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The Relationship between Classroom Justice, EFL Female Students' Attitudes toward Empowerment, and Their Self-esteem

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationships between self-esteem, empowerment attitudes, and perceptions of classroom justice among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. Relative stratified sampling was used to choose the 329 participants that make up the research sample. The Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of questionnaire. This study used path analysis within the framework of structural equations, using a descriptive-correlational methodology, to analyse data and test research hypotheses. Software such as AMOS22 and SPSS22 were used to analyse the collected data. The results showed a significant correlation between students' perceptions of classroom justice dimensions and their feelings of empowerment and self-worth. The implications extend beyond the confines of the classroom, pointing towards a holistic approach to education that considers both the interpersonal dynamics within the learning environment and the individual empowerment of students.

***Keywords*:** attitude, classroom justice, EFL female students, empowerment, self-esteem

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1. Introduction

Adolescence is a pivotal stage of human development, marked by significant physical, emotional, cognitive, and social transformations (Santrock, 2018). This period serves as a bridge between childhood and adulthood, where individuals begin to form their identities and establish a sense of self. The quality of this developmental phase can have lasting impacts on one's future well-being and societal contribution. Enhancing self-esteem during adolescence is crucial, as it significantly influences emotional and social adjustment, as well as deterring antisocial behaviors (Orth & Robins, 2014).

Self-esteem, a critical component of an individual's psychological health, is shaped by various internal and external factors. Adolescents, in particular, are highly susceptible to changes in their self-perception due to the intense developmental changes they undergo. Positive self-esteem fosters resilience, better academic performance, and healthier relationships, while low self-esteem is associated with negative outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and social withdrawal (Harter, 2012).

Given the considerable proportion of female adolescents and their essential role in shaping future generations, it is imperative to focus on their self-esteem development. Female adolescents face unique challenges, including societal expectations and gender-specific pressures, which can impact their self-esteem and overall development (Pomerantz et al., 2002). Therefore, a comprehensive approach involving authorities, educators, parents, and mental health professionals is essential to support and enhance the self-esteem of female adolescents (WHO, 2021).

Moreover, the concept of perceived justice, comprising distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, plays a significant role in adolescents' development. Perceived justice relates to individuals' perceptions of fairness in different aspects of their experiences (Shakki, 2022; Wang, 2026).

Distributive Justice refers to the perceived fairness of the outcomes or distribution of resources (Adams, 1965). It focuses on whether individuals believe that they receive a fair share of rewards or resources compared to others. Procedural Justice concerns the perceived fairness of the processes and methods used to determine outcomes (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). It emphasizes transparency, consistency, and impartiality in decision-making procedures. Interactional Justice involves the perceived fairness of interpersonal interactions, including respect, courtesy, and the provision of adequate explanations during processes (Bies & Moag, 1986). It reflects

the quality of treatment individuals receive from authority figures.

Understanding the relationship between these dimensions of perceived justice and self-esteem, as well as the mediating role of empowerment, can provide valuable insights into how to foster healthier developmental environments for adolescents.

Human experience is characterized by a dynamic and subjective internal world, constantly shaped by life events and the emotions they evoke. This inherent subjectivity creates a sense of self-centrality, where individuals believe they possess a unique and unobservable understanding of themselves. The most crucial factor in increasing self-satisfaction lies in a change in individuals' attitudes toward themselves, leading to an enhancement of self-esteem and, consequently, fostering a more desirable societal transformation.

This objective is only possible if these changes and efforts take place during the foundational stages of personality development, specifically in childhood and adolescence. Adolescence serves as a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood and is characterized by evident physical, mental, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive changes. The conflicts and contradictions during this period are particularly prominent (Lotfabadi, 2015). As noted by Frost and McKelvie (2005), wise and rational decisions during this crucial time determine an individual's course. It becomes essential to guide adolescents to guarantee the need for psychological and emotional preparedness.

Considering that almost half of the country's adolescents are female and acknowledging the vital role they play in shaping future society and nurturing a wholesome generation, it is imperative to have comprehensive participation from authorities, educators, parents, and mental health professionals. The goal of this collaborative endeavor is to improve adolescents' self-esteem, which is an important component that affects their emotional-social adjustment and acts as a deterrent to antisocial behaviors. (Baumeister et al., 2003).

While self-esteem is recognized as a critical element in adolescent development, understanding the underlying factors that influence it is equally important. One such factor is perceived justice, which encompasses distributive, procedural, and interactional dimensions. Perceived justice can significantly impact an individual's sense of empowerment, which in turn, affects their self-esteem. Exploring these relationships can provide deeper insights into how we can effectively enhance self-esteem among adolescents (Van den Bos & Nierop, 2012).

Therefore, to further explore these dynamics and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing adolescent self-esteem, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

Research Questions

RQI: Is there a correlation between dimensions of perceived justice (distributive, procedural, interactional) and self-esteem?

RQ2: Is there a correlation between dimensions of perceived justice (distributive, procedural, interactional) and empowerment?

Q3: Is there a correlation between empowerment and self-esteem?

RQ4: Is there a correlation between dimensions of perceived justice (distributive, procedural, interactional) and self-esteem, mediated by empowerment?

Research Hypotheses

H 1: There is a correlation between dimensions of perceived justice (distributive, procedural, interactional) and self-esteem.

H 2: There is a correlation between dimensions of perceived justice (distributive, procedural, interactional) and empowerment.

H 3: There is a correlation between empowerment and self-esteem.

H 4: There is a correlation between dimensions of perceived justice (distributive, procedural, interactional) and self-esteem, mediated by empowerment.

2. Literature Review

Adolescence is a crucial stage in human development, characterized by significant physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes (Steinberg, 2023). This period serves as a bridge between childhood and adulthood, during which individuals begin to form their identities and establish a sense of self. The quality of this developmental phase has lasting impacts on an individual's future well-being and societal contribution. Enhancing self-esteem during adolescence is particularly important, as it significantly influences emotional and social adjustment and serves as a deterrent to antisocial behaviors (Harris & Orth, 2020).

Self-esteem, a critical component of psychological health, is shaped by various

internal and external factors. Adolescents, especially, are highly susceptible to changes in their self-perception due to the intense developmental changes they undergo. Positive self-esteem fosters resilience, better academic performance, and healthier relationships, while low self-esteem is associated with negative outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and social withdrawal (Harter, 2012). Given the considerable proportion of female adolescents and their essential role in shaping future generations, focusing on their self-esteem development is imperative. Female adolescents face unique challenges, including societal expectations and gender-specific pressures, which can impact their self-esteem and overall development (Pomerantz et al., 2002). Therefore, a comprehensive approach involving authorities, educators, parents, and mental health professionals is essential to support and enhance the self-esteem of female adolescents (WHO, 2021).

Moreover, the concept of perceived justice, which includes distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, plays a significant role in adolescents' development. Perceived justice relates to individuals' perceptions of fairness in different aspects of their experiences. Distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of outcomes or the distribution of resources (Adams, 1965). Procedural justice concerns the perceived fairness of the processes and methods used to determine outcomes (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Interactional justice involves the perceived fairness of interpersonal interactions, including respect, courtesy, and the provision of adequate explanations during processes (Bies & Moag, 1986). Understanding the relationship between these dimensions of perceived justice and self-esteem, as well as the mediating role of empowerment, can provide valuable insights into how to foster healthier developmental environments for adolescents.

Rekashvand et al. (2022) highlight that women's self-esteem is equal to men's, underscoring the necessity for women to see themselves as valuable contributors in societal roles. This emphasizes the importance of helping women develop a positive self-image and inspiring them to recognize their potential and make meaningful contributions to society (Huang et al., 2007; Xie et al., 2019). To unlock their full mental capacity and potential abilities, individuals need to maintain a positive attitude towards themselves and their environment. Self-esteem is a degree of approval, acceptance, and personal worth influenced by one's actual abilities, values, and rewards received. It refers to an individual’s internal evaluation of their self-worth, status, and social value, and there is a growing body of research suggesting a positive correlation between self-esteem and performance (Rezaei, 2012). Consequently, self-

esteem is a cognitive judgment impacted by approvals, assessments, and social events (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). According to Coopersmith (1967), low levels of self-esteem can negatively affect tenacity, self-assurance, academic progress, and overall performance in psychological, physical, familial, and social domains.

Thus, students with high self-esteem can communicate effectively, express their feelings, bounce back from setbacks, and accept responsibility, leading to a positive self-perception and an internal sense of control. Conversely, students with low self-esteem tend to be dependent, struggle with resilience, and encounter difficulties in decision-making (Bitner, 2022). Research suggests that social events become more significant when fair practices are supported. In other words, relationships with others are respectful and accepting when there is a sense of justice, which affects people via motivation, self-worth, and self-confidence (Cremer et al., 2008).

The development of interpersonal relationships between educators and students in learning environments indicates that teachers and learners must cooperate and communicate to accomplish individual learning objectives (Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004; Frymier & Houser, 2000). Despite teachers demonstrating effective teaching behaviors that facilitate motivation and learning, students may have different expectations from their learning experiences. For instance, students may express displeasure when teachers publicly embarrass them or handle discipline inappropriately (Paulsel, 2005). Research findings indicate that students' perceptions of justice and empowerment significantly contribute to the improvement of their self-esteem in educational settings. Consequently, examining students' attitudes towards teacher-student relationships as interpersonal connections provides key insights into their expectations from teachers and learning experiences. This study aims to investigate the impact of perceived classroom justice on female students' attitudes toward empowerment and self-esteem in educational settings.

The examination of female students' attitudes towards teacher-student relationships is crucial in understanding their expectations from teachers and learning experiences. Improving empowerment and increasing self-esteem symbolize mental well-being and support individuals in social interactions against anxiety and physical disorders, enhancing coping mechanisms, and promoting mental health. Although self-esteem, like a skill, is not directly teachable, it can be influenced by educational messages in the environment, school, family, and society. In traditional and developing societies, where women are often subject to different beliefs, norms, and

values than men, research indicates that women feel more injustice than men, negatively affecting their abilities and self-esteem. Therefore, this study investigates the relationship between female students' perception of classroom justice and their attitude toward empowerment and self-esteem within the school environment. The findings contribute to our understanding of factors that can empower women and improve their self-esteem, leading to a redistribution of power within families and societies, as women seek to be involved in development alongside men, based on equality and justice.

2.1. Classroom Justice

Classroom justice, as defined by Paulsel (2005), pertains to the concept of justice as it relates to outcomes or procedures within a learning environment. It encompasses three main facets: distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactional justice. While there are notable correlations between these dimensions, classroom justice research has demonstrated that they are linked to different structures (Colquitt et al., 2001). For example, Colquitt examined several models of classroom justice, including various forms of justice, and found that models considering distinct structures of justice provided a better fit for the data compared to single-dimensional models. Colquitt defined procedural justice as adhering to class rules, distributive justice as satisfaction with grades, and interactional justice as the evaluation of pertinent teachers. Other researchers have also conceptually and operationally divided classroom justice into separate types, demonstrating that various types of justice are associated with different variables.

2.2. Distributive Justice

Distributive justice within the classroom context refers to students' perception of fairness in the distribution of educational resources. This involves assessing the fairness of their grades compared to peers or in alignment with their expected outcomes. It also encompasses the principles that govern how social resources are distributed among individuals and communities, influencing relationships, tools, and the distribution of rewards and penalties. Teachers' actions generally impact how distributive justice principles are applied in the classroom (Di Battista et al., 2014).

2.3. Procedural Justice

Procedural justice, according to Byrne and Cropanzano (2001), refers to the fairness of processes used to achieve specific goals in an educational setting. These protocols cover behavior regulations for students, methods for grading homework and tests, and classroom management strategies. Assessing how students perceive the distribution of resources in the classroom about decision-making processes is a crucial aspect of procedural justice.

2.4. Interactional Justice

Interactional justice encompasses formal procedures and interpersonal interactions in resource distribution. Formal procedures relate to socially accepted and predetermined methods, while interpersonal interaction pertains to the quality of interaction between distributors and recipients, including elements like trust and respect (Tyler & Bies, 2015). The term "interactional justice" specifically refers to the interpersonal aspects of procedures, emphasizing how they are carried out. While some researchers incorporate interactional justice as part of procedural justice (Tyler & Lind, 1992), others suggest that the effects of formal procedural justice and interactional justice are entirely independent. In the classroom, interactional justice involves the equitable assessment of instructors' interpersonal behavior and interactions with students (Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004).

2.5. Empowerment

Empowerment is defined as a process involving the acceptance of values and intentional behaviors to enhance personal and organizational goals, promoting growth, learning, and achievement (Luechauer & Shulman, 1993). In organizational settings, perceiving empowerment leads to a more effective sense of well-being, motivation, and engagement among employees. Frymier and Houser (2000) identified three important dimensions for students when introducing the empowerment structure in educational settings: meaningfulness, impact, and competence. Meaningfulness refers to how students perceive a task based on their personal beliefs and standards, exploring their understanding of class assignments. Impact relates to students' perceptions that they can make a difference, influencing the teacher, other students, or contributing to class discussions. Competence pertains

to students' feelings about their abilities and their belief in completing activities and tasks in class. Furthermore, Burant (1999) shows that teacher and student behaviors are linked to empowerment. Students who receive responsive instruction, particularly those with higher aptitudes, feel more empowered, while students who feel less competent can be disempowered by teachers using aggressive verbal behaviors (Charlier & Caubergs, 2007).

From a different perspective, recognized as a key strategy for national development, women's empowerment, according to the United Nations, involves equality in all economic and social areas. It is considered a fundamental foundation for achieving development and peace (Kenyon & Garcia, 2016). Acknowledging women as a dynamic, active group with diverse motivations can lead to their effective participation in societal decision-making. Prioritizing women's empowerment, along with attention to self-esteem and cohesion, is vital for sustainable development.

Given the importance of self-esteem in many facets of women's lives and the crucial role educators and school administrators' play in fostering female students' psychological health and social skills. Understanding the variables that affect self-esteem is crucial. Taking proactive measures to strengthen the sense of competence and supporting social initiatives that enhance the self-esteem of females is vital for their preparation to undertake social and family responsibilities in the future.

In the light of the literature and to fill the gap regarding acceptance of women as a dynamic, highly motivated group that can make their participation in societal decision-making more effective. Women's empowerment, prioritizing it, and considering the interconnectedness of empowerment and self-esteem are important concepts that lead to sustainable development. Given the importance of self-esteem and its role in various aspects of women's lives, and due to the significance of the roles of teachers and school officials in enhancing the mental health and social skills of female students, as well as nurturing them to take on social and familial responsibilities in the future, the necessity of paying attention to factors influencing it and taking actions to strengthen the sense of competence and worthiness and social support, which leads to greater self-esteem in females, is felt.

3. Methodology

The present study adopted a descriptive-correlational research design. Correlation analysis examines the relationship between independent and dependent variables

based on the research objective because a correlation exists when changes in one variable are associated with changes in another. The target population in this study comprised all female high school students in West Azerbaijan, Iran with a total of 9661 female students during the academic year. Among them, 5925 students were enrolled in Region 1, and 3623 students were enrolled in Region 2. Finally, a total of 329 female students were selected through proportional stratified sampling from various schools.

3.1. Instrument

To gather data for this study, a questionnaire comprising three distinct components was utilized. The Justice Perception Questionnaire, developed by Koori and Asad (2004), consisted of 40 items distributed across three dimensions: distributive justice (14 items), procedural justice (17 items), and interactional justice (9 items). Cultural appropriateness adjustments were made based on expert opinions, and respondents used a five-point Likert scale to rate their perceptions, with higher scores indicating a stronger sense of justice. The questionnaire's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability coefficient was 0.910 in the study by Koori and 0.830 in the current study. Distributive Justice showed consistent reliability with coefficients of 0.880 in both previous studies and 0.880 in the current study. Interactional Justice exhibited a reliability coefficient of 0.950 in Koori's study, 0.726 in Kazemi's study, and 0.726 in the current study. These reliability indices provide insights into the internal consistency of the Justice Perception Questionnaire across different dimensions.

To measure the dependent variables, two instruments were employed. The Empowerment Questionnaire, adapted from Framer et al. (1996), comprised 28 items assessing meaningfulness, effectiveness, and competitiveness. Cronbach's alpha indicated high reliability. the reliability indices of the Empowerment Questionnaire for Students, comparing the values reported by Frymier and Houser (2000), to those obtained in the current study. The variables assessed include Significance, Effectiveness, Competition, and the Total score. In Framer et al.'s study, Significance and Effectiveness had reliability coefficients of 0.86, while Competition had a coefficient of 0.81. The value of the reliability coefficient for the total score was 0.90. The measure of significance had a slightly higher reliability coefficient (0.87) compared to Framer et al.'s findings.

However, Effectiveness exhibited a lower reliability coefficient of 0.80.

Competition remained consistent with a reliability coefficient of 0.81. The Total score maintained a reliability coefficient of 0.90, consistent with the previous study. These reliability indices provide insights into the internal consistency of the Empowerment Questionnaire for Students across different dimensions. The study also employed a 10-item Self-Esteem Questionnaire by Rosenberg (1965), which demonstrated a reliability coefficient of 0.77.

3.2. Self-Esteem Questionnaire

A 10-item questionnaire developed by Rosenberg (1965) was employed to measure self-esteem. Cronbach's alpha was utilized to evaluate the reliability of this questionnaire, resulting in an alpha coefficient of 0.77 in the current study. Previous studies reported reliability values ranging from 0.77 to 0.88 (Makkikangas et al., 2004). Finally, the data were analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The analysis was conducted using SPSS 22 and AMOS 22 software.

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with SPSS 22 and AMOS 22 software. The study aimed to examine the relationship between classroom justice, EFL learners' attitudes toward empowerment, and their self-esteem, focusing on female high school students in Iran. The questionnaires utilized in this research were carefully selected and adapted to ensure cultural appropriateness and reliability, allowing for a comprehensive investigation into the targeted constructs. The findings contribute to understanding intricate connections between classroom justice, student empowerment, and self-esteem, emphasizing the importance of addressing these factors in educational settings for the holistic development of students.

4. Results

To assess the normality of variable distributions, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was utilized, and the results indicated normal distributions for the variables. Mean and standard deviation values for each study variable are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Maximum	Minimum
Distributive Justice	3.0372	0.749	4.500	2.100
Procedural Justice	3.1173	0.767	4.400	2.100
Interactional Justice	3.3001	0.652	5.000	2.100
Justice Perception	3.1836	0.619	4.400	2.500
Empowerment	3.4533	0.678	5.000	2.800
Self-Esteem	3.6103	0.878	5.000	2.100

According to the data presented in Table 1, Interactional Justice has the highest mean among the dimensions of justice perception, and Self-Esteem has a higher mean compared to Empowerment.

4.1. First Research Hypothesis Analysis

Figure 1

Full Mediation Model or Complete Direct Effect of Independent Variables on the Dependent Variable without the Presence of a Mediating Variable

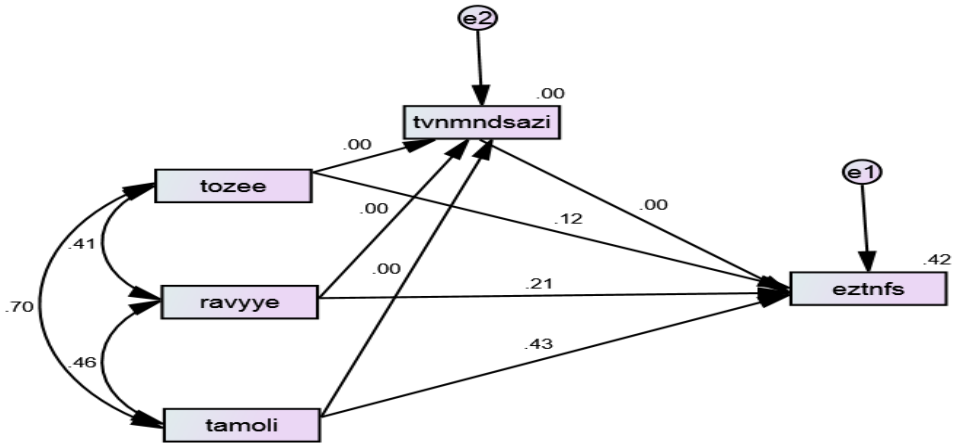

Table 2

Standardized Regression Coefficients of Direct Paths for Research Variables

Paths	Standardized Regression Coefficients	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	p-value
Distributive Justice ← Self-Esteem	0.120	0.119	0.200	0.500
Procedural Justice ← Self-Esteem	0.210	0.040	4.400	0.000
Interactional Justice ← Self	0.430	0.100	9.600	0.000

The standardized regression coefficients indicate insights into the direct relationships between the dimensions of justice perception and the self-esteem of female students. The standardized coefficients for the paths, Distributive Justice ← Self-Esteem, Procedural Justice ← Self-Esteem, and Interactional Justice ← Self-Esteem are 0.120, 0.210, and 0.430, respectively.

Significant coefficients for Distributive Justice ← Self-Esteem (standardized coefficient 0.120, critical ratio 0.2, p-value 0.5), Procedural Justice ← Self-Esteem (standardized coefficient 0.210, critical ratio 4.4, p-value 0.000), and Interactional Justice ← Self-Esteem (standardized coefficient 0.430, critical ratio 9.6, p-value 0.000) at the 0.01 significance level affirm a direct relationship between the dimensions of justice perception and the self-esteem of female students. Given the established direct relationship between independent and dependent variables, we can proceed to examine the indirect relationships between these variables. Analyzing the second, third, and fourth research hypotheses.

Figure 2

Model of the Effect of Independent Variables on the Dependent Variable with the Mediating Variable

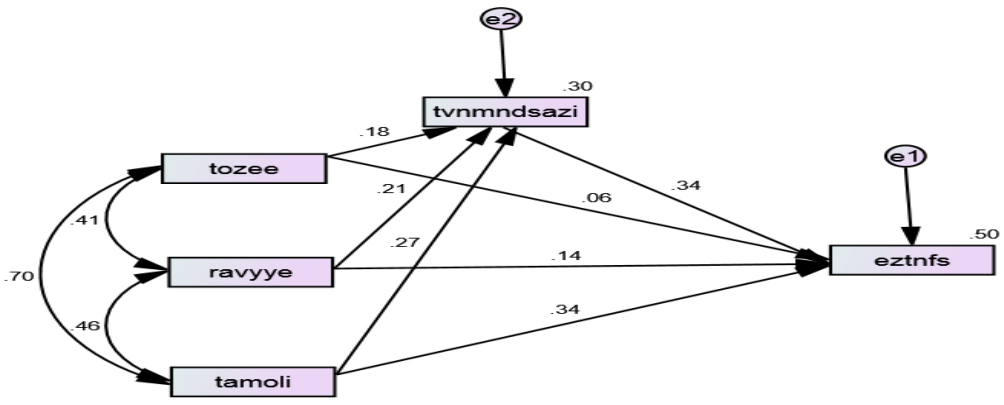

Table 3
Standardized Regression Coefficients of Paths in the Research Model with Mediating Effect

Paths	Standardized Regression Coefficients	S. E.	Critical Ratio	p-value
Distributive Justice ← Empowerment	0.180	0.100	2.700	0.050
Procedural Justice ← Empowerment	0.210	0.034	4.000	0.000
Interactional Justice ← Empowerment	0.300	0.100	4.000	0.000
Empowerment ← Self-Esteem	0.340	0.048	7.400	0.000
Distributive Justice ← Self-Esteem	0.069	0.100	1.100	0.300
Procedural Justice ← Self-Esteem	0.140	0.032	3.100	0.050
Interactional Justice ← Self-Esteem	0.340	0.100	5.700	0.000

4.2. Second Hypothesis Analysis

Based on the findings presented in Table 4.3, and the significant coefficients for the paths Distributive Justice ← Empowerment (standardized coefficient: 0.180, critical ratio: 7.2, p-value: 0.050), Procedural Justice ← Empowerment (standardized coefficient: 0.210, critical ratio: 0.4, p-value: 0.000), and Interactional Justice ← Empowerment (standardized coefficient: 0.300, critical ratio: 0.4, p-value: 0.000) at the 0.01 significance level, it can confidently claim that there exists a direct relationship between Distributive Justice, Procedural Justice, and Interactional Justice with Empowerment among female students. Furthermore, the path Empowerment ← Self-Esteem shows a significant coefficient (0.340) with a critical ratio of 4.7 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a substantial direct relationship between Empowerment and Self-Esteem.

For the paths, Distributive Justice ← Self-Esteem, Procedural Justice ← Self-Esteem, and Interactional Justice ← Self-Esteem, the coefficients are 0.690, 1.400, and 3.400, respectively. The critical ratios are 1.1, 1.3, and 7.5, and the p-values are 0.300, 0.050, and 0.000. This suggests that there is a significant direct relationship between these justice dimensions and Self-Esteem, particularly for Procedural Justice and Interactional Justice. Examining the paths of Self-Esteem ← Distributive Justice, Self-Esteem ← Procedural Justice, and Self-Esteem ← Interactional Justice, the coefficients are 0.690, 1.400, and 3.400, respectively. The critical ratios are 1.1, 1.3, and 7.5, and the p-values are 0.300, 0.050, and 0.000. These results suggest a direct relationship between the justice dimensions and Self-Esteem, particularly for

Procedural Justice and Interactional Justice.

In summary, the research model signifies a direct relationship between justice dimensions, empowerment, and self-esteem among female.

4.3. Third Hypothesis Analysis

Examining the results in Table 4.3, the coefficient for the path Empowerment ← Self-Esteem is 0.340, and with a p-value less than 0.001, it is statistically significant. Hence, it can be confidently asserted that there exists a significant relationship between Empowerment and Self-Esteem among female students.

4.4. Fourth Hypothesis Analysis

The analysis of the fourth hypothesis, Distributive Justice ← Affiliation (standardized coefficient: 1.0, critical ratio: 1.1, p-value: 1.0), shows that the coefficient is not statistically significant. However, Procedural Justice ← Self-Esteem (standardized coefficient: 1.4, critical ratio: 1.3, p-value: 0.050) and Interactional Justice ← Self-Esteem (standardized coefficient: 3.4, critical ratio: 7.5, p-value: 0.000) are statistically significant. This implies that there exists a positive and indirect correlation between the dimensions of Procedural and Interactional Justice and Self-Esteem among female students, mediated by Empowerment.

Table 4

Structural Equation Modeling Fit Indices

Fit Index	Acceptable Range	Observed Value	Result
CMIN/DF	<3 (Good), <5	3.3	Acceptable
TLI	>0.9	0.863	Acceptable
PCLOSE	<0.05	0.056	Acceptable
RMR	<1.0	0.077	Good
CFI	>0.9	1	Good
GFI	>0.9	0.91	Good
IFI	>0.9	0.876	Acceptable
PNFI	>0.5	0.74	Good
RMSEA	<0.08 (Good), 0.08-0.1 (Average), >0.1 (Poor)	0.042	Good

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the fit indices presented in Table 4.4, the overall fit of the research model appears to be relatively good. The values fall within the acceptable or good range for most fit indices, indicating that the model fits the data well. In conclusion, the research findings provide support for the hypotheses, demonstrating significant direct and indirect relationships between justice dimensions, empowerment, and self-esteem among female students. Additionally, the model fit indices that the proposed structural model provides a good representation of the observed data.

The research findings confirm the first hypothesis, indicating a direct and significant relationship between the dimensions of justice and self-esteem among female students. In other words, an increase in justice perception among students corresponds to an increase in their self-esteem. This correlation holds across all three dimensions of justice, with interactive justice having the most significant impact on enhancing the self-esteem of female students. It can be argued that when students perceive fairness in grade distribution, rewards, and related procedures, and when interactions between teachers and students are characterized by respect and acknowledgment of their rights, they feel assured that their efforts and behaviours are fairly evaluated. This, in turn, positively influences their morale, development, and the reinforcement of self-esteem.

These results are consistent with the findings of De Cremer et al.,(2008), who demonstrated a significant correlation between procedural justice and self-esteem. moreover, Pierce and Gardner (2004), showed that individuals with high self-esteem tend to interpret organizational procedures fairly. Within the organizational context.

The evidence suggests a direct correlation between students' perception of justice in the classroom and their sense of empowerment. This finding holds across all three dimensions of classroom justice, namely distributive, procedural, and interactional. As learners' perception of justice increases, so does their perception of empowerment. This result is consistent with the findings of Zahednejad et al. (2015) who attributed the relationship between distributive justice and heightened empowerment to Adams' equity theory.

This study also revealed that higher perceived levels of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice in school were associated with increased feelings of empowerment among female learners. These students believe that their teachers impartially identify methods of distribution and interactions, resulting in heightened

motivation for learning and the cultivation of meaningful relationships within the class. They perceive that their teachers have afforded them equitable opportunities for success and progress. Therefore, the sense of justice, particularly in improving teacher-student relationships, helps female students feel more competent, have a greater impact on the class, and consequently, enhance their self-esteem.

In line with theoretical foundations, it is observed that the empowerment of female students is most strongly associated with interactive justice. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, the principles of interactive justice are constructed through the dynamics between teachers and students. Teachers with a high degree of justice in their conduct treat their students with integrity, courtesy, and impartiality (Colquitt et al., 2001). Teachers are recognized for their fairness in interacting positively with students, establishing strong relationships, and emphasizing the students' rights. Such teachers, recognized for their justice, behave compassionately towards students, aid their rights, and help them express their competence and abilities. Consequently, this nurtures empowerment, instilling a sense of competence and capability among students within the classroom and school environment (Paulsel & Chory-Assad, 2004).

4.1. Implications

The findings suggest a significant and direct correlation between female students' empowerment and their self-esteem. This finding is consistent with the study by (Kiani et al.,2017), which highlights that empowerment motivation contributes to heightened motivation, increased self-esteem, a sense of content relevance, and an elevated perception of teacher authority among students. All these positive outcomes enable students to consider the educational setting, including the curriculum, teachers, and peers, as a coherent whole. The study also reveals that the empowerment of female students acts as a mediator in the link between their perception of justice and self-esteem. From the perspectives of female students, this connection is more pronounced for interactive justice, underscoring that their perception of justice in interpersonal interactions has a greater impact on shaping their equitable experiences compared to the fair distribution of rewards and grades. In conclusion, teachers play a crucial role in melding students' feelings, motivations, beliefs, cognitions, values, and behaviours through the powerful forces of justice perception. As highlighted earlier, strong self-esteem among females serves as a robust foundation, enabling them to withstand external challenges. Consequently, teachers aiming to enhance the positive impact of equitable classroom and school experiences should endeavor to be recognized by their students as fair educators. This

entails steering clear of unjust practices that may cause student distress and actively involving them in equitable activities and interactions. Such educators provide fair opportunities for success and advancement, fostering stronger collaboration with students. Moreover, they empower students and boost self-esteem by nurturing a sense of competence and independence. Weiner (2003) highlights the significance of students' perception of justice within the school context and emphasizes the crucial role teachers' play in diverse areas such as dispensing rewards, providing assistance, handling incidents, demonstrating respect and affection, establishing learning standards, and assigning academic grades. It is essential to examine and address the fairness of the distributions, interactions, and procedures within educational systems. The perception of justice encompasses factors that significantly impact students' emotions, motivations, beliefs, thoughts, values, and actions.

As mentioned, high self-esteem among females is a robust support that can empower them to face challenges in the external world. Therefore, teachers aspiring to increase the positive and beneficial effects of students from fair experiences in the classroom and school should strive to be recognized by their students as fair educators.

4.2. Suggestions for the study

In practical terms, education authorities should be committed to increasing awareness among teachers and other school staff about educational justice. Some teachers lack adequate awareness of the actual or potential perception of injustice by female students in schools. Future teachers need to be equipped with methods to listen to students' experiences, understand their living conditions, perceptions of educational justice, and identify the consequences of unjust experiences on various aspects of students' lives, and be familiar with and effective in reducing students' unjust experiences in schools as much as possible. School authorities are recommended to create a culture of respect, justice, and the importance of positive relationships, combined with respect and justice in schools, and strengthen them by designing appropriate programs. Equal opportunities should be created for all students to grow in abilities, talents, and self-esteem. In addition to making decisions based on the interests and preferences of all groups of students, parents' opinions (without discrimination) should be used in decision-making. Given that this research was conducted cross-sectionally, it is suggested that researchers conduct this research longitudinally and determine changes over time. The population of this research was

only the city's high schools of West Azerbaijan. It is recommended that other researchers who intend to conduct this research have a population consisting of both urban and rural schools.

4.3. Limitations

The first limitation is that in examining students' experiences of fairness, students were asked to consider their perception of fairness (or unfairness) in their experiences with all their teachers in general, without focusing on any specific teacher. However, students have different experiences with each of their teachers, and it may be difficult for them to make a general judgment about all their teachers on average. Secondly, this study only used self-reporting tools (questionnaires) to collect all information. There is a felt need for research using observation and interview tools in this area. Moreover, this study was conducted in secondary schools in specific districts of Urmia city, and the results cannot necessarily be generalized to students from other areas. Therefore, further studies from different cities and cultures are needed to validate the results of these findings. Social and economic factors and variables that are not accounted for in this study may also influence students' perceptions of fairness and their experiences in educational settings.

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