



The effect of perfectionism on school resistance: the mediating role of goal commitment

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Abstract

School resistance is a common problem characterized by negative attitudes and behaviors that students develop towards learning processes, the school context, and authority figures. The aim of this research is to examine the effect of different types of perfectionism on school resistance in middle school students and to test the mediating role of goal commitment in this relationship. Research data were collected from middle school students; the PROCESS macro (Model-4) was used in the analyses, and direct and indirect effects in regression models were evaluated using the bootstrap method. The findings showed that the total effect of self-specific perfectionism on school resistance was statistically significant and negative. This effect was found to occur both directly and indirectly through goal commitment. The finding that the indirect effect of goal commitment is significant suggests that unique perfectionism can strengthen goal commitment and thus reduce school resistance. The total effect of socially induced perfectionism on school resistance was also found to be significant and negative. However, the indirect effect of socially induced perfectionism on school resistance through goal commitment was found to be positive and significant. Overall, goal commitment functioned as a significant mediating variable in the relationship between both types of perfectionism and school resistance. These findings suggest that pursuing goals that students find intrinsically meaningful and valuable can support their ability to cope with academic challenges and maintain their motivation to stay in school.

Keywords

Perfectionism
Self-oriented perfectionism
Socially prescribed perfectionism
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Introduction

The middle school years represent a critical developmental period during which students' attitudes toward education and academic self-concepts are formed. In the Turkish context, middle school achievement is regarded as an important turning point in the educational process in Turkey, not

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only in terms of academic attainment but also because of its lasting implications for individuals' subsequent educational and career trajectories (Can & Taylı, 2014; Dağhan, 2022). During this period, students' perceptions of school as a meaningful, supportive, and safe environment may contribute to the development of positive attitudes and behaviors, such as academic engagement, emotional attachment, behavioral adjustment, motivation, and a sense of belonging (Allen & Boyle, 2022). In contrast, when school experiences are perceived as meaningless, restrictive, or insufficiently supportive, students may display negative attitudes and behaviors, including avoidance of academic engagement, emotional withdrawal, resistance to rules, low motivation, and a lack of belonging (Korpershoek et al., 2020; Koyuncu, 2017). These negative experiences may lead students to disengage from the learning process and develop resistance toward school over time (Sarı, 2018). This process may cause behavioral and emotional withdrawal patterns conceptualized as school resistance in the literature.

School resistance has emerged as a frequently encountered problem in contemporary education systems (Sarı & Yolcu, 2020). It is a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing students' tendencies to distance themselves over time from the learning process, school environment, or authority figures (Winkler & Rybnikova, 2019). In this regard, school resistance may manifest through emotional reactions such as disengagement, indifference toward school, unhappiness, and a lack of belonging; cognitive processes such as beliefs that lessons are meaningless, low perceived self-efficacy, and devaluation of school; and behavioral patterns including nonparticipation in classroom activities, tardiness, absenteeism, and avoidance of interaction with teachers (Kırbaç, 2019). These indicators indicate that school resistance is not merely a behavioral problem but rather reflects a multifaceted process of disconnection in students' relationships with their school experiences. Particularly during the middle school years—when self-concept is strengthened, a sense of belonging develops, and self-efficacy beliefs are shaped—school resistance constitutes a significant developmental risk factor (Dağhan, 2022). Indeed, school resistance may lead to adverse outcomes across a broad range of domains, extending from academic achievement to social interactions (Bustamante, 2021).

In this context, students who exhibit resistance may disrupt classroom order, challenge teacher authority, and hinder the effective implementation of instructional processes (Tolman & Kremling, 2023). Such behaviors not only impede the attainment of academic goals but may also negatively affect the psychological well-being and sense of school attachment of students (Nas & Ekinçi, 2022). Accordingly, school resistance should be conceptualized as a phenomenon that requires consideration at both individual and contextual levels and is closely associated with motivational processes and the extent to which basic psychological needs are met within the school environment.

Self-determination theory provides an important theoretical framework for understanding school resistance. According to self-determination theory, insufficient satisfaction of students' basic psychological needs—namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness—in educational settings may undermine intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and, in turn, foster negative attitudes toward school and learning processes (Jang et al., 2016). Due to their developmental characteristics, middle school students may be particularly sensitive to the fulfillment of these needs, and declines in motivational resources may trigger the emergence of school resistance (Singh et al., 2022). From this perspective, school resistance can be viewed not only as an individual problem but also as an indicator of the extent to which educational environments support the basic psychological needs of students. Examining school resistance behaviors within this theoretical framework may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of their underlying causes and support the design of instructional processes that are more responsive to students' motivational needs.

Perfectionism and school resistance

The attitudes and behaviors of students toward school environments may vary depending on their individual characteristics. Perfectionism has emerged as a noteworthy personality trait for understanding behavioral differences within the school context (Osenk et al., 2020). Perfectionism is defined as a multidimensional personality trait characterized by high performance expectations and a strong tendency to avoid making mistakes (Sorrenti et al., 2024). This tendency encompasses not only

excessively high performance standards but also fears of social devaluation in the event of failure (Bento et al., 2020). During middle school, students' efforts to succeed academically, achieve high grades, and develop a positive academic identity constitute salient developmental features (Uzun & Bakioğlu, 2022). In Türkiye, the education system's strong emphasis on examination performance and the pressure students experience to achieve high academic outcomes create a context that may foster the development of perfectionistic tendencies.

Perfectionism can substantially influence students' perceptions of school life, motivation levels, and academic behaviors within educational settings (Rice et al., 2016). Evidence from the literature indicates that perfectionism produces multidimensional effects in educational contexts. For example, this personality tendency has been shown to be significantly associated with students' levels of academic engagement (Shim et al., 2016), school attachment (Damian et al., 2017), motivation to learn, academic achievement, psychological well-being (Endleman et al., 2022), and problem-solving skills (Mohammed, 2024).

Perfectionism may function adaptively in some cases, while it may contribute to adjustment difficulties in students' school experiences in others. Self-oriented perfectionism involves students' efforts to attain high standards (Cao et al., 2024). In contrast, socially prescribed perfectionism is more closely associated with extrinsic motivation (Stoeber, 2018). In socially prescribed perfectionism, environmental factors such as parental expectations, teacher demands, and broader societal norms impose perceptions of perfection on students (Bento et al., 2020). This condition may suppress students' need for autonomy and lead them to regulate their academic lives according to others' expectations. In such contexts, students may become overly focused on avoiding mistakes, experience heightened fear of failure, and develop feelings of worthlessness rather than developing a sustainable desire to learn. This process may cause students to perceive the school environment as threatening, punitive, or meaningless, thereby creating conditions conducive to the emergence of school resistance behaviors.

The mediating role of goal commitment in the relationship between perfectionism and school resistance

Goal commitment is a key variable that strengthens students' relationships with school and their capacity to sustain the learning process in a desired direction (Tang et al., 2021). It refers to the persistent effort, determination, and sustained motivation displayed by individuals while striving to achieve a specific goal (Han, 2021). Goal commitment is regarded as a critical personal disposition for students' attainment of academic goals in educational settings. The literature indicates that goal commitment directly influences students' motivation, academic achievement, perseverance, and psychological well-being (Tang et al., 2021). Students who are strongly committed to their goals are more likely to exert effort, overcome challenges, and achieve favorable outcomes (Yılmaz & Dündar, 2021).

Students with self-oriented perfectionistic tendencies are reported to exhibit stronger intrinsic motivation toward goal attainment, which in turn supports higher levels of goal commitment (Powers et al., 2011). Self-oriented perfectionistic tendencies enable individuals to perceive their goals as personally meaningful and worthy of pursuit. The intrinsic motivation that develops in this context may foster persistence despite difficulties, thereby strengthening goal commitment (Powers et al., 2012). In contrast, socially prescribed perfectionism may generate environmental pressure as well as intense fear and anxiety related to failure, which can undermine sustained goal-directed effort and negatively affect goal commitment (Jiang & Konorova, 2023). Accordingly, students' commitment to goals may vary depending on the source of perfectionism: whereas internally oriented perfectionism tends to strengthen goal commitment, whereas externally driven perfectionism may weaken it.

Goal commitment may shape students' attitudes toward school and their levels of academic engagement (Zhang et al., 2023). According to research, students who are committed to goals that carry personal meaning and are internalized tend to perceive the learning process as more meaningful, rewarding, and valuable. Consequently, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward

school and demonstrate higher levels of interest, satisfaction, and participation in academic activities (Dickhäuser et al., 2016; Froiland, 2021). Students with high levels of goal commitment also show greater perseverance in academic contexts and maintain their educational engagement even during challenging periods (Burns et al., 2018). Thus, students who develop strong goal commitment may use strategies that support academic success more effectively and sustain their attachment to school. Moreover, goal commitment may serve a protective function against the development of school resistance by enhancing motivation, psychological well-being, and satisfaction with school experiences.

Self-determination theory offers an explanatory framework for understanding the relationships between the subdimensions of perfectionism and goal commitment. Self-oriented perfectionism strengthens intrinsic motivation to the extent that it supports individuals' orientation toward self-determined and meaningful goals; high goal commitment that develops on this basis contributes to students' perceptions of learning as intrinsically valuable (Jiang & Konorova, 2023). This process may prevent the emergence of resistance behaviors such as emotional disengagement, feelings of meaninglessness, and withdrawal from the school system (Barabadi & Khajavy, 2020). In contrast, socially prescribed perfectionism may shape goals primarily around external approval and expectations, rendering goal commitment more superficial and fragile (Moore et al., 2021). Such a form of commitment may lead students to associate the school environment with pressure, the threat of failure, and value conflict, thereby increasing their tendency to distance themselves from school, learning, and authority figures. Accordingly, from the perspective of self-determination theory, goal commitment may function as either a protective factor or a risk-enhancing mechanism for school resistance, depending on the orientation of perfectionism.

The present study

Previous research has demonstrated that school resistance is a widespread problem among students (Dağhan, 2022; Sari & Yolcu, 2020). School resistance is characterized by the development of negative attitudes and behaviors toward school (Sari & Yolcu, 2020). It is considered a significant issue that may adversely affect students' motivation, well-being, and satisfaction with their school experiences (Dickhäuser et al., 2016; Froiland, 2021). Despite its importance, studies addressing school resistance among middle school students in Türkiye remain limited. In particular, research examining variables that may be effective in reducing or preventing school resistance within a comprehensive, theory-driven model is scarce.

The Turkish education system is largely examination-oriented. Centralized exams, such as the High School Entrance System, are the primary criteria for placement in academically selective high schools, especially for middle school students. Accordingly, middle school represents a critical developmental period during which students' academic self-concepts and future educational trajectories begin to take shape. Therefore, it is crucial to address school resistance behaviors that emerge during this period—not only in terms of academic continuity and psychological adjustment but also in terms of offering an original perspective on how individual differences, such as perfectionism and goal commitment, may influence school resistance, as emphasized in this study.

In this regard, school resistance behaviors that emerge during middle school are thought to influence students' learning motivation and school experiences in multiple ways. To better understand these motivational differences, this study incorporates self-determination theory as its theoretical framework, emphasizing autonomy-, competence-, and relatedness-based motivational processes.

The primary aim of this study is to examine the mediating role of goal commitment in the relationship between perfectionism and school resistance among Turkish middle school students within the framework of self-determination theory. In doing so, this study seeks to provide evidence-based findings regarding the roles of perfectionism and goal commitment—both considered key variables in the prevention or reduction of school resistance in this population. Moreover, as this study is among the first to investigate the mediating role of goal commitment in the relationship between perfectionism and school resistance, it is expected to contribute to the existing literature and inform the planning of

school counseling and guidance services aimed at preventing or reducing school resistance among middle school students.

Based on this framework, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Significant relationships exist among self-oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism, school resistance, and goal commitment.

H2: Goal commitment mediates the relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism and school resistance.

Method

This study employed a relational research design to examine the associations among self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism, goal commitment, and school resistance. Relational research designs are structured to investigate the direction and strength of relationships among multiple variables and to identify underlying relational patterns without implying causal inference (Karasar, 2024).

Participants

The study population consisted of students enrolled in public middle schools affiliated with the Turkish Ministry of National Education during the academic year 2024–2025. Middle school students represent a developmentally salient group for examining the relationships among perfectionism, goal commitment, and school resistance, as increasing academic demands and goal-oriented behavior consolidation characterize this period. Accordingly, this population was theoretically appropriate for the present study.

The study sample was drawn from students attending public middle schools in Eastern Anatolia. Convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling method, was employed to ensure access to a large and heterogeneous participant group and to facilitate data collection without disrupting ongoing educational activities.

The sample size was determined using G*Power 3.1 software, considering the mediation structure of the research model. Assuming a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$), an alpha level of .01, and a statistical power of 99%, the minimum required sample size for multiple regression-based analyses with two predictors was approximately 180 participants. The present study included data collected from 491 middle school students in the analyses, and this sample size was considered statistically adequate for conducting the planned analyses. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Students Participating in the Study

Variable	n	%
Gender		
Female	256	52,1
Male	235	47,9
Grade Level		
5th grade	126	25,7
6th grade	128	26,1
7th grade	97	19,8
8th grade	140	28,5
Total	491	100

Data collection instruments

Child–Adolescent Perfectionism Scale–Short Form: The Child–Adolescent Perfectionism Scale–Short Form (CAPS-SF) was used to assess the perfectionism tendencies of the students. Bento et al. (2020) developed the short form of the scale, and its Turkish adaptation, validity, and reliability were

established by Yıldırım and Balcı Çelik (2022). The short form was preferred in the present study due to its efficiency in administration for middle school students, the age-appropriateness of its items, and the psychometric adequacy confirmed in the adaptation study.

The CAPS-SF consists of nine items rated on a five-point Likert scale and comprises two subdimensions: self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism. The self-oriented perfectionism subscale reflects individuals' orientation toward high self-imposed standards, whereas the socially prescribed perfectionism subscale represents perfectionistic tendencies shaped by perceived external expectations and evaluations. Items are scored from 1 (completely false) to 5 (completely true). Higher total scores obtained by summing item responses within each subscale indicate higher levels of the corresponding dimension of perfectionism.

In the Turkish adaptation study (Yıldırım & Balcı Çelik, 2022), Cronbach's alpha coefficients were reported as .80 for the total scale, .81 for self-oriented perfectionism, and .80 for socially prescribed perfectionism, respectively. CFA results indicated an acceptable model fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.87$, GFI = .956, AGFI = .924, CFI = .956, RMSEA = .072, RMR = .045). Factor loadings ranged from 0.48 to 0.81 for the items and from 0.55 to 0.88 across the subdimensions.

Although the adaptation sample covered a broad age range (10–22 years), the scale was administered exclusively to a homogeneous middle school sample, allowing for appropriate use within this developmental group. Reliability analysis of the current data yielded an internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of .63. Additionally, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed to evaluate the structural validity of the collected data. The results demonstrated acceptable model fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 2.30$, GFI = .975, IFI = .933, TLI = .901, CFI = .931, RMSEA = .052, RMR = .050). These findings indicate that the scale exhibits an acceptable fit and can be considered a valid and reliable measurement instrument.

School Resistance Scale: Kırbaç (2019) developed the School Resistance Scale (SRS) to assess middle school students' perceptions of school resistance. The scale consists of 15 items and two dimensions, and responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale. Data were collected from 500 students during the scale development process. The results indicated that item–total correlation coefficients ranged from .40 to .76, while inter-item correlation values varied between .18 and .66.

As part of the reliability assessment of the SRS, both internal consistency and test–retest reliability analyses were conducted. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were reported as .83 for the passive resistance subdimension, .89 for the active resistance subdimension, and .90 for the total scale. The test–retest reliability coefficients were calculated as .74 for passive resistance, .76 for active resistance, and .75 for the total scale. These findings indicate that the scale yields reliable measurement results.

The internal consistency coefficient calculated based on the collected data was .81. Additionally, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to evaluate the structural validity of the data obtained for the current sample. The resulting fit indices demonstrated that the scale exhibited acceptable model fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.80$, RMSEA = .061, CFI = .896, TLI = .874, GFI = .939, AGFI = .916). Taken together, these findings indicate that the scale demonstrates adequate validity and reliability for use with the present sample.

Goal Commitment Scale: Klein et al. (2001) developed the Goal Commitment Scale to assess individuals' levels of commitment to their goals and later adapted it into Turkish by Şenel and Yıldız (2016). The scale has a unidimensional structure consisting of five items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Items 1, 2, and 4 are negatively worded and therefore reverse-coded. The total scores range from 5 to 25, with lower scores indicating weaker goal commitment and higher scores reflecting stronger goal commitment.

The scale's reliability was established through internal consistency and test-retest reliability analyses. The internal consistency coefficient of the Goal Commitment Scale was reported as .74, and the test-retest reliability coefficient was .92.

The internal consistency coefficient calculated based on the collected data was .64. In addition, a CFA was conducted to evaluate the structural validity of the data obtained for this sample. The CFA results indicated that the model demonstrated acceptable fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 2.20$, GFI = .993, IFI = .986, TLI = .966, CFI = .986, RMSEA = .050, RMR = .054). These findings indicate that the scale is a valid and reliable measurement instrument.

Demographic Information Form: The researchers developed a Demographic Information Form to collect the demographic characteristics of students, including gender and grade level.

Data collection procedure

Data collection was conducted in classroom settings after the researchers informed the students about the study's purpose and procedures. Questionnaire forms were administered to 506 students. Data were collected using the Child-Adolescent Perfectionism Scale-Short Form, School Resistance Scale, Goal Commitment Scale, and Demographic Information Form.

Data Analysis

Prior to data analysis, responses from 506 participants were entered into the statistical software. The dataset was examined for outliers and normality assumptions. Because of these screening procedures, data from 15 participants were found to violate parametric assumptions and were therefore excluded from further analyses. All subsequent analyses were conducted using data from 491 participants.

First, Pearson correlation analyses were performed to examine the relationships between self-oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism, goal commitment, and school resistance. The specification of the mediation model was grounded in theoretical and empirical evidence that perfectionism exerts indirect effects on motivational processes and goal commitment (Jiang & Konorova, 2023; Powers et al., 2011). Goal commitment was conceptualized as a mediating mechanism that may explain the relationships between the types of perfectionism and school resistance within this framework.

In the second stage, regression-based mediation analyses were conducted to test the mediating role of goal commitment in the relationships between self-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism and school resistance. Bootstrap confidence intervals were used to statistically evaluate the mediation effects and assess the significance of indirect effects (Hayes, 2018). The PROCESS macro (Model 4) was used to test the proposed mediation model, and the significance of indirect effects was determined based on 5,000 bootstrap resamples. Indirect effects were considered to be statistically significant when the corresponding confidence intervals excluded zero.

All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 25. In addition, to examine the construct validity of the measurement instruments used in the study, confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted using SPSS AMOS version 24.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Educational Sciences Unit, Rectorate of Atatürk University, in accordance with ethical principles ensuring respect for human dignity and integrity (Approval date: October 30, 2024; Approval number: 09).

Results

In this section, the descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients for the study variables—namely, the independent, dependent, and mediating variables—are presented first, followed by the findings related to the testing of the mediation model.

Table 2 presents the correlation coefficients and descriptive statistics for self-oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism, school resistance, and goal commitment.

Table 2. Relationships Among the Study's Independent, Mediating, and Dependent Variables

	1	2	3	4
1. Self-Oriented Perfectionism	1			
2. Socially Prescribed Perfectionism	,255**	1		
3. Goal Commitment	,143**	-,089*	1	
4. School Resistance	-,145**	-,111*	-,264**	1
$\bar{X}$	16,35	18,57	18,48	34,35
SS	2,77	3,16	4,47	10,9
Skewness	-,669	-,386	-,806	-,016
Kurtosis	-,271	-,058	,386	-,876

N:491, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

An examination of Table 2 indicates a positive, low-level significant relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and goal commitment ($r = .143$) and a negative, low-level significant relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and school resistance ($r = -.145$). Socially prescribed perfectionism was found to be negatively and weakly associated with both goal commitment ($r = -.089$) and school resistance ($r = -.111$). A low-level, negative significant relationship was observed between goal commitment and school resistance ($r = -.264$).

Findings on the Mediating Role of Goal Commitment in the Relationship Between Self-Oriented and Socially Prescribed Perfectionism and School Resistance

Figure 1 presents the results regarding the mediating role of goal commitment in the relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and school resistance, whereas Figure 2 shows the findings concerning the mediating role of goal commitment in the relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and school resistance. Table 3 summarizes the results for total, direct, and indirect effects.

The analysis of unstandardized regression coefficients for PROCESS Model 4 indicated that self-oriented perfectionism positively predicted goal commitment ($B = .23$, $SE = .07$) and negatively predicted school resistance ($B = -.43$, $SE = .17$). Goal commitment negatively predicted school resistance ($B = -.60$, $SE = .10$). The predictive effects of self-oriented perfectionism and goal commitment on school resistance were statistically significant ($R^2 = .08$, $F(2, 488) = 21.70$, $p < .001$), with these two variables jointly explaining 8% of the variance in school resistance.

Similarly, socially prescribed perfectionism positively predicted goal commitment ($B = .13$, $SE = .06$) and negatively predicted school resistance ($B = -.47$, $SE = .15$). Goal commitment was also found to negatively predict school resistance ($B = -.67$, $SE = .11$). The predictive effects of socially prescribed perfectionism and goal commitment on school resistance were statistically significant ($R^2 = .09$, $F(2, 488) = 23.50$, $p < .001$), accounting for 9% of the variance in school resistance.

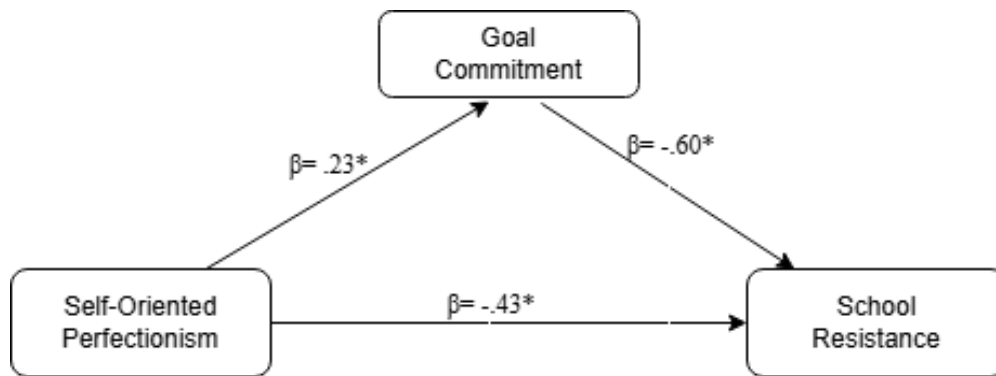


Figure 1. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients for Goal Commitment's Mediating Role in the Relationship Between Self-Oriented Perfectionism and School Resistance

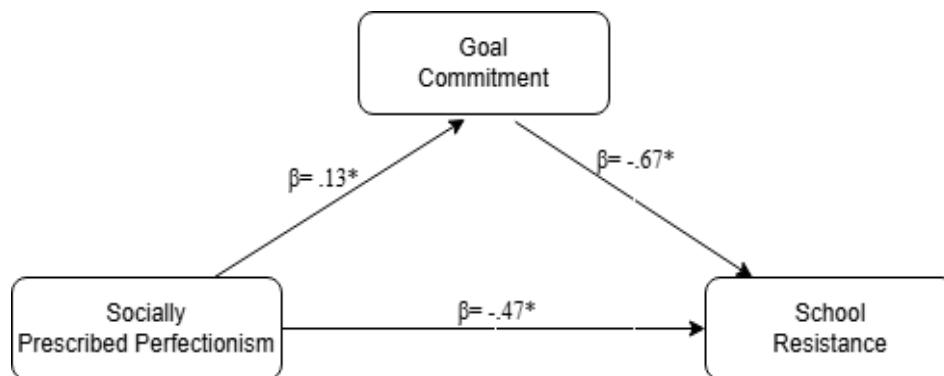


Figure 2. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients for Goal Commitment's Mediating Role in the Relationship Between Socially Prescribed Perfectionism and School Resistance

Table 3. Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects of Self-Oriented and Socially Prescribed Perfectionism on Goal Commitment-induced School Resistance

		Unstandardized β coefficient	SH	LLCI	ULCI
Self-Oriented Perfectionism	S-OP→SR	-.57	,17	-,9156	-,2240
	Total Effect				
	S-OP→SR	-.43	,17	-,7688	-,0913
	Direct Effect				
	Total indirect effect				
	S-OP→GC→SR	-.14	,05	-,2548	-,0464
Socially Prescribed Perfectionism	SP-P→SR	-.38	,15	-,6872	-,0770
	Total Effect				
	SP-P→SR	-.47	,15	-,7619	-,1727
	Direct Effect				
	Total indirect effect				
	SP-P→GC→SR	,08	,05	,0005	,1808

S-OP = Self-Oriented Perfectionism; SP-P = Socially Prescribed Perfectionism; SR = School Resistance; GC = Goal Commitment; LLCI = Lower Limit of the Bootstrap Confidence Interval; ULCI = Upper Limit of the Bootstrap Confidence Interval; SE = Standard Error

An examination of Table 3 indicates that the bootstrap confidence intervals for the indirect effects do not include zero, demonstrating that the indirect effects are statistically significant. Specifically, the total indirect effect of self-oriented perfectionism on school resistance through goal commitment was significant ($B = -.14$, $SE = .05$, 95% CI $[-.2548, -.0464]$). The completely standardized indirect effect (CSIE = $-.0355$) was small. Similarly, the total indirect effect of socially prescribed perfectionism on school resistance via goal commitment was also significant ($B = .08$, $SE = .05$, 95% CI $[.0005, .1808]$), with a small effect size (CSIE = $.0247$).

The indirect effect coefficients were small across both models, indicating that goal commitment plays a limited mediating role in the relationships between self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism and school resistance. Accordingly, the findings point to statistically significant but weak mediation rather than a dominant or strong mediating mechanism. Small indirect effects are common in the social sciences, and the absence of zero within the bootstrap confidence intervals provides evidence for the statistical validity of the mediation effect (Hayes, 2018). Differences in goal internalization processes may explain the relatively low regression coefficients between perfectionism dimensions and goal commitment. Goal commitment is strengthened through autonomy and intrinsic regulation according to self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). In this context, goals grounded in individuals' internal standards in self-oriented perfectionism, as opposed to goals regulated by external expectations in socially prescribed perfectionism, may account for the weaker association observed between socially prescribed perfectionism and goal commitment.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate a negative association between perfectionism and school resistance. Moreover, the fact that goal commitment plays a significant mediating role in this relationship suggests that students who commit to goals they have internally endorsed are more likely to develop adaptive attitudes toward the school context within the framework of self-determination theory.

The middle school years constitute a developmental period during which students' achievement orientation becomes more salient and their academic self-concepts and self-efficacy beliefs are formed, alongside the development of positive or negative attitudes and behaviors toward school (Doğan, 2007). During this period, students tend to become more sensitive to achievement-related expectations, making them more strongly affected by evaluation and examination processes in educational settings (Karademir et al., 2018). The exam-oriented structure of the education system in Türkiye, together with the substantial impact of exam outcomes on students' academic and career futures, may heighten students' fear of failure (Dağhan, 2022). Over time, this may create conditions that foster the development of negative attitudes and behaviors, such as withdrawal from school, reluctance toward academic demands, and resistance. The findings of this study indicate that goal commitment may function as a protective psychological resource, enhancing the adaptive effects of perfectionism on school resistance.

The Relationship Between Perfectionism and School Resistance

The first finding of the study revealed that the perfectionism levels of middle school students were negatively associated with school resistance.

The perfectionistic personality traits of middle school students may positively influence their psychological well-being and contribute to their satisfaction with school (Rice et al., 2016). Students who exhibit self-oriented perfectionism may demonstrate an intrinsic orientation toward achieving their high goals. This characteristic may play an important role in enabling students to perceive the challenges they encounter in the school environment as opportunities for development. Accordingly, students may develop more positive attitudes toward school and actively participate in the learning process (Damian et al., 2017). Studies on students have shown that self-oriented perfectionistic traits are closely associated with school engagement and are related to numerous characteristics and processes that predict academic achievement. For example, perfectionism may increase students' achievement

and motivation. Similarly, perfectionistic striving may motivate students to do their best and thus obtain better grades (Endleman et al., 2022; Osenk et al., 2020). Within this framework, students who display self-oriented perfectionism may evaluate the school environment as more meaningful, supportive, and developmental; therefore, they may not feel the need to develop resistance toward school.

The pursuit of external approval may become more pronounced among students with high levels of socially prescribed perfectionism. Pursuing external approval may produce bidirectional effects with respect to school resistance. On the one hand, when students act with the desire to be approved of and appreciated by others in their environment, they may be more willing to comply with school rules, participate in classes, and fulfill academic tasks, which may result in lower levels of school resistance (Richards, 2019). For example, Miquelon et al. (2005) reported that students' efforts to meet external expectations may be associated with reduced school resistance; however, internal stress and burnout levels may simultaneously increase as a result. This finding indicates that external pressure reduces short-term resistance behaviors toward the school environment by fostering a superficial form of compliance. However, the intensity of external expectations may increase students' perceptions of pressure and be associated with heightened fear of making mistakes and feelings of worthlessness, which may in turn lead students to perceive the school environment as threatening. Indeed, socially prescribed perfectionism is closely related to performance-avoidance goals and negative emotional experiences in the classroom (Jiang & Konorova, 2023). Similarly, it has been reported that socially prescribed perfectionism has stronger associations with generally maladaptive academic outcomes (Seong & Chang, 2021). These results indicate that socially prescribed perfectionism does not produce a unidirectional effect on school resistance; rather, depending on students' individual characteristics and contextual conditions, the nature of this relationship may vary in either an increasing or decreasing direction.

The findings indicate that the first hypothesis is consistent with the self-determination theory. Students who exhibit self-oriented perfectionism may possess strong intrinsic motivation to achieve high goals (Stoeber et al., 2017). According to self-determination theory, students with intrinsic motivation may experience greater personal control over their lives and behave in a more willing, persistent, and attentive manner in their school lives (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Self-oriented perfectionism may support the development of positive attitudes and behaviors toward school among middle school students, thereby contributing to the prevention or reduction of school resistance. Self-determination theory posits that extrinsic motivational factors may strengthen an individual's sense of competence and enhance performance quality (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Accordingly, when the extrinsic motivation-related dimension of socially prescribed perfectionism is considered, these positive outcomes could reduce students' school resistance. Research indicates that students who develop extrinsic motivation can focus on academic tasks with the aim of attaining desired outcomes in the school environment (e.g., receiving rewards or approval), develop strategies to cope with academic demands, and experience satisfaction with school (Bailey & Phillips, 2016; Homklin et al., 2024). Within this framework, considering the extrinsic motivation-related dimension of socially prescribed perfectionism, such motivation may produce certain functional outcomes in the short term (Ryan ve Deci, 2000a). Indeed, studies have shown that students who develop extrinsic motivation can focus on academic tasks to receive rewards or approval, develop strategies to cope with academic demands, and experience a certain level of satisfaction with the school environment (Bailey & Phillips, 2016; Homklin et al., 2024). These positive appearances may contribute to a short-term reduction in negative tendencies such as school resistance, as external rewards may temporarily increase students' effort and support academically adaptive behaviors (Guay, 2022). Studies indicate that extrinsic motivation can support short-term adaptation, effort, and stress coping by directing students toward target behaviors (Pournaghi Azar et al., 2020). However, this effect is not sustainable, and negative attitudes and behaviors toward school may increase when the focus on rewards and approval weakens (Ariani, 2017). According to self-determination theory, this differentiation stems from the emergence of extrinsic motivation in introjected and externally regulated forms and from the extent to which these forms support basic psychological needs at different levels (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Accordingly, when extrinsic motivation is based on obligation and approval, it may provide only short-term compliance; in the long

term, it may weaken students' internal resources and lead to the development of negative attitudes and behaviors toward school.

In this context, the short-term compliance behaviors produced by socially prescribed perfectionism through extrinsic motivation may reduce school resistance by positively influencing students' relationships with school under certain conditions; however, this effect may not be sustained in the long term.

The Relationship Between Perfectionism and Goal Commitment

The literature indicates that self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism are associated with goal commitment. Self-determination theory emphasizes that individuals' commitment to goals varies depending on whether behaviors are regulated in an autonomous (internalized) or controlled (externally pressured) manner. Consistent with this theoretical framework, the findings of the present study demonstrate a positive and significant relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and goal commitment and a negative and significant relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and goal commitment. Within this context, different dimensions of perfectionism may assume distinct roles in shaping students' goal commitment.

Indeed, evidence from the literature shows that students who exhibit self-oriented perfectionism develop a more autonomous and internalized motivation during the goal attainment process. This motivation contributes to perceiving goals as worth pursuing and is associated with maintaining persistence and preserving commitment to goals despite encountered difficulties (Powers et al., 2011, 2012). In contrast, another line of research suggests that socially prescribed perfectionism may cause students to feel pressured, which may trigger the development of fear of failure and weaken goal commitment (Jiang & Konorova, 2023). The findings of this study are consistent with the existing literature. Specifically, perfectionism based on individuals' internal standards appears to be associated with stronger commitment to goals by allowing goals to be internalized in an autonomous manner, whereas socially prescribed perfectionism shaped by external expectations was found to be associated with reduced goal commitment, particularly in contexts where autonomy and intrinsic motivation are not sufficiently supported.

The Relationship Between Goal Commitment and School Resistance

This study argues that goal commitment and school resistance are related, demonstrating that students with higher levels of goal commitment are less likely to develop school resistance. This finding indicates that students' levels of goal commitment may significantly shape their school-related attitudes and behaviors. As emphasized in the literature, the learning process becomes more meaningful and rewarding for students when they focus on achieving goals that they have internally endorsed and perceive as meaningful, which facilitates the development of more positive attitudes and behaviors toward the school environment and supports academic effort and engagement (Burns et al., 2018; Dickhäuser et al., 2016; Froiland, 2021). Furthermore, it has been emphasized that students who demonstrate goal commitment may develop stronger school attachment and use strategies that enhance academic achievement more effectively (Tang et al., 2021).

The Mediating Role of Goal Commitment in the Relationship Between Perfectionism and School Resistance

Finally, this study's findings indicate that goal commitment may serve as an important mediating variable in the relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism, which are subdimensions of perfectionism, and school resistance. This result suggests that students' efforts to reach their own internal standards may be effective in developing strong commitment to academic goals, and that such commitment may play an important role in actively coping with difficulties encountered in the school environment. Self-oriented perfectionism, characterized by an internally driven achievement orientation (Stoeber et al., 2017), may contribute to students' perceptions of the learning process as supportive and meaningful, thereby fostering positive attitudes and behaviors toward school and creating conditions conducive to reducing school resistance (Barabadi & Khajavy, 2020). Self-oriented perfectionism may support the satisfaction of students' needs

for autonomy and competence, thereby increasing goal commitment, when evaluated from the perspective of self-determination theory. Increased goal commitment may strengthen students' engagement in academic processes and reduce behaviors related to disengagement from school (Jiang & Konorova, 2023). This finding indicates that school resistance may be shaped not only by external factors but also by the internal motivational structures of students.

Students with socially prescribed perfectionism may focus on external achievement expectations, which may reduce their internal commitment to goals. This effect may lead to decreased school motivation and an increased risk of school disengagement (Moore et al., 2021). However, the same social pressures may create an external force that pushes students toward achievement and may thus turn into a functional pressure mechanism that helps students stay in school (Homklin et al., 2024). According to self-determination theory, extrinsic motivational factors may increase academic competence, strengthen academic performance, and support achievement (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Therefore, socially prescribed perfectionism may display a dual function, exerting an indirect effect that increases the risk of school resistance by weakening intrinsic motivation and a direct effect that encourages the development of positive attitudes and behaviors toward school through extrinsic motivation. This finding indicates that socially prescribed perfectionism should be considered not only as a risk factor in the school context but also as a complex regulatory factor.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The first limitation is that the research used a cross-sectional design. Longitudinal studies on school resistance may provide more detailed information. The second limitation is that the study was conducted with middle school students. Studies with students at different educational levels may allow for a comparative examination of whether the findings apply similarly to primary, middle, and high school levels. In this way, by examining the effects of age and developmental differences, the research findings may be generalized to broader student populations. The third limitation is that causal inferences cannot be established because the study was conducted using a relational design and was based on a model. Future experimental or longitudinal studies may be beneficial to address this limitation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism among middle school students are negatively associated with school resistance. Moreover, it demonstrates that increasing goal commitment is an important variable in reducing school resistance. In addition, the findings expand the literature on the relationship between perfectionism and school resistance from the perspective of self-determination theory.

The findings revealed that self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism operate through different pathways in relation to school resistance. Self-oriented perfectionism emerged as a protective structure associated with increased goal commitment and reduced tendencies toward school disengagement. However, despite weakening goal commitment, socially prescribed perfectionism was found to be directly and negatively associated with school resistance. Goal commitment, in turn, functioned as a significant and strong buffer against school resistance. These results indicate that the individual goal orientations and perceptions of achievement of students should be considered in efforts to reduce or prevent school resistance.

Based on the research findings, students' levels of goal commitment and types of perfectionism may be important in interventions aimed at reducing or preventing school resistance. As the findings show that self-oriented perfectionism is positively associated with goal commitment, supporting goal-setting processes based on internal standards may be beneficial in such interventions. In contrast, the negative association between socially prescribed perfectionism and goal commitment highlights the importance of psychological counseling and guidance practices that focus on reducing external expectations and pressures associated with this type of perfectionism.

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