#).

6. Conclusion

As conclusion of this research, it can be said that the dimensions of moral education, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility are interrelated and function in an integrated manner. Moral education helps individuals internalize ethical principles, leading them to act correctly in various situations. Emotional intelligence helps individuals perceive and manage their own emotions and those of others, consequently enabling them to establish effective communication and resolve conflicts more successfully. Social responsibility also helps individuals feel a sense of duty towards society and others and take steps for the public good. In fact, moral education, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility complement each other and together can contribute to the formation of a balanced and responsible individual. For example, an individual with high emotional intelligence can react better in ethical situations by understanding the emotions of others. Likewise, an individual with strong moral education can, by using their emotional intelligence, act ethically in difficult situations and demonstrate their social responsibility. The results of this

hypothesis indicate that as the levels of emotional intelligence and moral education increase, the social responsibility of students also increases. This finding suggests that the better the students' social status, the higher their perceived social intelligence, and the higher the level of moral education they experience, the greater social responsibility they can demonstrate.

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Authors Contribution

All the authors have participated sufficiently in the intellectual content, conception, and design of this work or the analysis and interpretation of the data (when applicable), as well as the writing of the manuscript.

Availability of data and materials

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflict of interest

The author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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