

Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research
Volume 15, Issue 3, 15th October 2025, Pages 222-234
Online First Published: 3rd October 2025
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<http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/remie.17779>

What They Think of Me and What I Think of Myself: Social Influences on Academic Self-Concept in Adolescence

Jorge-Manuel Dueñas^{1,2}, Ivana Stepanović-Ilić³, María Moya⁴, Ksenija Krstić³ & Sergi Martín-Arbós¹

1) *Universitat Rovira i Virgili*, Spain

2) *Research Center for Behavior Assessment (CRAMC)*, Spain

3) *University of Belgrade*, Serbia

4) *Fundació de Recerca Clinic Barcelona-Institut d'Investigacions Biomèdiques August Pi i Sunyer*, Spain

Abstract

During adolescence, academic self-concept may be influenced by key social factors such as functional support and social reputation. Understanding how these factors interact, particularly to gender, is essential for promoting school well-being. This study delves into the intricate relationships between functional social support, social reputation, and academic self-concept among Spanish adolescents. It places particular emphasis on exploring potential gender differences. The sample comprised 160 adolescents (aged 14 to 17, Mage=15.06, 54.4% girls) from two public high schools in Tarragona, Spain. The instruments used were the Self-Concept Questionnaire (AUDIM), the Functional Social Support Questionnaire (DUKE-UNC), and the Reputation Enhancement Scale. Statistical analyses involved descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analyses. Our findings showed that academic self-concept was positively associated with functional social support across the general sample and within gender-specific groups. Gender differences emerged regarding the influence of social reputation on academic self-concept: girls displayed significant positive relationships with conforming self-perception and reputational self-perception, but boys displayed a significant relationship only with non-conforming self-perception. These findings highlight the key role of functional social support in shaping academic self-concept. They also reveal gender-specific effects of social reputation, highlighting the influence of gender norms on adolescents' self-perceptions.

Keywords

Academic self-concept, functional social support, social reputation, gender differences

To cite this article: Dueñas, J.M., Stepanović Ilić, I., Moya, M., Krstić, K., & Martín-Arbós, S (2023). What They Think of Me and What I Think of Myself: Social Influences on Academic Self-Concept in Adolescence. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research*, 15(3), Pages 222-234 <http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/remie.17779>

Corresponding author: Jorge-Manuel Dueñas

Contact address: jorgemanuel.duenas@urv.cat

Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research
Volumen 15, Número 3, 15 de octubre 2025, 222-234
Publicado en Online First: 3 de octubre de 2025
© Autor(s) 2025
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/remie.17779>

Lo que Piensan de Mí y lo que Pienso de Mí: Influencias Sociales en el Autoconcepto Académico en la Adolescencia

Jorge-Manuel Dueñas^{1,2}, Ivana Stepanović-Ilić³, María Moya⁴, Ksenija Krstić³ y Sergi Martín-Arbós¹

1) *Universitat Rovira i Virgili*, España

2) *Centro de Investigación para la Evaluación del Comportamiento (CRAMC)*, España

3) *Universidad de Belgrado*, Serbia

4) *Fundació de Recerca Clínic Barcelona-Institut d'Investigacions Biomèdiques August Pi i Sunyer*,
España

Resumen

Durante la adolescencia, el autoconcepto académico puede verse influido por factores sociales como el apoyo funcional y la reputación social. Comprender cómo estos elementos interactúan, especialmente en relación con el género, resulta clave para fomentar el bienestar escolar. Este estudio analiza las relaciones entre el apoyo social funcional, la reputación social y el autoconcepto académico en adolescentes españoles, con un enfoque especial en las posibles diferencias de género. La muestra incluyó a 160 adolescentes (entre 14 y 17 años, $M = 15.06$; 54.4 % chicas) de dos institutos públicos de Tarragona, España. Se utilizaron el Cuestionario de Autoconcepto AUDIM, el Cuestionario de Apoyo Social Funcional DUKE-UNC y la Reputation Enhancement Scale. El análisis estadístico se basó en estadísticas descriptivas, correlaciones de Pearson y regresiones múltiples. Los resultados revelaron asociaciones positivas entre el autoconcepto académico y el apoyo funcional en toda la muestra y dentro de cada grupo de género. En cuanto a la reputación social, se observaron diferencias: las chicas mostraron relaciones significativas con la autopercepción conforme y reputacional, mientras que en los chicos solo se vinculó con la autopercepción no conforme. Estos hallazgos reflejan una relación entre el apoyo social y las normas de género en el desarrollo académico adolescente.

Palabras clave

Autoconcepto académico, apoyo social funcional, reputación social, diferencias de género

Cómo citar este artículo: Dueñas, J.M., Stepanović Ilić, I., Moya, M., Krstić, K., & Martín-Arbós, S (2023). What They Think of Me and What I Think of Myself: Social Influences on Academic Self-Concept in Adolescence. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research*, 15(3), 222-234 .
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/remie.17779>

Correspondencia Autor: Jorge-Manuel Dueñas

Dirección de contacto: jorgemanuel.duenas@urv.cat

Academic Self-Concept (ASC) refers to an individual's assessment of their cognitive abilities within the context of academic achievements (Tatlow-Golden, 2012). This concept embodies a dual nature, epitomising stabilities that are linked to factors such as genes or early environment and change that is often triggered by new academic experiences or feedback (Jansen et al., 2020). ASC is therefore generally a mental representation of a person's academic capability across different academic domains (Brunner et al., 2010). Recognised as a foundational construct within social sciences, self-concept holds significant sway not only as a key outcome in psychological and educational contexts but also as a mediator that facilitates other essential outcomes such as academic performance and social competence (Mañano et al., 2019). More precisely, ASC is shaped by several facets: a) feedback and experiences related to reference frames such as peer comparison; b) causal attributions regarding reasons for success and failure; c) external evaluations affecting self-assessment; d) mastery experiences such as schemas formed from past achievements; and e) psychological centrality, which involves perceptions about personal qualities (Skaalvik, 1997). Consequently, while academic self-concept is a representation of students, this representation is mainly grounded in social interactions as frames of reference.

From the perspective of social identity theory, personal perception is anchored in group affiliations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Specifically, self-concept is divided into personal identity, personality traits, and social identity, aligning with the groups or social categories to which an individual belongs. Through these affiliations and the interaction between personal and social identity, an individual's overall self-concept is formed. This dynamic illustrates how affiliations influence and shape our understanding of ourselves (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social variables are therefore intertwined with academic self-concept. According to Hornsey (2008), social identity and self-categorisation theories provide an essential theoretical framework for understanding how social categorisations and group identities affect individual perception and behaviour. Group identity dynamics and social categorisation could influence students' academic perceptions, particularly in their self-assessment of skills and achievements.

Accordingly, psychosocial variables such as social support may present a crucial construct that is associated with adaptive development, especially during adolescence (Tomás et al., 2020). Functional social support refers not only to the existence of social networks, but also to the perceived quality and availability of resources such as emotional, instrumental, and informational support (Broadhead et al., 1988; Bellón et al., 1996). This construct emphasises the supportive functions that social ties provide, beyond their mere presence, and is thus particularly relevant during adolescence when relationships with peers, teachers, and family members strongly shape self-perceptions. An individual's perception of the support received from their environment can strengthen academic aspects such as academic performance (Mishra, 2020; Tinajero et al., 2020). According to Stepanovic Ilic et al. (2020), much research has concluded that strong social networks with peers and teachers are associated with a lower risk of student dropout, greater satisfaction with studies, better adjustment, and higher academic achievement. Different types of social support, such as that from parents, teachers, peers and society in general, have also been linked with academic self-concept (Rodríguez-Fernández et al., 2012; Xu et al., 2019). In this vein, a study conducted with adolescents and emerging adults revealed a strong correlation between social support provided by peers, self-concept and academic performance (Chen et al., 2015), thus demonstrating that peers are a

critical resource for social support (Alsubaie et al., 2019). For instance, a study of students experiencing learning difficulties reported that students with high overall self-concept perceived higher levels of social support and viewed themselves as more competent (Kloomok & Cosden, 1994). A similar finding was observed in a study of university students, where self-concept correlated positively with perceived social support from parents, teachers and peers (Xu et al., 2019). According to these authors, different types of perceived support from the social environment can help students form a positive self-concept (Xu et al., 2019).

Adolescence is characterised by the desire to belong and to be accepted by other adolescents (Kunnen et al., 2019). Under this premise, social reputation is expected to play an important role in an adolescent's life and how they think and feel about themselves. More concretely, academic self-concept, which reflects how individuals perceive themselves in relation to academic abilities and achievements, may be mutually related to the social reputation of those individuals within the group they belong to. Although there are few studies on this subject, some have shown that these variables are interrelated and could be related to an individual's perception of their academic skills. Gest et al. (2008) discovered that academic peer reputations, whether positive or negative, were associated with variations in academic self-concept, effort and performance. Likewise, Verschueren et al. (2012) asserted that significant social relationships in children's lives, such as those with their mothers, teachers and peers, found a significant positive association between children's key social relationships (mothers, teachers, peers) and several dimensions of self-concept, including academic ones, in their cross-sectional correlational study (Verschueren et al., 2012). Similarly, another study (Lösch et al., 2017) used an interpersonal approach to demonstrate that self-ratings of academic self-concept and peer ratings of academic competence overlap significantly in terms of variance.

Societally defined expectations and experiences for boys and girls can significantly impact their interpersonal relationships and self-perceptions, both in gender interactions and in the broader social context (Lalchandani & Pardasani, 2022). Historically, discrepancies in academic self-concept between genders have mirrored socio-cultural norms and expectations about the abilities and roles of men and women in society (Löffler & Greitemeyer, 2023). It was found that although girls generally demonstrate a comparable mathematical performance to that of boys, they tend to report lower levels of mathematical self-concept than their male counterparts (Niepel et al., 2019). It is crucial to emphasise that such differences do not necessarily reflect inherent capabilities but perceptions that may be shaped by feedback from teachers, parents and peers. However, the existing literature does not provide definitive conclusions on gender divergences in academic self-concept; for instance, a study with Chilean adolescents found no significant differences in academic self-concept between genders (Céspedes et al., 2021). Conversely, research conducted in Mexico with adolescents reported significant differences in academic self-concept, with the balance in favour of girls (e.g., Romero-Abrio et al., 2019). Given this variability, it is imperative to continue exploring these differences through adequately contextualised studies in order to gain a more thorough understanding of this issue.

The main aim of this present study was to analyse the role of functional social support and social reputation in academic self-concept among Spanish adolescents. Also to explore were potential gender differences in these relationships. Specifically, we sought to evaluate how

different dimensions of social reputation and perceived social support were linked to academic self-concept in Spanish adolescents.

We anticipated finding significant relationships between functional social support and social reputation and academic self-concept as a dependent variable grounded in Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Given that categorisation within the social environment directly influences self-concept, we expected reputation and functional social support to significantly impact adolescents' academic self-concept.

In view of the discrepancies previously reported in studies on academic self-concept between genders (Löffler & Greitemeyer, 2023; Niepel et al., 2019; Romero-Abrio et al., 2019), we expected gender differences in how social reputation and functional social support were associated with predicting academic self-concept, but there would be no differences in the total scores for social reputation or functional social support.

Materials and Methods

Participants

The sample comprised one hundred and sixty adolescents (54.4% girls) from two public high schools in Tarragona (Spain). We were mindful of gender diversity and provided several options for this issue. However, all participants self-identified as binary cisgenders. Their ages ranged from 14 to 17 years, with a mean age of 15.06 (SD = 0.87). Specifically, 27.4% were 14 years old, 43.8% were 15 years old, 21.9% were 16 years old, and 6.9% were 17 years old.

Measures

The Self-Concept Questionnaire (AUDIM) (Fernández-Zabala et al., 2015) assesses dimensions of self-concept in the Spanish population. In this study, we used the academic self-concept scale, including verbal and mathematical academic self-concepts. The verbal academic self-concept refers to how individuals perceive themselves as students in verbal domains (e.g. "I am proficient in humanities subjects"). Similarly, the mathematical self-concept pertains to students' perceptions of their abilities in mathematics (e.g. "I am good at mathematics"). Each subscale of the academic self-concept scale includes four items, and so the scale comprises eight items, each of which has a Likert-type response scale with five options ranging from 1 = false to 5 = true. We obtained adequate reliability ($\alpha = .78$).

The Functional Social Support Questionnaire (DUKE-UNC) (Broadhead et al., 1988) is a self-administered 11-item instrument that uses a Likert-type response scale with five response options ranging from 1 ("As much as I wish") to 5 ("Much less than I wish"). Specifically, it assesses perceived social support, which refers to a person's assessment of their social network and available social resources (e.g. "I get love and affection"). An adapted and validated version for the Spanish population was used (Bellón et al., 1996). The Spanish version of this questionnaire presents adequate reliability properties ($\alpha = .81$).

The Reputation Enhancement Scale (Carroll et al., 1999) comprises 15 items and assesses adolescents' social reputation, with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (always). Each item

is evaluated twice by the participants for two different aspects: 1) Perceived reputation, which refers to what the person believes others think about their reputation and comprises three dimensions: a) non-conforming self-perception of reputation (how adolescents believe others see them in terms of non-conforming behaviours) (e.g. “My friends think that I break rules”) ($\alpha = .85$), b) conforming self-perception of reputation (how they believe others see them in terms of conforming behaviours) (e.g. “My friends think that I am a good person”) ($\alpha = .65$), and c) reputational self-perception (how they believe they are perceived in general) (e.g. “My friends think that I am a leader”), ($\alpha = .62$); and 2) Perception of ideal reputation, which refers to what the person would like others to think about their reputation and comprises three dimensions: a) non-conforming ideal of public self-reputation (how they would like to be seen in terms of non-conforming behaviours) (e.g. “I would like my friends to think that I break rules”) ($\alpha = .80$), b) conforming ideal of public self-reputation (how they would like to be seen in terms of conforming behaviours) (e.g. “I would like my friends to think that I am a good person”) ($\alpha = .66$), and c) reputational ideal of public self (how they would like to be seen in general) (e.g. “I would like my friends to think that I am a leader”) ($\alpha = .53$).

Procedure

The procedure for the present study involved the following steps. First, the directors of various public high schools were contacted, and the study’s objective was explained to them. Second, after institutional authorisation was provided, the students’ families were informed of the study’s objectives, and only students whose families signed informed consent were surveyed. Third, the questionnaires were administered collectively during the students’ class hours. The student’s right to anonymity and the confidentiality of their results were guaranteed. The students were given all the time they needed to answer the questionnaires. Although the families agreed to allow their children to participate, the adolescents were free to decline their participation at any time without question. Finally, we followed the recommendations of Organic Law 15/1999 and the Spanish Data Protection Agency, which regulates the fundamental right to data protection, the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki, and the recommendations of the ethical code of CEIPSA-2022-0017 Rovira i Virgili University.

Data Analysis

Statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS Statistics version 29. Once the study data were obtained, their normality was analysed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Since the results revealed that the data had a normal distribution ($p < .05$), we performed parametric analyses. Second, a t-test (Student, 1908) was performed to analyse potential gender-based differences in the study variables. We used Cohen’s d to obtain the effect size, and the results were interpreted based on the following criteria: $0.2 < d < 0.5 =$ small; $0.5 < d < 0.8 =$ median; and $d > 0.8 =$ large (Cohen, 1988). To gauge the robustness of the correlation, we used the classifications suggested by Guilford (1956). The relationship between academic self-concept and other variables was analysed using Pearson’s correlation coefficient. To determine whether the correlations of boys and girls differed significantly from each other, we used Fisher’s z

transformation. Finally, we conducted multiple regression analysis with the stepwise method for the general sample and separated by gender to determine the predictive value of the subscales of social reputation and perceived social support in academic self-concept.

Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of all the study variables for the general sample and by gender. The results revealed significant differences, with higher scores for boys than for girls in non-conforming self-perception of reputation ($t(158) = -4.12$, $p < 0.001$; Cohen's $d = 0.65$) with a medium effect size. Significant differences were also found in non-conforming ideal of public self-reputation ($t(158) = -4.09$; $p < 0.001$; Cohen's $d = 0.65$) also with a medium effect size. However, significant differences were not observed for the other variables.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Psychometric Variables Across the Overall Sample and by Gender

Variables	Overall sample	Boys	Girls
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Academic self-concept	24.57 (3.70)	23.94 (3.48)	25.10 (3.74)
Functional social support	41.67 (7.36)	42.30 (6.94)	41.13 (7.68)
Nonconforming self-perception of reputation	8.86 (3.19)	9.94* (3.86)	7.95 (2.13)
Conforming self-perception of reputation	9.80 (1.76)	9.89 (1.94)	9.72 (1.61)
Reputational self-perception	7.35 (1.73)	7.54 (1.71)	7.19 (1.73)
Nonconforming ideal of public self-reputation	7.64 (2.52)	8.50* (3.25)	6.93 (1.35)
Conforming ideal of public self-reputation	10.81 (1.63)	10.72 (1.79)	10.88 (1.48)
Reputational ideal of public self	8.46 (1.77)	8.75 (1.79)	8.21 (1.73)

* $p < .001$

The correlations between academic self-concept and the other variables are shown in Table 2. In the general sample, academic self-concept was positively related to perceived social support ($r = .28$, $p < .001$), conforming self-perception of reputation ($r = .17$, $p < .01$) and reputational self-perception ($r = .24$, $p < .01$). In the opposite direction, academic self-concept was negatively related to non-conforming self-perception of reputation ($r = -.20$, $p < .01$) and non-conforming ideal of public self-reputation ($r = -.16$, $p < .01$).

Table 2

Bivariate Correlations Between Academic Self-Concept and the Other Scales, and Partial Correlations Controlling the Functional Social Support

Variables	Overall sample		Boys		Girls	
	Pearson	Partial	Pearson	Partial	Pearson	Partial
Functional social support	.28***	-	.42***	-	.21*	-
Non-conforming self-perception of reputation	-.20**	-.18*	-.25*	-.21	-.07	-.04
Conforming self-perception of reputation	.17**	.13	.05	.01	.31**	.28**
Reputational self-perception	.24**	.14	.07	.07	.40***	.35**
Non-conforming ideal of public self-reputation	-.16*	-.12	-.12	.04	-.13	-.10
Conforming ideal of public self-reputation	.13	.08	.02	.06	.23*	.18
Reputational ideal of public self	.24**	.18*	.14	.04	.37***	.34**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

In the subsample of boys, only two variables had significant relationships with academic self-concept: functional social support had a positive relationship ($r = .42, p < .001$) while non-conforming self-perception of reputation had a negative relationship ($r = -.25, p < .05$). In the subsample of girls, on the other hand, five variables were positively related to academic self-concept: perceived social support ($r = .21, p < .05$); conforming self-perception of reputation ($r = .31, p < .01$); reputational self-perception ($r = .40, p < .001$); conforming ideal of public self-reputation ($r = .23, p < .05$); and reputational ideal of public self ($r = .37, p < .001$). Only perceived social support showed a significant relationship in both boys and girls. However, no significant differences were found ($Z = 1.60$).

Our goal was to remove how much perceived social support affects academic self-concept by taking out its differences from the group of social reputation factors. For this reason, partial correlations were conducted between the academic self-concept and the social reputation subscales while controlling the effects of perceived social support in the correlation coefficient. These partial correlations are shown in table 2 for the general sample and the sample separated by gender. In the general sample, only two variables continued to be significant but with a lower coefficient of determination: non-conforming self-perception of reputation and reputational ideal of public self.

In the sample of boys, only non-conforming self-perception of reputation obtained significant relationships in the Pearson correlations. However, this relationship was no longer

significant in the partial correlation. In the sample of girls, on the other hand, all variables with a significant relationship in the Pearson correlations continued to be significant in the partial correlations.

The results of the regression analyses are shown in Table 3. The data were analysed with multiple regression using the stepwise method. This analysis was performed with the overall sample and with each gender separately. All subscales of social reputation and perceived social support were entered into the regression equation as predictors of academic self-concept. In the general sample, perceived social support, reputational ideal of public self, and nonconforming self-perception of reputation explained 15% of the variance of academic self-concept ($F(158) = 9.39$; $p < 0.001$). On the other hand, perceived social support explained 18% of the variance of academic self-concept in boys ($F(71) = 15.13$; $p < 0.001$). In contrast, reputational self-perception explained 15% of the variance in girls ($F(86) = 16.09$; $p < 0.001$).

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression Predicting Academic Self-Concept by Social Reputation and Perceived Social Support for the Overall Sample and by Gender

	Scales	R²	β	t	p
Overall Sample	Functional social supports	.08	.21	2.71	< .001
	Reputational ideal of public self	.11	.20	2.82	< .01
	Non-conforming self-perception of reputation	.15	-.20	-2.81	< .01
Boys	Functional social supports	.18	.42	3.89	< .001
Girls	Reputational self-perception	.15	.40	4.01	< .001

Discussion

The main aim of this study was to analyse the role of functional social support and social reputation in academic self-concept in a sample of Spanish adolescents. The data revealed that academic self-concept correlates strongly with functional social support both in the general sample and for each gender-separated group. These data align with previous studies that identified a strong relationship between these two variables (Pratiwi & Mangunsong, 2020) as well as with studies that stress the need for students to establish strong networks in various niches of their social surroundings to achieve academic success (Mishra, 2020; Stepanovic Ilić et al., 2020; Tinajero et al., 2020, Xu et al., 2019). Indeed, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) predicts that self-concept is based on interactions and affiliations between components of personal and social identity in adolescence. It is therefore not surprising that these variables are significantly related.

An individual's perception of social support can, therefore, be positively associated with academic aspects of social identity, such as academic self-concept, during adolescence (Mishra, 2020; Tinajero et al., 2020). Specifically, the association between academic self-concept and functional social support has been highlighted as fundamental to human development (Tomás et al., 2020). This support may come from various sources such as family,

peers, and teachers. Research examining the impact of social support on adolescents' academic self-concept reveals several significant correlations. For example, Chen et al. (2015) reported that adolescents who perceived stronger social support also tended to report greater confidence in their academic abilities, which was statistically associated with higher academic self-concept. A study with Spanish adolescents conducted by Fernández-Lasarte et al. (2019) confirmed these associations. Their results showed that when students perceived greater support from their social environment, they also tended to describe themselves more positively in terms of academic self-concept. Therefore, while Chen et al. (2015) reported a general correlational link between social support and academic self-concept, Fernández-Lasarte et al. (2019) demonstrated how this association manifested in a Spanish cultural context, underscoring the importance of considering cultural and contextual factors in educational research.

An individual's perception of social support can, therefore, be positively related to academic aspects of social identity, such as academic self-concept, during adolescence (Mishra, 2020; Tinajero et al., 2020). Specifically, the relationship between academic self-concept and functional social support is fundamental to human development (Tomás et al., 2020). This support can come from various sources such as family, peers, and teachers. Research on the impact of social support on adolescents' academic self-concept reveals several significant findings. The study by Chen et al. (2015), for example, demonstrates that adolescents with strong social support tend to exhibit greater confidence in their academic abilities. In turn, this greater confidence reinforces their academic self-concept, which suggests that the perceived level of support is directly related to academic self-esteem. A study of Spanish adolescents conducted by Fernández-Lasarte et al. (2019) confirms these findings. That study suggests that when students perceive more significant support from their social environment, not only do they develop greater confidence in their academic abilities, but they also form a more positive self-concept in the academic realm. Therefore, while the study by Chen et al. (2015) establishes a general relationship between social support and academic self-concept, Fernández-Lasarte et al. (2019) examine how this relationship manifests itself explicitly in a Spanish cultural context while highlighting the importance of considering cultural and contextual factors in educational research.

Although few studies have analyzed the relationship between reputation enhancement and academic self-concept, our findings are parallel to those of Gest et al., (2008), who discovered significant bidirectional associations between peer academic reputation and academic self-concept in their general sample, which supports the results we obtained in ours. Moreover, previous studies that focused on academic reputation present significant relationships between these variables in their general sample (Gest et al., 2008). This coincides with our results, though our study also examined gender differences.

However, in our study, gender differences were detected in this relationship. In the sample of girls, the variables measuring conforming self-perception of reputation, reputational self-perception, conforming ideal of public self-reputation, and reputational ideal of public self-reputation showed significant and positive relationships with academic self-concept. On the other hand, in the sample of boys, only non-conforming self-perception of reputation showed a significant and positive relationship. These differences could be attributed to several factors related to

developmental evolution in adolescence. Firstly, adolescence is a period of intense identity formation (Gest et al., 2008) when girls showed a positive association between conformity-oriented reputation perceptions and academic self-concept, a pattern previously observed among early-adolescent females who are notably sensitive to peer approval (Closson et al., 2017).. Secondly, boys displayed significant links only with non-conforming reputation perceptions, consistent with developmental tendencies toward differentiation and autonomy during mid-adolescence (Lalchandani & Pardasani, 2022). Specifically, conforming self-perception of reputation, reputational self-perception, conforming ideal of public self-reputation, and reputational ideal of public self-had significant and positive relationships with academic self-concept in the sample of girls but not in the sample of boys, who obtained a significant relationship in the non-conforming self-perception of reputation. These results may be due to various reasons, including variations in social norms and gender expectations. Gender-related stereotypes continue to prevail and are disseminated through socialisation (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). Girls may therefore be higher conformity-oriented reputation perceptions were positively associated by conformity with reputation perceptions and public self-reputation ideals due to social pressures to align with specific roles and behaviours. This is reflected in their academic self-concept, where conformity and perceived reputation are more prominent. On the other hand, boys may experience less pressure to conform to these norms (Ciarrochi et al., 2017; Preckel et al., 2013), which could explain why only non-conforming reputation perceptions showed a significant association with their academic self-concept. This difference could indicate that boys value individuality (Miles & Naumann, 2021) and distinction in their academic self-concept more, whereas girls may prioritise conformity and social acceptance (Closson et al., 2017).

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of functional social support and social reputation in shaping academic self-concept among Spanish adolescents, it has several limitations that open up avenues for future research. Firstly, the sample was limited to adolescents from public high schools in Tarragona, Spain, who may only partially represent the diverse adolescent populations in different regions or educational settings. Future studies could expand the geographical scope to include a more varied sample and generalise the findings more broadly. Secondly, the study relied primarily on self-reported measures, which may be subject to biases such as social desirability. Incorporating multi-informant approaches could provide a more comprehensive understanding. Additionally, the study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality. Finally, further research could investigate the underlying mechanisms that drive the observed gender differences in the relationship between social reputation, functional social support, and academic self-concept.

The findings of this study offer significant practical implications for educators, parents, and policymakers. Understanding the crucial role of functional social support and social reputation in shaping adolescents' academic self-concept highlights the importance of fostering supportive and inclusive school environments. Schools can implement programmes and interventions to enhance peer support, teacher-student relationships, and parental involvement in educational activities. These initiatives can help to build a positive social reputation and reinforce students' confidence in their academic abilities.

Conclusion

This study explored the associations between functional social support and social reputation on academic self-concept among Spanish adolescents, with a particular focus on potential gender differences. Our findings highlight a significant correlation between academic self-concept and functional social support across the general sample, thereby confirming the theoretical propositions derived from Social Identity Theory. In the present study, a cross-sectional sample of Spanish adolescents was carried out. The results suggest that, in this sample, higher perceived levels of social support were statistically associated with a stronger academic self-concept. These findings are correlational and should not be interpreted as causal or generalised to all adolescents. Nevertheless, they point to the potential relevance of supportive networks including family, peers, and educators in shaping adolescents' academic self-perceptions, while underscoring the need for further research with larger and more diverse populations. The results suggest that higher perceived levels of social support were statistically associated with a stronger academic self-concept. This link is correlational and cannot be generalized to the entire adolescent population nor interpreted as causal. This relationship underscores the importance of supportive social networks, including family, peers and educators, in fostering adolescents' academic identities.

Moreover, the study reveals nuanced gender differences in the association between social reputation and academic self-concept. While girls' academic self-concept appears to be positively influenced by conforming self-perception and reputational self-perception, boys' academic self-concept is primarily associated with non-conforming self-perception. These findings suggest that social expectations and gender norms significantly shape adolescents' academic self-perceptions and reflect broader societal influences.

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