


The Mediating Role of School Belonging and Parental Educational Aspirations in the Relationship Between Goal Congruence and Academic Persistence

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The present study aimed to examine the mediating role of school belonging and parental educational aspirations in the relationship between goal congruence and academic persistence among high school students.

Methods and Materials: This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational design using structural equation modeling. The statistical population consisted of high school students in Tehran during the 2025 academic year, from which a sample of 412 students (209 females and 203 males) was selected through multistage cluster sampling. Data were collected using standardized instruments, including the Goal Congruence Scale, the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale, the Parental Educational Aspirations Scale, and the Academic Persistence Scale. The validity and reliability of all instruments had been confirmed in previous studies. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS-27 for preliminary analyses and AMOS for structural equation modeling. Model fit was evaluated using indices such as χ^2/df , CFI, TLI, NFI, and RMSEA, and mediation effects were tested using bootstrapping procedures.

Findings: The results indicated that goal congruence had a significant direct effect on academic persistence ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, goal congruence significantly predicted school belonging ($\beta = 0.51$, $p < 0.001$) and parental educational aspirations ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$), both of which had significant positive effects on academic persistence ($\beta = 0.34$ and $\beta = 0.21$, respectively; $p < 0.001$). Bootstrapping analysis confirmed that both school belonging ($\beta = 0.17$, 95% CI [0.11, 0.24]) and parental educational aspirations ($\beta = 0.09$, 95% CI [0.05, 0.14]) significantly mediated the relationship between goal congruence and academic persistence, with school belonging demonstrating a stronger mediating effect. The overall model demonstrated good fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 2.41$, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.92, NFI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.058).

Conclusion: The findings highlight the critical role of both individual motivational alignment and relational-contextual factors in shaping academic persistence.

Keywords: Goal congruence; school belonging; parental educational aspirations; academic persistence; structural equation modeling

1. Introduction

Academic persistence has emerged as a central construct in contemporary educational psychology, reflecting students' sustained engagement, effort, and commitment to completing their educational trajectories despite challenges and setbacks. In recent decades, increasing attention has been directed toward identifying the psychological, familial, and contextual determinants that influence students' decisions to continue or discontinue their education. Evidence suggests that dropout and persistence are not merely outcomes of academic ability, but rather complex phenomena shaped by motivational, relational, and socio-environmental processes (Singh & Alhulail, 2022; Zhao-hui et al., 2025). Understanding these processes is particularly critical in adolescence, a developmental period characterized by identity formation, goal setting, and heightened sensitivity to social influences, all of which directly impact educational continuity (Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2022).

One of the key psychological constructs associated with academic persistence is goal congruence, defined as the degree of alignment between individuals' personal goals and external expectations, including those of parents, teachers, and broader socio-cultural systems. Theoretical frameworks rooted in self-determination theory and expectancy-value models emphasize that congruence between internal motivations and external demands enhances engagement, persistence, and well-being. Empirical findings indicate that adolescents who experience higher levels of motive-goal congruence demonstrate greater academic engagement and lower disengagement tendencies (Yau et al., 2022). Conversely, incongruence between personal aspirations and external pressures can lead to internal conflict, reduced motivation, and increased likelihood of academic withdrawal (Noll, 2021).

The importance of goal congruence becomes even more pronounced when considered within the broader context of educational inequalities and transitions. Research has shown that mismatches between students' aspirations and institutional or familial expectations can exacerbate disparities in academic trajectories, particularly during critical transition periods such as high school to university (Eller et al., 2024). Similarly, studies on immigrant and marginalized populations highlight how structural barriers and cultural misalignments contribute to goal incongruence and subsequent educational disengagement (Carlana et al.,

2022; Cooper et al., 2022). These findings underscore the necessity of examining goal congruence not only as an individual-level construct but also as a relational and contextual phenomenon embedded within social systems.

Another critical variable influencing academic persistence is students' sense of belonging to school, which reflects the extent to which individuals feel accepted, valued, and supported within their educational environment. School belonging has been consistently identified as a protective factor against dropout and disengagement, as it fosters emotional connection, motivation, and resilience. Students who perceive a strong sense of belonging are more likely to participate actively in academic activities, develop positive relationships with peers and teachers, and maintain commitment to their educational goals (Fraysier & Reschly, 2022; Ravishankar et al., 2024). In contrast, experiences of exclusion, discrimination, or marginalization can undermine students' sense of belonging and increase the risk of academic disengagement (Cooper et al., 2022).

The role of school belonging extends beyond immediate academic outcomes and is closely linked to broader developmental processes, including identity formation and career development. For instance, peer acceptance and group affiliation have been shown to influence students' goal orientations and personal development trajectories (Liem & Fredricks, 2025). Additionally, interventions aimed at enhancing students' sense of belonging, such as mentorship programs and inclusive pedagogical practices, have demonstrated significant improvements in retention and academic success (Negrete et al., 2023; Ravishankar et al., 2024). These findings suggest that school belonging may serve as a critical mediating mechanism through which motivational factors, such as goal congruence, influence academic persistence.

In parallel with school-based influences, family factors, particularly parental educational aspirations, play a pivotal role in shaping students' academic behaviors and outcomes. Parental aspirations reflect the expectations and values that parents hold regarding their children's educational attainment and future careers. These aspirations not only influence students' own goals but also affect their motivation, self-efficacy, and persistence. Studies have consistently demonstrated that higher parental aspirations are associated with increased academic achievement and continuity (Norwood et al., 2025; Williams-Johnson & Cain, 2020). Moreover, parental involvement and support have been identified as critical factors in fostering students'

resilience and commitment to education (Nathans et al., 2024).

However, the relationship between parental aspirations and student outcomes is not always straightforward. While supportive and aligned parental expectations can enhance motivation and persistence, excessive pressure or misalignment between parental and student aspirations can lead to stress, anxiety, and disengagement (Labib, 2021). Longitudinal research indicates that incongruence between parental and adolescent educational aspirations significantly hinders academic attainment and increases the likelihood of dropout (Schoon & Burger, 2022). Similarly, perceived parental expectations influence adolescents' career development processes through mechanisms such as goal-setting self-efficacy and career planning (Zhou, 2024). These findings highlight the dual nature of parental aspirations as both facilitators and potential barriers to academic persistence, depending on their alignment with students' personal goals.

The interplay between goal congruence, school belonging, and parental aspirations can be further understood within ecological and socio-cultural frameworks that emphasize the interconnectedness of individual, familial, and institutional factors. From this perspective, academic persistence emerges as the result of dynamic interactions between students' internal motivations and their external environments. For example, culturally responsive educational practices and mentorship programs have been shown to enhance both school belonging and alignment between students' goals and institutional expectations, thereby promoting persistence (Gil & Parnter, 2024; Ovinck & Veazey, 2021). Similarly, leadership practices that emphasize visioning and goal alignment contribute to the creation of supportive educational climates that foster student engagement (Noman, 2023).

Recent research has also highlighted the importance of considering diversity and contextual variability in understanding academic persistence. Studies focusing on underrepresented and non-traditional student populations reveal that factors such as discrimination, cultural capital, and access to resources significantly influence students' experiences of belonging and goal alignment (Moyna & Zapata, 2024; Neumann et al., 2024). Additionally, gender-specific dynamics, such as the challenges faced by women in STEM fields, illustrate how structural and cultural barriers can disrupt goal congruence and reduce persistence (González-Pérez et al., 2022). These findings underscore the

need for comprehensive models that integrate multiple levels of influence and account for diverse student experiences.

Furthermore, career development perspectives provide additional insights into the mechanisms linking goal congruence, parental aspirations, and academic persistence. Research indicates that congruence between adolescents' career goals and parental expectations enhances career adaptability and decision-making processes (Chen et al., 2025). Similarly, students' career ambitions and preferences are shaped by both personal interests and external influences, including family and educational systems (R., 2024; S., 2024). These dynamics highlight the importance of examining educational persistence not only as an academic outcome but also as part of a broader developmental trajectory encompassing career and life planning (Guzman et al., 2025; Turner & Pope, 2023).

In addition to individual and relational factors, institutional and policy-level influences also play a significant role in shaping academic persistence. Counseling services, mentoring programs, and supportive educational policies have been identified as effective strategies for enhancing student retention and engagement (Stamou et al., 2024). Moreover, research on educational accountability and institutional culture emphasizes the importance of aligning organizational goals with students' needs and aspirations to promote persistence (Antony & Schaps, 2021). These findings suggest that interventions aimed at improving academic persistence must adopt a holistic approach that addresses multiple levels of influence.

Despite the growing body of research on academic persistence, there remains a need for integrative models that simultaneously examine the roles of goal congruence, school belonging, and parental aspirations. While previous studies have explored these variables independently, limited research has investigated their combined and mediating effects within a unified framework. Addressing this gap is essential for developing a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying academic persistence and for informing targeted interventions.

Therefore, the aim of the present study is to examine the mediating role of school belonging and parental educational aspirations in the relationship between goal congruence and academic persistence among high school students.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study was conducted using a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational design based on structural equation modeling. The statistical population included high school students in Tehran during the 2025 academic year. A total of 412 students (209 females and 203 males) were selected through a multistage cluster sampling method from different educational districts of Tehran to ensure adequate representativeness across socio-economic and academic backgrounds. Inclusion criteria consisted of enrollment in upper secondary education, willingness to participate, and completion of all study questionnaires, while incomplete responses were excluded from the final analysis. The sample size was determined based on SEM requirements, ensuring sufficient statistical power for model estimation and parameter stability.

2.2. Measures

Goal congruence was measured using a standardized Goal Congruence Scale originally developed by Brunstein (1993), designed to assess the alignment between individuals' personal goals and perceived external expectations. This instrument consists of 12 items across two subscales: personal goal alignment and perceived external goal alignment. Participants respond using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), with higher scores indicating greater congruence between personal and contextual goals. Previous research has confirmed the construct validity of the scale through confirmatory factor analysis and demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients typically exceeding 0.80.

Students' sense of belonging to school was assessed using the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) scale developed by Goodenow (1993). This widely used instrument includes 18 items measuring students' perceived acceptance, inclusion, and support within the school environment. The scale comprises two primary subscales: perceived belonging and perceived rejection (reverse-scored items). Responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Higher total scores reflect a stronger sense of school belonging. The scale has been extensively validated across diverse cultural contexts, with reported Cronbach's alpha

coefficients ranging from 0.78 to 0.92, and evidence of strong convergent and discriminant validity.

Parental educational aspirations were measured using the Parental Aspirations for Children's Education Scale developed by Yamamoto and Holloway (2010). This instrument consists of 10 items designed to assess parents' expectations and aspirations regarding their children's academic achievement and future educational attainment. The scale includes two subscales: academic expectations and long-term educational aspirations. Responses are rated on a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), with higher scores indicating stronger parental aspirations. Previous studies have reported satisfactory psychometric properties, including Cronbach's alpha values above 0.80 and strong evidence of construct validity.

Academic persistence was assessed using the Academic Persistence Scale developed by Duckworth and Quinn (2009), adapted for educational contexts. This scale includes 8 items measuring students' perseverance and sustained effort in academic tasks despite challenges and setbacks. The instrument is unidimensional and uses a five-point Likert scale ranging from not at all like me (1) to very much like me (5). Higher scores indicate greater levels of persistence in academic engagement. Prior research has confirmed the reliability of the scale with Cronbach's alpha coefficients typically above 0.75, as well as its predictive validity in relation to academic outcomes.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling to examine the direct and indirect relationships among goal congruence, school belonging, parental educational aspirations, and academic persistence. Initially, preliminary analyses including descriptive statistics, normality assessment, and correlation matrices were conducted using SPSS-27. Subsequently, the hypothesized model was tested using AMOS software. Model fit was evaluated using multiple fit indices, including the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). Acceptable model fit was determined based on conventional thresholds ($\chi^2/df < 3$, CFI and TLI > 0.90 , RMSEA < 0.08). Mediation effects were assessed using bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 resamples to estimate indirect effects and their corresponding confidence intervals.

3. Findings and Results

The analysis began with a detailed examination of the demographic characteristics of the participants. The final sample consisted of 412 high school students from Tehran, of whom 209 (50.7%) were female and 203 (49.3%) were male, indicating a balanced gender distribution. In terms of age, participants ranged from 15 to 18 years, with a mean age of 16.41 years (SD = 0.92). Regarding grade level, 134 students (32.5%) were in the 10th grade, 141 students

(34.2%) in the 11th grade, and 137 students (33.3%) in the 12th grade, demonstrating a relatively even distribution across educational levels. Socio-economic status, based on self-reported parental occupation and education, indicated that 38.6% of participants were from middle-income families, 34.5% from lower-middle-income families, and 26.9% from higher-income families. These distributions suggest that the sample was sufficiently heterogeneous and representative of the broader student population in Tehran, thus supporting the generalizability of the findings.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Goal Congruence	3.67	0.58	1.00			
2. School Belonging	3.74	0.62	0.49	1.00		
3. Parental Educational Aspirations	3.81	0.55	0.44	0.52	1.00	
4. Academic Persistence	3.69	0.60	0.56	0.59	0.48	1.00

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that all study variables were above the midpoint of the scale, suggesting relatively high levels of goal congruence, school belonging, parental educational aspirations, and academic persistence among participants. Academic persistence had a mean score of 3.69 (SD = 0.60), while school belonging showed the highest mean (M = 3.74, SD = 0.62). Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships among all variables. Goal congruence was moderately correlated with academic persistence (r = 0.56), indicating that higher

alignment of personal and contextual goals is associated with greater persistence. School belonging demonstrated the strongest correlation with academic persistence (r = 0.59), highlighting its central role in sustaining student engagement. Parental educational aspirations were also positively associated with academic persistence (r = 0.48), as well as with school belonging (r = 0.52), suggesting an interconnected system of motivational and contextual influences.

Table 2

Measurement Model Fit Indices (Confirmatory Factor Analysis)

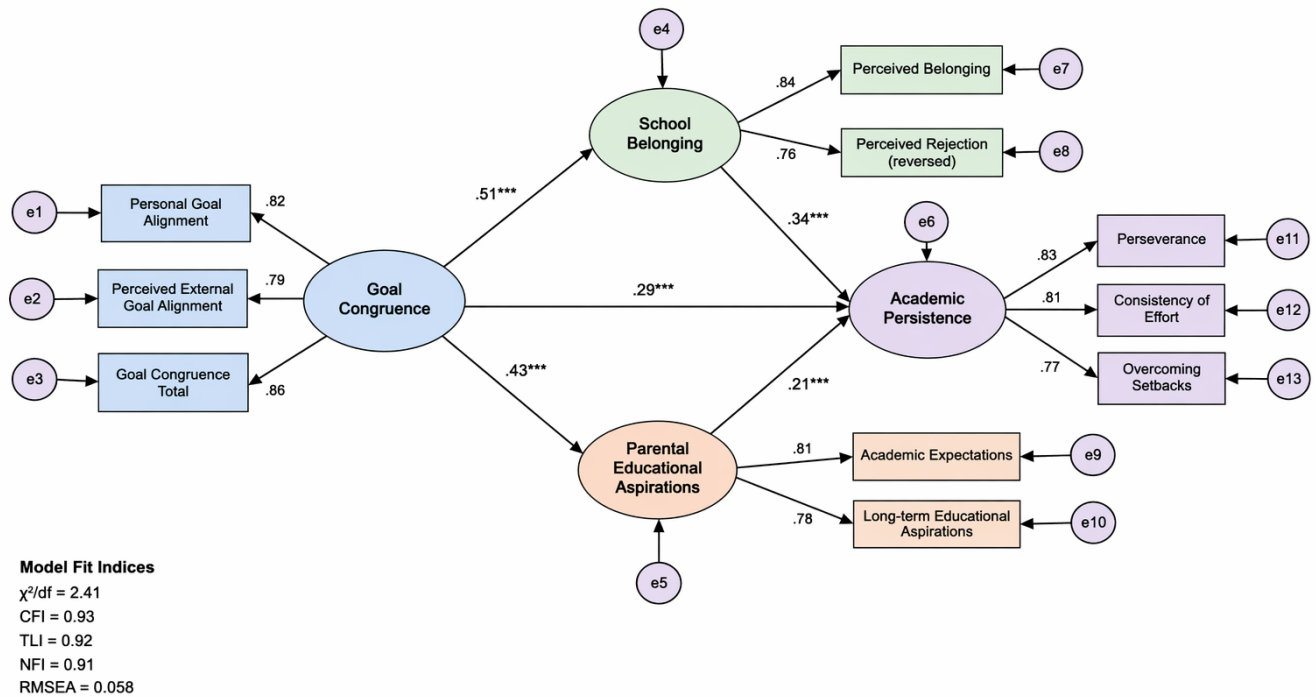
Fit Index	Value	Acceptable Threshold
χ^2/df	2.41	< 3.00
CFI	0.93	> 0.90
TLI	0.92	> 0.90
NFI	0.91	> 0.90
RMSEA	0.058	< 0.08

The confirmatory factor analysis results demonstrated that the measurement model had a good fit to the data. The chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio ($\chi^2/df = 2.41$) was within the acceptable range, indicating an adequate fit between the observed and estimated covariance matrices. Incremental fit indices, including the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.93), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI = 0.92), and

Normed Fit Index (NFI = 0.91), all exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.90, confirming the robustness of the model. Furthermore, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.058) indicated a close fit. Collectively, these results support the construct validity of the measurement instruments and justify proceeding with structural model analysis.

Figure 1

Structural Model of the Mediating Role of School Belonging and Parental Educational Aspirations in the Relationship Between Goal Congruence and Academic Persistence



Note. *** $p < .001$. Standardized path coefficients are reported.

Table 3

Structural Model Path Coefficients

Path	β	SE	t-value	p-value
Goal Congruence → Academic Persistence	0.29	0.05	5.81	0.001
Goal Congruence → School Belonging	0.51	0.04	9.76	0.001
Goal Congruence → Parental Aspirations	0.43	0.05	8.12	0.001
School Belonging → Academic Persistence	0.34	0.06	6.02	0.001
Parental Aspirations → Academic Persistence	0.21	0.05	4.17	0.001

The structural model results indicated that goal congruence had both direct and indirect effects on academic persistence. The direct path from goal congruence to academic persistence was significant ($\beta = 0.29, p < 0.001$), suggesting that students with higher goal alignment demonstrate greater persistence independently of mediating factors. Additionally, goal congruence significantly

predicted school belonging ($\beta = 0.51$) and parental educational aspirations ($\beta = 0.43$), both of which, in turn, significantly predicted academic persistence ($\beta = 0.34$ and $\beta = 0.21$, respectively). These findings indicate that both school belonging and parental aspirations serve as important pathways through which goal congruence enhances persistence.

Table 4

Bootstrapping Results for Indirect Effects

Indirect Path	Effect	Boot SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
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Goal Congruence → School Belonging → Persistence	0.17	0.03	0.11	0.24
Goal Congruence → Parental Aspirations → Persistence	0.09	0.02	0.05	0.14

Bootstrapping analysis with 5,000 resamples revealed that the indirect effects of goal congruence on academic persistence through both mediators were statistically significant. The indirect effect via school belonging ($\beta = 0.17$) was stronger than the pathway through parental aspirations ($\beta = 0.09$), indicating that the school environment plays a more substantial mediating role. The confidence intervals for both indirect effects did not include zero, confirming the significance of the mediation effects. These results provide strong empirical support for the hypothesized mediational model.

4. Discussion

The findings of the present study provide robust empirical support for the hypothesized structural model, demonstrating that goal congruence exerts both direct and indirect effects on academic persistence through the mediating roles of school belonging and parental educational aspirations. The results indicated that students who reported higher alignment between their personal goals and external expectations exhibited significantly greater levels of academic persistence. This direct relationship underscores the centrality of motivational alignment in sustaining students' engagement with academic tasks. Consistent with theoretical propositions in motivation research, congruence between internal motives and external demands reduces psychological conflict and enhances sustained effort toward long-term goals (Yau et al., 2022). Furthermore, the observed direct effect aligns with prior findings suggesting that incongruence between individual aspirations and contextual expectations is associated with disengagement and reduced academic continuity (Noll, 2021).

Beyond the direct pathway, the results revealed that goal congruence significantly predicted both school belonging and parental educational aspirations, which in turn contributed to academic persistence. The strong path coefficient between goal congruence and school belonging indicates that students who perceive alignment between their goals and the expectations of significant others are more likely to feel accepted and integrated within the school environment. This finding is consistent with research emphasizing the relational nature of belonging, where alignment with peer and institutional norms fosters inclusion and emotional attachment (Liem & Fredricks, 2025). Additionally, the mediating role of school belonging in the

relationship between goal congruence and persistence is supported by evidence demonstrating that students who experience a sense of belonging are more resilient in the face of academic challenges and are less likely to disengage from school (Frayser & Reschly, 2022; Ravishankar et al., 2024).

The results also highlighted the significant role of parental educational aspirations as a mediator. Students who perceived higher alignment between their goals and parental expectations reported stronger parental aspirations, which were positively associated with academic persistence. This finding supports prior research indicating that parental expectations play a crucial role in shaping students' academic trajectories and motivational orientations (Norwood et al., 2025; Williams-Johnson & Cain, 2020). However, the mediating effect of parental aspirations was weaker than that of school belonging, suggesting that while family influences are important, the immediate school environment may exert a more proximal impact on students' day-to-day academic engagement. This pattern is consistent with ecological models that prioritize the role of immediate social contexts in influencing behavior.

Importantly, the bootstrapping analysis confirmed the significance of both indirect pathways, with the mediation effect through school belonging being stronger than that through parental aspirations. This finding suggests that the influence of goal congruence on academic persistence operates primarily through enhancing students' sense of connection to their school environment. Such a mechanism is supported by studies demonstrating that belongingness serves as a key psychological resource that buffers against academic stress and promotes sustained engagement (Cooper et al., 2022). Moreover, interventions aimed at strengthening school belonging, such as mentorship programs and inclusive educational practices, have been shown to significantly improve retention rates (Gil & Parnther, 2024; Negrete et al., 2023).

The relationship between goal congruence and parental educational aspirations observed in this study also aligns with previous research on family dynamics and educational outcomes. When students' goals are aligned with parental expectations, communication and support within the family context are likely to be enhanced, leading to higher levels of motivation and persistence. Conversely, misalignment can result in tension, reduced motivation, and disengagement, as documented in longitudinal studies on aspiration

incongruence (Schoon & Burger, 2022). Additionally, research on parental influence in career development highlights the importance of perceived congruence in fostering adaptive goal-setting and planning behaviors among adolescents (Chen et al., 2025; Zhou, 2024).

The findings of this study further contribute to the literature by integrating multiple levels of influence within a single model. By simultaneously examining individual (goal congruence), school (belonging), and family (parental aspirations) factors, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying academic persistence. This integrative approach is consistent with socio-ecological perspectives, which emphasize the interconnectedness of various systems in shaping developmental outcomes (Ovink & Veazey, 2021). Moreover, the results highlight the importance of considering both motivational and relational processes in explaining students' academic behaviors.

The observed relationships also resonate with research on educational inequality and diversity. Studies have shown that students from marginalized backgrounds often experience lower levels of goal congruence and belonging due to structural barriers and cultural mismatches, which can negatively impact their academic persistence (Carlana et al., 2022; Neumann et al., 2024). In this context, enhancing alignment between students' goals and institutional expectations, as well as fostering inclusive environments that promote belonging, becomes particularly critical. Additionally, the role of parental aspirations may vary across cultural contexts, with some families emphasizing collective goals and others prioritizing individual autonomy, further influencing the dynamics of congruence and persistence (Labib, 2021).

Another important implication of the findings relates to the role of engagement and identity processes in academic persistence. Research has demonstrated that students' sense of purpose and identity is closely linked to their academic engagement and achievement (Yukhymenko-Lescroart & Sharma, 2022). In this regard, goal congruence can be seen as a reflection of identity alignment, where students integrate personal aspirations with external expectations, leading to greater coherence and commitment. Furthermore, studies on student engagement indicate that both cognitive and affective components, including belonging and motivation, are critical in determining whether students persist or drop out (Zhao-hui et al., 2025).

The findings also align with research on career development and educational pathways, which emphasizes

the importance of aligning educational experiences with students' long-term goals and aspirations. For instance, studies have shown that students who perceive a clear connection between their current academic activities and future career goals are more likely to remain engaged and persist in their studies (Guzman et al., 2025; Turner & Pope, 2023). Additionally, institutional practices that support goal alignment, such as counseling and career guidance programs, have been found to enhance students' motivation and retention (Stamou et al., 2024). These insights underscore the practical relevance of the present findings for educational policy and practice.

5. Conclusion

Finally, the results contribute to the growing body of literature on student retention and dropout prevention by identifying specific mechanisms through which motivational and contextual factors interact. The identification of school belonging and parental aspirations as mediators provides valuable targets for intervention, suggesting that efforts to enhance academic persistence should focus not only on individual motivation but also on strengthening students' relationships with their school and family environments. This multidimensional perspective is consistent with contemporary approaches to education that emphasize holistic student development and well-being (Davis, 2021; Rocha et al., 2022).

6. Limitations & Suggestions

The present study is subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to draw causal inferences about the relationships among the variables. Although structural equation modeling provides insights into potential pathways, longitudinal or experimental designs are needed to establish causality. Second, the reliance on self-report measures may introduce biases such as social desirability and common method variance, which could affect the accuracy of the results. Third, the study was conducted within a specific cultural and geographical context, namely high school students in Tehran, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations or settings. Finally, although the study included key variables, other potentially relevant factors such as peer influence, teacher support, and socio-economic status were not explicitly modeled and may also play important roles in academic persistence.

Future research should address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs to examine the dynamic relationships among goal congruence, school belonging, parental aspirations, and academic persistence over time. Such designs would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these factors interact and evolve throughout different stages of students' educational trajectories. Additionally, future studies should consider incorporating multiple sources of data, including teacher and parent reports, as well as objective academic records, to enhance the validity of the findings. Expanding the model to include additional variables, such as peer relationships, teacher support, and cultural factors, would also provide a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms underlying academic persistence. Furthermore, comparative studies across different cultural contexts could shed light on the generalizability of the findings and identify context-specific factors that influence the relationships among the variables.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study have important implications for educational policy and practice. Schools should prioritize the development of supportive and inclusive environments that foster students' sense of belonging, as this has been shown to play a critical role in promoting academic persistence. Interventions such as mentorship programs, peer support initiatives, and inclusive teaching practices can help strengthen students' connection to their school community. Additionally, efforts should be made to enhance alignment between students' personal goals and educational expectations through counseling and career guidance programs. Engaging parents in the educational process and fostering constructive communication between students and their families can also help align parental aspirations with students' goals, thereby supporting persistence. Overall, a holistic approach that integrates individual, familial, and institutional factors is essential for promoting sustained academic engagement and reducing dropout rates.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

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