Assessment and Practice in Educational Sciences

Investigating the Role of Social Responsibility, Organizational Transparency, and Organizational Commitment in Social Cynicism among Secondary School Teachers in Urmia

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the predictive role of social responsibility, organizational transparency, and organizational commitment in explaining social cynicism among secondary school teachers in Urmia. The research followed a descriptive-correlational design with an applied developmental objective. The statistical population included all secondary school teachers in Urmia during the 2021–2022 academic year (N = 2670). Using Cochran's formula, a sample of 400 teachers was selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using four standardized questionnaires: the Social Cynicism Questionnaire (Afshani & Kebriayi, 2020), the Social Responsibility Questionnaire (Carroll, 1991), the Organizational Transparency Questionnaire (Rawlins, 2008), and the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The internal consistency of the tools was confirmed by Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.802 to 0.814. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, applying Pearson correlation and multiple regression techniques. The results showed that all three independent variables—social responsibility, organizational transparency, and organizational commitment—had significant negative correlations with social cynicism ($p \leq 0.01$). The multiple regression analysis revealed that these variables collectively explained 62.2% of the variance in social cynicism ($R^2 = 0.622$, $p < 0.001$), with organizational transparency being the strongest predictor ($\beta = -0.489$), followed by social responsibility ($\beta = -0.268$) and organizational commitment ($\beta = -0.121$). The findings underscore the critical role of ethical and organizational constructs in reducing social cynicism among teachers. By fostering socially responsible behavior, increasing transparency, and strengthening organizational commitment, educational institutions can significantly diminish negative attitudes and promote a more trusting and constructive work environment for educators.

Keywords: Social Cynicism, Social Responsibility, Organizational Transparency, Organizational Commitment, Secondary School Teachers, Educational Ethics, Iran.

Introduction

In recent years, social cynicism has gained increasing attention in the realm of organizational psychology and educational management due to its widespread impact on employee attitudes, trust, and overall school climate. Social cynicism, generally characterized by pervasive distrust of others, negative expectations about social systems, and skepticism toward institutions, can undermine interpersonal relations and organizational functionality, particularly in the education sector where cooperation

and mutual respect are fundamental. Among school teachers, this phenomenon can lead to disengagement, reduced morale, and the erosion of professional commitment, with negative implications for both educational outcomes and institutional trust (1). Consequently, understanding the organizational and psychological antecedents of social cynicism is crucial for fostering a healthy and productive school environment.

One significant construct that plays a potentially protective role against social cynicism is social responsibility. Social responsibility refers to individuals' and institutions' moral obligation to act for the benefit of society at large. In educational contexts, this encompasses ethical behavior, concern for student welfare, compliance with educational norms, and contribution to the collective good of the community (2). Teachers who perceive themselves and their institutions as socially responsible may experience higher levels of trust and optimism toward their organization, thereby reducing their susceptibility to cynicism. Ethical social responsibility practices within schools, such as equitable decision-making and inclusive pedagogy, contribute to a sense of purpose and reduce feelings of alienation among educators (3, 4).

Organizational transparency is another core factor that has been linked to reduced levels of social cynicism. Transparency refers to the openness of an organization in communicating with stakeholders, including clarity in procedures, honesty in communication, and visibility of decision-making processes. Teachers working in transparent environments tend to have higher levels of trust in leadership and are more likely to perceive their workplace as fair and accountable (5, 6). Lack of transparency, on the other hand, often fosters suspicion, rumor-mongering, and perceived injustice—factors strongly associated with cynical attitudes. Transparency also plays a critical role in mitigating organizational paranoia and promoting social capital within institutions (7).

Furthermore, organizational commitment—particularly when characterized by emotional attachment, a sense of belonging, and identification with organizational goals—has been shown to inversely correlate with social cynicism. Teachers with strong organizational commitment are more resilient in the face of administrative challenges and more likely to constructively engage with organizational policies (8, 9). Affective commitment helps anchor employees in their roles, making them less vulnerable to the erosion of trust that typifies social cynicism. Studies have also suggested that when educators feel committed to their schools, they are more inclined to adopt prosocial behaviors and support institutional initiatives, which in turn reinforces a positive feedback loop of mutual trust and dedication (10, 11).

Social cynicism in organizational settings is not merely an individual psychological response but is often the outcome of broader institutional deficiencies such as lack of ethical leadership, ambiguous roles, and absence of participatory governance (12, 13). Schools, as microcosms of society, are particularly vulnerable to these dynamics due to hierarchical structures, resource limitations, and the pressure for performance. In such environments, the perception of unethical practices or opaque decision-making processes can erode teachers' trust and trigger cynicism. Several scholars emphasize the need for educational institutions to adopt ethical codes and ensure consistency between stated values and actual practices (14, 15). When organizations fail to align ethics with operations, they inadvertently foster a culture of skepticism and disengagement.

The role of professional ethics in shaping teacher behavior and preventing cynicism has also been documented in numerous studies. Professional ethics serve as the foundation for decision-making and interpersonal relations within educational settings. A well-internalized ethical framework enhances teachers' sense of agency and accountability, reducing the likelihood of adopting a cynical worldview even in adverse organizational climates (16, 17). Furthermore, professional ethics are closely tied to educators' commitment to continuous learning and adaptive resilience, which can buffer the negative psychological effects of organizational mismanagement (18, 19).

Research has also highlighted the importance of leadership style and ethical engagement in influencing teachers' organizational perceptions. Ethical leadership is characterized by integrity, fairness, and a commitment to stakeholder well-

being. When leaders consistently demonstrate ethical behavior and communicate transparently, they serve as role models, reinforcing ethical norms within the organizational culture (20, 21). Ethical leadership not only reduces organizational cynicism but also enhances employees' sense of moral obligation and professional loyalty (3). This linkage suggests that educational managers who prioritize ethics and transparency may indirectly reduce social cynicism among teachers by fostering organizational commitment and reinforcing shared values.

In the Iranian context, organizational structures within public education are often shaped by bureaucratic governance, limited teacher autonomy, and centralized decision-making processes. These structural features can act as breeding grounds for social cynicism if not accompanied by mechanisms that enhance trust, accountability, and participatory engagement. Recent studies in Iran have emphasized the growing relevance of social responsibility and ethical practices in mitigating psychological distress among teachers and fostering institutional resilience (6, 10). Additionally, efforts to institutionalize professional ethics and improve transparency in educational institutions have gained momentum, particularly in response to public demands for reform and accountability (22).

Considering the multifaceted nature of social cynicism and its interaction with organizational constructs, this study aims to investigate the predictive role of social responsibility, organizational transparency, and organizational commitment in shaping social cynicism among secondary school teachers in Urmia. By focusing on this population, the study addresses a critical gap in the literature regarding the psychosocial well-being of educators in non-Western, centralized educational systems. In doing so, it responds to the call for localized, empirical research that examines how internal organizational dynamics can either contribute to or mitigate the rise of cynical attitudes in schools (23, 24).

The findings from this research are expected to offer practical insights for educational policymakers, school administrators, and organizational development experts. Specifically, understanding how social responsibility and transparency foster organizational commitment and reduce cynicism can guide the development of professional ethics training programs, participatory leadership frameworks, and trust-building mechanisms within schools. Moreover, the outcomes may inform national educational strategies aimed at promoting ethical culture and psychological safety in schools—a key condition for effective teaching and sustainable school improvement (25, 26).

In sum, this study seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on workplace cynicism by examining how organizational and ethical factors shape the perceptions and attitudes of secondary school teachers.

Methods and Materials

This research employed a descriptive-correlational design with an applied and developmental objective. The statistical population comprised all secondary school teachers in Urmia during the 2021–2022 academic year, totaling 2,670 individuals. To determine the appropriate sample size, Cochran's formula was used. Based on the size of the population, a sample of 340 teachers was initially estimated. However, to ensure robustness and account for a potential 20% dropout rate, the final sample size was expanded to 400 participants. Sampling was conducted using stratified random sampling. In this method, the city of Urmia was first divided into five geographical districts. Three districts were randomly selected, and within each selected district, several secondary schools were randomly chosen. All teachers in these schools who met the inclusion criteria were invited to participate in the study.

Eligibility criteria for inclusion were: holding at least a bachelor's degree, willingness to participate in the study, physical health, no recent experience (within the past three months) of traumatic events such as the death or divorce of close relatives, and no receipt of psychological services during that period. Exclusion criteria included withdrawal from completing the questionnaires and failure to respond to more than 10% of the items.

The Social Cynicism Questionnaire used in this study was developed by Afshani and Kobraei (2020) and includes 24 items distributed across three dimensions: generalized cynicism (9 items), public cynicism (8 items), and personal cynicism (7 items). Responses were scored using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). The total score is derived by summing the scores of all items, resulting in a possible range of 24 to 120. Content validity was confirmed by experts and exploratory factor analysis. Reliability was reported using Cronbach's alpha: 0.75 for generalized, 0.80 for public, 0.78 for personal cynicism, and 0.81 for the total instrument. In the current study, the subscale reliabilities were slightly higher, ranging from 0.801 to 0.803, with an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.802, indicating strong internal consistency.

The Social Responsibility Questionnaire was originally developed by Carroll (1991), containing 20 items divided equally into four dimensions: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5), yielding a total score between 20 and 100. Perez and Rodriguez-del-Bosque (2013) confirmed the construct validity using exploratory factor analysis and reported Cronbach's alpha values of 0.85 (economic), 0.77 (legal), 0.87 (ethical), 0.89 (philanthropic), and 0.91 for the total scale. In Iranian studies, Rabiei, Madbari, and Mahmoudi (2020) confirmed content validity through expert review and reported similar reliability coefficients. In this study, the internal consistency coefficients were also high, ranging from 0.801 to 0.812 for subscales, and 0.814 for the overall questionnaire.

The Organizational Transparency Questionnaire was developed by Rawlins (2008), consisting of 23 items across four subscales: participation (6 items), substantial information (7 items), accountability (5 items), and secrecy (5 items). Items were rated using the same five-point Likert scale, with a total possible score ranging from 23 to 115. Rawlins (2008) confirmed construct validity through exploratory factor analysis and reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.92 (participation), 0.93 (substantial information), 0.87 (accountability), 0.79 (secrecy), and 0.91 for the total scale. In an Iranian adaptation by Derakhshan, Ghanbari, and Zandi (2018), confirmatory factor analysis was used to verify construct validity. Cronbach's alpha in their study ranged from 0.77 to 0.91. In the present study, reliability coefficients were between 0.802 and 0.806 for each dimension, with a total alpha of 0.806, indicating satisfactory consistency and dependability.

The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire used was developed by Allen and Meyer (1990), containing 24 items measuring three components: affective, normative, and continuance commitment (8 items each). Scoring followed a five-point Likert scale, providing a total score ranging from 24 to 120. Construct validity was confirmed through exploratory factor analysis, and the original reliability coefficients were 0.85 (affective), 0.79 (normative), and 0.83 (continuance). Iranian studies, including Nasiri et al. (2017) and Nouri et al. (2019), verified reliability with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.74 to 0.85. In the current research, internal consistency was confirmed with alpha values of 0.805 (affective), 0.806 (normative), 0.813 (continuance), and 0.809 for the total instrument, validating its appropriateness for the study sample.

Data analysis was performed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and normality tests, were used to summarize demographic and key study variables. Inferential statistical methods were employed to examine relationships between variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated to explore associations between organizational commitment, transparency, social responsibility, and social cynicism. In addition, standard multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the predictive power of independent variables on the dependent variable, i.e., social cynicism. All statistical analyses were conducted at a significance level of $p < 0.05$. The combination of correlation and regression techniques ensured a comprehensive evaluation of both associative and predictive relationships among the constructs under investigation.

Findings and Results

The demographic profile of the 400 secondary school teachers in this study reveals a diverse distribution in terms of age, gender, marital status, education, and work experience. Regarding age, 42% of the participants were under 30 years old (n = 168), 45.5% were between 30 and 40 years old (n = 182), and 12.5% were over 40 years old (n = 50). In terms of gender, a significant majority were female, comprising 80.5% of the sample (n = 322), while males represented 19.5% (n = 78). With respect to marital status, 48.5% of the participants were single (n = 194), and 51.5% were married (n = 206). In terms of educational attainment, most held a bachelor's degree (50.8%, n = 203), followed by associate degrees (28.3%, n = 113), master's degrees (16.5%, n = 66), and a smaller proportion with doctoral degrees (4.5%, n = 18). Regarding work experience, 48.5% had less than 10 years of experience (n = 194), 38% had 10 to 20 years (n = 152), and 13.5% had more than 20 years (n = 54). This distribution indicates a relatively young and predominantly female teaching workforce with moderate levels of educational attainment and professional experience.

Table 1. Normality Test of the Variables Using Skewness and Kurtosis

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Social Responsibility	68.36	10.324	0.386	-0.445
Organizational Commitment	70.80	8.506	0.171	-0.261
Organizational Transparency	78.16	12.839	0.194	-0.905
Social Cynicism	-82.01	12.757	-0.390	-0.623

Table 1 presents the results of the normality test for all study variables based on skewness and kurtosis statistics. The mean score for social responsibility was 68.36 (SD = 10.324), for organizational commitment 70.80 (SD = 8.506), for organizational transparency 78.16 (SD = 12.839), and for social cynicism -82.01 (SD = 12.757). Skewness values for all variables ranged between -0.390 and 0.386, and kurtosis values were between -0.905 and -0.261. These values fall within the acceptable range (±1), indicating that the data distribution for all variables approximates normality and is suitable for parametric analyses such as Pearson correlation and regression.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix Between Study Variables

Row	Variable	1	2	3	4
1	Social Responsibility	1			
2	Organizational Commitment	0.568	1		
3	Organizational Transparency	0.742	0.551	1	
4	Social Cynicism	-0.700	-0.543	-0.755	1

Table 2 shows the Pearson correlation coefficients among the key study variables. Social responsibility had a strong positive and significant correlation with organizational commitment (r = 0.568, $p \leq 0.01$) and with organizational transparency (r = 0.742, $p \leq 0.01$), while it had a strong negative correlation with social cynicism (r = -0.700, $p \leq 0.01$). Similarly, organizational commitment was positively correlated with organizational transparency (r = 0.551, $p \leq 0.01$) and negatively correlated with social cynicism (r = -0.543, $p \leq 0.01$). Organizational transparency also demonstrated a strong negative correlation with social cynicism (r = -0.755, $p \leq 0.01$). All correlations are statistically significant at the 0.01 level, indicating that as social responsibility, organizational commitment, and transparency increase, social cynicism tends to decrease among the teachers.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Summary: Predicting Social Cynicism Based on Social Responsibility, Organizational Transparency, and Organizational Commitment

Correlation Coefficient (R)	R Square (R²)	Adjusted R²	F	p-value
0.789	0.622	0.619	217.369**	0.001

Table 3 displays the summary results of the multiple regression analysis conducted to examine the extent to which social responsibility, organizational transparency, and organizational commitment predict social cynicism among secondary school

teachers in Urmia. The correlation coefficient (R) was 0.789, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.622, indicating that the model explains approximately 62.2% of the variance in social cynicism. The adjusted R^2 of 0.619 confirms that even after accounting for the number of predictors, the model retains strong explanatory power. The F-value of 217.369 is statistically significant ($p \leq 0.001$), demonstrating that the model as a whole is significant and that the predictors collectively contribute meaningfully to the prediction of social cynicism.

Table 4. Regression Coefficients: The Effect of Predictors on Social Cynicism

Variables	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	p-value
Constant	-8.553	3.430	—	-2.493	0.013
Social Responsibility (X_1)	-0.331	0.059	-0.268	-5.572	0.001
Organizational Commitment (X_2)	-0.181	0.058	-0.121	-3.130	0.002
Organizational Transparency (X_3)	-0.486	0.047	-0.489	-10.314	0.001

Table 4 presents the detailed regression coefficients for each independent variable in predicting social cynicism. The constant value was -8.553 ($p = 0.013$), indicating that in the absence of the predictor variables, the baseline level of social cynicism would be negative. Social responsibility had a significant negative effect on social cynicism (B = -0.331, β = -0.268, $p = 0.001$), meaning that for each unit increase in social responsibility, social cynicism decreased by 0.331 units. Organizational commitment also had a significant negative effect (B = -0.181, β = -0.121, $p = 0.002$), and organizational transparency had the strongest negative impact (B = -0.486, β = -0.489, $p = 0.001$). These findings indicate that all three variables—social responsibility, transparency, and commitment—serve as significant negative predictors of social cynicism. Among them, organizational transparency had the most powerful impact, reducing social cynicism by nearly half a point per unit increase. The negative direction of all coefficients highlights the inverse relationship between these organizational factors and the level of social cynicism among teachers.

Discussion and Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to examine the predictive role of social responsibility, organizational transparency, and organizational commitment in explaining the level of social cynicism among secondary school teachers in the city of Urmia. The findings revealed that all three variables had a significant negative relationship with social cynicism. Moreover, the results of multiple regression analysis indicated that these three variables collectively explained 62.2% of the variance in social cynicism, with organizational transparency having the strongest predictive power, followed by social responsibility and organizational commitment. This suggests that improvements in these organizational and ethical dimensions can substantially decrease the prevalence of cynical attitudes among educators.

The inverse relationship between social responsibility and social cynicism aligns with theoretical frameworks emphasizing the role of moral and ethical awareness in shaping positive psychological attitudes in the workplace. Teachers who perceive their institutions and roles as embedded within a socially responsible framework are more likely to develop trust in the system, feel valued, and contribute meaningfully, which in turn reduces negative perceptions such as cynicism. This is consistent with previous findings that social responsibility, particularly when expressed through ethical leadership and community-oriented goals, fosters constructive employee behaviors and mitigates alienation (2, 3). Studies in both educational and non-educational contexts affirm that when organizational values reflect social consciousness and ethical commitment, employees demonstrate greater emotional investment and less psychological withdrawal (13, 27).

Organizational transparency emerged as the strongest predictor of social cynicism reduction in the current study. This outcome reinforces a well-documented finding in organizational behavior literature: that transparency significantly enhances

institutional trust and reduces suspicion, miscommunication, and perceived injustice (5, 6). In educational settings, transparency in decision-making processes, performance evaluation, and resource distribution can act as a powerful buffer against the formation of cynical beliefs. Transparency also strengthens the perception that the organization operates with integrity and accountability, thereby reducing emotional distance and psychological detachment among staff (7, 23). Moreover, transparent communication practices contribute to the normalization of feedback, learning from mistakes, and participatory leadership—all of which counteract the secrecy and top-down control often associated with organizational cynicism (14).

The negative association between organizational commitment and social cynicism further supports the idea that strong emotional bonds with the organization enhance employees' resilience to negative workplace dynamics. Teachers with higher levels of organizational commitment—especially affective and normative commitment—are more likely to align their goals with those of the institution, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and reducing skepticism toward organizational motives (8, 24). Organizational commitment is not merely an individual attitude but a reflection of institutional policies and leadership practices that cultivate loyalty, appreciation, and job satisfaction. When teachers perceive fairness, recognition, and professional growth opportunities, their commitment increases, and cynical attitudes diminish (9, 11).

The synergistic role of all three variables—social responsibility, transparency, and commitment—offers a holistic view of how institutional ethics and structure jointly contribute to reducing social cynicism. While each variable independently contributes to reducing cynicism, their combined impact is substantially greater, suggesting that piecemeal reforms in one area without attention to the others may be insufficient. For instance, promoting transparency without enhancing social responsibility or commitment may leave underlying organizational tensions unresolved. The interplay among these constructs indicates the importance of an integrated ethical and managerial framework to promote teacher well-being and organizational health (10, 21).

This finding also resonates with studies emphasizing the mediating and reinforcing roles of ethical practices across various domains of organizational functioning. Ethical leadership and institutional social responsibility have been shown to indirectly enhance organizational citizenship behavior, reduce burnout, and even improve employee retention by mitigating psychological withdrawal and distrust (20, 28). In a school environment, where the emotional labor of teaching is high and the stakes are not only professional but moral, the presence of ethical and transparent governance may be even more critical for reducing feelings of futility, isolation, and disillusionment that characterize cynicism (25, 26).

The regression coefficients provide further insight into the specific influence of each variable. Organizational transparency had the highest beta value (-0.489), indicating its dominant role in predicting lower levels of cynicism. Social responsibility followed closely (-0.331), suggesting that the ethical climate and the perception of moral duty have strong emotional resonance for teachers. Organizational commitment had the smallest, though still significant, predictive weight (-0.181), which may reflect the fact that commitment is more of a consequence of institutional culture than a cause of change in attitudes. Nonetheless, its inclusion is critical, as commitment both reflects and amplifies the positive impacts of transparency and social responsibility (4, 29).

The relevance of these findings for educational administrators is profound. In contexts where teachers feel increasingly burdened by external pressures, institutional inefficiencies, or ambiguous ethical climates, cynicism may manifest as a psychological defense mechanism. However, the results of this study confirm that this reaction is not inevitable; rather, it is shaped by structural and cultural variables that are subject to intervention. Ethical training, participatory leadership, and transparent communication are not simply best practices—they are essential mechanisms for safeguarding educators' emotional and professional integrity (19, 30).

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing literature on social cynicism in professional environments by empirically validating the critical role of social responsibility, transparency, and commitment in mitigating negative workplace attitudes. The results emphasize that educational institutions seeking to foster positive organizational climates must go beyond superficial reforms and invest in deep cultural change grounded in ethical values and mutual trust. Only through such comprehensive efforts can the educational system ensure the psychological resilience and professional engagement of its teachers.

Despite the robustness of its findings, this study is subject to several limitations. First, the research employed a cross-sectional design, which restricts the ability to draw causal inferences about the relationships among variables. Longitudinal studies would offer a more dynamic understanding of how changes in social responsibility, transparency, and commitment over time affect social cynicism. Second, the data were collected solely from teachers in public secondary schools in Urmia, limiting the generalizability of the results to other educational levels, regions, or private institutions. Third, the reliance on self-report measures may have introduced response bias, especially concerning socially desirable responses to items related to ethics and organizational loyalty.

Future research could expand on these findings by incorporating qualitative methodologies, such as interviews or focus groups, to gain deeper insights into the lived experiences of teachers dealing with organizational challenges. Comparative studies between public and private schools, or between urban and rural settings, could also enrich the understanding of contextual factors influencing social cynicism. Additionally, future work should explore potential moderating and mediating variables, such as leadership style, institutional culture, or emotional intelligence, which may shape or amplify the impact of organizational factors on cynicism.

Educational leaders and policymakers should prioritize creating transparent and ethically sound working environments where teachers feel valued and included in decision-making processes. Institutions should invest in ethics training programs, build participatory governance structures, and promote consistent and fair communication at all organizational levels. Strengthening emotional bonds between teachers and their schools through recognition, support, and shared mission can further foster organizational commitment and help prevent the development of social cynicism in educational settings.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adheried in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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