

## The Effects of the Need for Social Approval on the Relationship between Perfectionism, Academic Self-Handicapping, and Self-Efficacy<sup>1</sup>

Sosyal Onay İhtiyacının Mükemmeliyetçilik, Akademik Kendini Engelleme ve Öz-Yeterlik Arasındaki İlişkiye Etkileri

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### Abstract

Examining the need for social approval is critical to understand the effects of the social environment on individuals' beliefs about themselves and perceptions of their abilities. This study aims to provide deep insight into the role and the effect of the need for social approval on the relationship between self-efficacy and perfectionism. Likewise, it aims to examine the role and the effect of the need for social approval on the relationship between self-efficacy and academic self-handicapping. In this study, academic self-handicapping, perfectionism, and the need for social approval, which are individually linked to self-efficacy, are examined in a single comprehensive framework. Participants were 121 university students studying at different universities who completed an online survey involving measures of academic self-handicapping, perfectionism, general self-efficacy, and reactions to social situations. They were manipulated by either receiving positive or negative feedback related to the need for social approval or receiving no feedback. The obtained data were tested with Pearson correlation analysis, one-way ANOVA, and moderation analysis. The findings showed that there was no significant difference between the self-efficacy scores of the groups. Self-efficacy was found to be significantly and negatively correlated with academic self-handicapping and perfectionism. The moderation analysis revealed that the relationship between academic self-handicapping and self-efficacy was only significant when participants received positive feedback or did not receive any feedback related to social approval. Contrary to expectations, the need for social approval was not found to have a moderating role in the relationship between perfectionism and self-efficacy. The current study contributes to the literature in terms of investigating the need for social approval in an experimental setting and showing that it plays a moderator role in the relationship between academic self-handicapping and self-efficacy.

**Keywords:** Self-efficacy, the need for social approval, self-handicapping, academic self-handicapping, perfectionism.

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## Öz

Sosyal onay ihtiyacını incelemek, sosyal çevrenin bireylerin kendileri hakkındaki inançları ve genel yetkinlikleri ve yeteneklerine ilişkin algıları üzerindeki etkilerini anlamak için kritik öneme sahiptir. Bu çalışma sosyal onay ihtiyacının öz-yeterlik ve mükemmeliyetçilik arasındaki ilişkideki rolü ve etkisine dair bir içgörü sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Aynı şekilde, sosyal onay ihtiyacının öz-yeterlik ve akademik kendini engelleme arasındaki ilişkideki rolünü ve etkisini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmada bireysel olarak öz-yeterlik ile bağlantılı olan akademik kendini engelleme, mükemmeliyetçilik ve sosyal onay ihtiyacı tek bir kapsamlı çerçevede incelenmiştir. Katılımcılar, akademik kendini engelleme, mükemmeliyetçilik, genel öz-yeterlik ve sosyal durumlara verilen tepkileri ölçen çevrimiçi bir anketi dolduran farklı üniversitelerde okuyan 121 üniversite öğrencisidir. Katılımcılara, sosyal onay ihtiyacı ile ilgili olumlu ya da olumsuz geri bildirim verilmiş veya herhangi bir geri bildirim verilmemiştir. Elde edilen veriler, Pearson korelasyon analizi, tek yönlü ANOVA ve düzenleyici değişken analizi ile test edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, üç grup arasında öz-yeterlik düzeyleri açısından anlamlı bir fark olmadığını göstermiştir. Öz-yeterliğin hem mükemmeliyetçilik hem de akademik kendini engelleme ile anlamlı derecede olumsuz yönde ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Düzenleyici değişken analizi, sosyal onay ihtiyacının olumlu geri bildirim ve kontrol koşullarının akademik kendini engelleme ile öz-yeterlik arasındaki negatif ilişkide düzenleyici rolü olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Ancak beklenenin aksine, sosyal onay ihtiyacının mükemmeliyetçilik ile öz-yeterlik arasındaki ilişkide düzenleyici bir rolü bulunamamıştır. Mevcut çalışma, sosyal onay ihtiyacının deneysel bir düzende ele alınması ve akademik kendini engelleme ile öz yeterlik arasındaki ilişkide düzenleyici bir rol oynadığını göstermesi açısından literatüre katkı sağlamaktadır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Öz-yeterlik, sosyal onay ihtiyacı, kendini engelleme, akademik kendini engelleme, mükemmeliyetçilik.

## Introduction

Research into social cognitive constructs such as *self-efficacy* has a long history in the psychology literature. Self-efficacy represents one's beliefs about his or her own capabilities regarding particular tasks (Bandura, 1986). The concept of self-efficacy was first proposed in *Social Cognitive Theory*, which evolved from the Social Learning Theory. Social Learning Theory has conceptualized learning in a social setting, featuring an active and reciprocal relationship between the individual, environment, and behaviors. Social Cognitive Theory mainly focuses on social influence and the effects of the social environment on behaviors (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy includes not only coping skills but also awareness of these skills and activating them. The concept of self-efficacy involves planning and performing an action or a behavior, organizing the necessary skills, and feeling motivated resulting from the review of the gains to be obtained with the difficulties. In addition, the general self-efficacy phenomenon has been described as a belief in one's own resources that one can initiate action and continue it until it produces results (Sherer et al., 1982).

Studies on self-efficacy has shown the role of self-efficacy in explaining well-being and success in many areas (Salvador, Crespo, & Barros, 2019; Tovel & Carmel, 2016). For instance, Milam, Cohen, Mueller, and Salles (2018) found that general self-efficacy was the positive predictor of both general well-being and personal accomplishment. Hajek and König (2019) showed that intervention programs aimed to increase self-efficacy might be helpful for subjective well-being. Also, a great deal of studies has focused on the link between self-efficacy and success or performance, mostly academic success in learning and motivation areas (Artino, 2012; Milam et al., 2018). According to Turner and his colleagues (2009), high levels of self-efficacy were associated with high GPA in college students. There are also studies investigating self-efficacy in two different concepts: performance self-efficacy (reflecting students' opinions of their abilities to perform academically), and academic self-efficacy (reflecting students' perceptions of their academic capability). The main difference between these two concepts derives from their expectations about their capability when facing either familiar or unfamiliar challenges. Both were found to be positively associated with students' GPA (Richardson, Abraham, & Bond, 2012).

The individual's behavior is determined and shaped by the social environment, especially the circle of family, school, and friends (Atkinson, Atkinson, Smith, Bem, & Hoeksema, 2002). The environment has the potential to direct behavior through the rewards and punishments that individuals can obtain

(Atkinson et al., 2002). In the context of the influence of the social environment on individuals, the *need for social approval* takes place in explaining human behavior (Antony & Swinson, 2009). In early research, the need for social approval phenomenon has been mostly examined with social desirability, conformity (Strickland & Crowne, 1962), and obedience to authority (Marlow & Crowne, 1961). The concept of the need for social approval has been described as seeking approval or praise from others (Johnson, Fendrich, & Mackesy-Amiti, 2012). While social desirability means presenting good image and showing oneself better in evaluative situations, the need for social approval is more stable across situations and seen as dispositional factors affecting behaviors in social contexts (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964; Johnson et al., 2012).

The need for social approval has been used to describe or explain social desirability in the early studies, and measured as a sub-type of social desirability. Marlow and Crowne (1961) defined social desirability through the need for social approval. Kalaman and Becerikli (2020) claimed that the social desirability phenomenon turned into the concept of the need for social approval. Also, Johnson and his colleagues (2012) explained these two concepts under the heading of the same scale. Although there has been a controversy about what Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MC-SDS) has really measured, it has been used to measure the need for social approval in many studies (Twenge & Im, 2007). In the Turkish context, Karaşar and Öğülmüş (2016b) developed a valid and reliable assessment tool in order to measure individuals' levels of the need for social approval.

Social approval was also studied with self-esteem through self-evaluations on several domains of attributes. MacDonald, Saltzman, and Leary (2003) investigated how people perceive specific attributes crucial for social approval and how they are related to self-esteem. Participants evaluate themselves in five dimensions with relation to the perceived importance in social approval. People who believe they are competent, attractive, or wealthy have higher self-esteem when they believe that these traits give rise to social approval. In the same way, people who see themselves as socially competent have higher self-esteem if they think that society does not approve of those who do not have positive personal characteristics such as sociability. Participants who believed the relationship between possessing certain attributes and social approval could obtain moderate self-esteem benefits when they positively evaluate themselves on these attributes (MacDonald et al., 2003).

The concept of the need for social approval has been handled in the Turkish literature as a sub-dimension of dysfunctional attitudes or irrational beliefs (Göller, 2010; Karaşar & Öğülmüş, 2016a). The need for social approval was studied with codependency in a sample of teachers, and a positive and moderate correlation was found (Karaşar, 2019). In addition, young individuals have a higher need for social approval than older ones and the need for social approval varies in terms of their occupations (Kalaman & Becerikli, 2020). Moreover, the social approval needs of high school students and university students showed a significant difference according to class level in Turkey (Göller, 2010; Karaşar & Öğülmüş, 2016a). Karaşar and Öğülmüş (2016a) conducted a study with university students in Turkey. They concluded that social anxiety is one of the significant predictors of the need for social approval. Therefore, as social anxiety increases, the need for social approval also increases. Furthermore, Stewart and George-Walker (2014) conducted a study with students in order to create a model that linked perfectionism, self-efficacy, and locus of control to self-handicapping. They reached two important conclusions: (i) perfectionism predicted low self-efficacy, and also (ii) perfectionism and locus of control predicted self-handicapping.

Various studies have explored the need for social approval and its association with possible related variables. One of these variables associated with the need for social approval is perfectionism. Antony and Swinson (2009) addressed that perfectionists are individuals who are overly concerned with other people's opinions, and they may have a strong desire for approval.

*Perfectionism* is defined as a desire for flawlessness by establishing the highest standards for performance (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Hewitt and Flett (1991) characterized perfectionism in their model with exaggerated expectations placed at others and perfectionistic self-promotion. Chiba, Iketani, Han, and Ono (2009) associated perfectionism with setting strict criteria and being dissatisfied with anything

that does not meet those criteria. Previous research has generally focused on the negative impacts of perfectionism on self-esteem (Rice, Ashby, & Slaney, 1998; Tice & Baumeister, 1990) and self-efficacy (Stewart & George-Walker, 2014). Other studies discussed the positive and negative dimensions of perfectionism and its multidimensional construct (Hart, Gilner, Handal, & Gfeller, 1998). In a recent study, Akar and his colleagues (2018) demonstrated that negative perfectionism negatively affected students' academic success and self-efficacy, and positively affected self-handicapping.

Suddarth and Slaney (2001) identified perfectionism as adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism under two sub-dimensions. The former is related to a reasonable pursuit of high standards without mental distress; the latter is mainly associated with unrealistic self-evaluations, harsh criticism, and frequent concerns about making mistakes.

As perfectionism is an important concept to understand mental health, and interpersonal and family relationships, Hewitt and Flett (1991) formulated perfectionism as a multidimensional concept. It has personal and social elements, classified as self-oriented, other-oriented, and socially prescribed perfectionism. It was found that socially prescribed perfectionism has association with perfectionistic self-presentation and dysfunctional self-evaluations. Individuals who are high on socially prescribed perfectionism often view others as displeased with them and believe that others want them to be perfect; therefore, they attempt to compensate for their perceived faults by looking perfect to others (Flett & Hewitt, 2006).

Considering the correlation of socially prescribed perfectionism with perfectionistic self-presentation, self-handicapping behaviors can also be discussed in this context. *Self-handicapping* has been described as self-sabotaging behaviors that people use for possible failures and strategies against self-threatened situations. The origin of the concept of self-handicapping comes from *Attribution Theory*, which consists of three dimensions in which causal explanations are evaluated (Kolditz & Arkin, 1982). The external attributions in the locus dimension of this theory can be seen as related to self-handicapping. In external attribution, individuals explain the causes of behavior in terms of environmental factors rather than personal characteristics (Passer, Kelley, & Michela, 1978). Similarly, self-handicapping strategies are attributing the consequences of one's behavior to temporary or environmental factors in order not to confront one's inadequacies and to avoid responsibilities. In addition, by attributing failures or negative results to external sources, individuals hide behind the fact that the situation is not under their control and therefore they cannot be held responsible. Individuals who do not have control are also not seen as responsible or unsuccessful in the eyes of others. People often employ to these strategies to protect their self-esteem and image in the eyes of others (Brown & Kimble, 2009).

Self-handicapping involves several actions like lack of effort, task avoidance, procrastination, substance use, or not doing enough practice (Stewart & George-Walker, 2014). Self-handicapping is frequently caused by concerns about others' judgments of one's abilities or competence, and self-doubt. By hiding the relationship between competence and performance, self-handicapping allows individuals to outsource failure and protect their self-worth (Brown & Kimble, 2009). Creating impediments and performing some behaviors that have detrimental effects on achievement can be classified as behavioral self-handicapping, whereas looking for excuses for underachievement can be classified as claimed self-handicapping. These two forms differentiate in terms of the purpose behind; therefore, it paves the way for explaining the function of implicit beliefs and coping mechanisms in self-handicapping (Snyder, Malin, Dent, & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014).

Self-handicapping leads to negative consequences in the long run. As self-handicappers display maladaptive behaviors or adopt maladaptive attitudes over time, self-handicapping becomes chronic and indicates its effects on many areas of life (Maatta, Stattin, & Nurmi, 2002). For example, high self-handicapping scores were found to be correlated with low grand point average (Bartuçcu-Yıldırım & Demir, 2020) and poor performance in school (Elliot & Church 2003). Some recent studies (e.g., Javanmard, Hoshmandja, & Ahmadzade, 2018; Zabihollahi, Varzaneh, & Lavasani, 2013) have indicated that *academic self-handicapping* and academic self-efficacy predicted significantly academic achievement. Also, academic self-efficacy was negatively correlated with academic self-handicapping, and gender did not moderate this relationship (Zabihollahi et al., 2013). Furthermore, male students got significantly

higher scores on academic self-handicapping than females, and female students got significantly higher scores on self-efficacy than males. Thomas and Gadbois (2007) demonstrated that self-handicapping was positively correlated with test anxiety and surface learning, whereas negatively correlated with exam grades, deep learning, self-concept clarity, and self-regulated learning. They also indicated that academic self-efficacy predicts exam grades in university students.

### ***Relationships among Self-Efficacy, the Need for Social Approval, Academic Self-Handicapping, and Perfectionism***

Perfectionism and self-handicapping meet on common ground, such as giving importance to the opinions of others, fear of making mistakes and not wanting to see their mistakes and shortcomings. Similarly, seeking approval or praise from others indicates the degree to which individuals attach importance to how their behavior and attitudes are evaluated by others. Perfectionism, academic self-handicapping, and the need for social approval are correlated with the protection of self-worth and maintenance of self-concept and it was seen that the common theme of all three concepts were self-presentation and impression management (Brown & Kimble, 2009; Maatta et al., 2002; Thomas & Gadbois, 2007; Tice & Baumeister, 1990). Self-efficacy has been examined with perfectionism, self-handicapping, and the need for social approval separately. Self-efficacy was found to be negatively correlated with self-handicapping, and perfectionism (Akar, Dogan, & Üstüner, 2018; Stewart & George-Walker, 2014), and the need for social approval (Karaşar, 2021). Also, there was a positive correlation between self-handicapping and perfectionism (Stewart & George-Walker, 2014). Baytemir (2019) showed that the need for social approval had significant positive correlation with positive perfectionism and negative perfectionism. In recent years, a number of studies have examined the need for social approval with relation to different phenomena such as self-esteem, social anxiety, or self-compassion (Barutçu-Yıldırım & Demir, 2020; Karaşar, 2019; Karaşar & Ögülmüş, 2016a). Since receiving positive feedback is expected to weaken the strength of the negative relationship between academic self-handicapping and self-efficacy, the need for social approval is included as a moderator variable in the model. A similar effect is expected to be seen in the relationship between perfectionism and self-efficacy. However, the need for social approval and its relationship with other concepts have not been investigated thoroughly; therefore, this study aimed to provide deep insight into the role and the effect of the need for social approval on the relationship between self-efficacy and perfectionism. Likewise, it aims to examine the role and the effect of the need for social approval on the relationship between self-efficacy and academic self-handicapping.

### ***Purpose of the Study***

Examining the role of the need for social approval is critical to understand the effects of social environment on individuals' beliefs about themselves and their abilities. While some research has been carried out on the relationship between one or two of the aforementioned three concepts and self-efficacy, no studies have been found that investigated them together. Moreover, studies in Turkey and abroad have not adequately addressed the need for social approval and its effects; therefore, this study will contribute to the literature by testing whether the need for social approval, which is one of the dispositional factors affecting behaviors, plays a role on the individual's evaluations of his/her own abilities and competence. As a result, the following hypotheses of the research were formed:

- H<sub>1</sub>: There would be differences in self-efficacy levels across three conditions. Receiving positive feedback regarding social approval would result in higher self-efficacy scores.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Those who have higher levels of perfectionism would have lower levels of self-efficacy, and this relationship would be moderated by the need for social approval.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Participants who use more academic self-handicapping strategies would have lower levels of self-efficacy, and the need for social approval would play moderating role in this relationship.

## Method

### *Participants*

Totally 163 university students from different state universities in Ankara, Türkiye completed all measures of the study. A convenience sampling method was used, and the survey link was distributed through various social media sites. Forty-two participants who either answered wrong on attention check questions, did not complete the whole survey, or completed the survey in a very long time were excluded; therefore, there was an imbalance in the distribution of the participants to the groups. Consequently, the study sample was made up of 121 participants (71 females, 50 males;  $M_{age}=20.6$ ,  $SD=1.90$ ). Thirty-eight, forty-four, and thirty-nine participants were assigned to positive-feedback, negative-feedback, and control condition (no-feedback), respectively.

### *Measures*

The Academic Self-Handicapping Scale, the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (F-MPS), the Reaction to Social Situations Test, and the General Self-Efficacy Scale were used in this study.

#### *Academic Self-Handicapping Scale*

This scale was developed by Urdan and Midgley (2001) to measure strategies students use in legitimizing their academic failures. The Turkish adaptation was made by Anlı, Taş, Güneş, Yazgı, and Sevinç (2018). This 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always) includes 6 items on one dimension with no reversed item. "Some students purposely do not try hard in the lessons so that if they do not do well, they can say it is because they did not try. How true is this of you?" is an example item. The highest and the lowest scores are 30 and 6, respectively. Higher scores obtained from the scale reveal greater levels of academic self-handicapping. The original scale's reliability coefficient was found as .88. The Cronbach alpha of the Turkish version was found to be .81.

#### *Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (F-MPS)*

This scale was developed by Frost, Marten, Lahart, and Rosenblate (1990) to measure perfectionism in terms of six dimensions: concern over mistakes, organization, personal standards, parental criticism, parental expectations, and doubts about actions. This 5-point Likert type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree has 35 items with total scores between 35 and 175. High scores obtained refer to high levels of perfectionism. An exemplar item is "Even when I do something very carefully, I often feel that it is not quite right." F-MPS was translated to Turkish by Kağan (2011), and the Turkish version had .91 Cronbach alpha score. Only three sub-dimensions were used in the current questionnaire: personal standards, doubts about actions, and concern over mistakes with a total of 20 questions.

#### *Reaction to Social Situations Test*

The scale was developed by the researcher for the current study in order for the participants to think that their social reactions to everyday situations were measured. It provides questions about various social situations that participants may encounter in their daily lives. It consists of 10 questions, and each question has 4 options. Since each option is about different social reactions, there is no specific right or wrong answer to these questions. The test requires participants to imagine themselves in some social situations and choose how they would react in that situation. "You saw that a product was sold at a price well above its value in a store to a foreign customer who does not speak Turkish. How would you react in this situation?" is an example question. The options are "(a) I would intervene by warning the salesperson. (b)

I would warn the customer. (c) I would complain about the store to their occupational association. (d) I would prefer not to interfere.”

Since the Reaction to Social Situations Test is not an accurate and real measure, the scores given at the end of the test were not the real scores of the participants’ social skills. After completing this test, they were randomly assigned by the online survey tool to one of the three conditions in which test results and related feedback are predetermined: positive-feedback, negative-feedback, and control condition (no-feedback). They were given either positive feedback about the need for social approval (high score on the test), negative feedback about the need for social approval (low score on the test), or no feedback about the need for social approval (no information). They saw the table given below indicating the scores they got and explanations about the scores:

You have completed the test. Your score: 73

Explanations about the score

0-35: low cohesion with society

65-100: high cohesion with society

The test score was shown as either 73 or 34 according to the conditions that the participants were assigned randomly. In the control condition, there was no information related to the test score or the need for social approval; they just skipped to the General Self-Efficacy Scale.

### *General Self-Efficacy Scale*

This 5-point Likert-type scale was developed by Sherer et al. (1982) in order to measure beliefs about one's resources to initiate and continue an action. The Turkish adaptation was made by Yıldırım and İlhan (2010). Participants rated a total of 17 items between “Not at all” and “Very well” in terms of “How well does it describe you?” Items of 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, and 17 on the scale were reverse scored. "When I make plans, I am certain I can make them work." is an example item of this scale. The sum of all the items gives the total score between 17 and 85. Receiving higher scores displays higher levels of self-efficacy beliefs. The internal consistency coefficient was calculated as .80, and the test-retest reliability was computed as .69 for the Turkish version (Yıldırım & İlhan, 2010).

### *Demographic Information Form*

At the end of the questionnaire, a demographic information form including age and gender questions were given to the participants.

Attention check questions that required selecting a specific option were added to the measures except for the Reaction to Social Situations Test.

### ***Design, Procedure, Statistical Analysis***

#### *Design*

The design of the current study is Person-Environment (P x E) design. Perfectionism and academic self-handicapping were measured as independent variables, and the need for social approval was involved as a moderator variable. The first two were measured as trait variables. General self-efficacy was the only dependent variable.

#### *Procedure*

Ethical permissions for collecting data from human subjects were taken from the Ethical Committee of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University prior to the research. The permission of the ethics committee dated 09.12.2021 and numbered 2021-453/34 was obtained. At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants

were given informed consent as well as assurance of confidentiality and anonymity by the researchers. The purpose of the study was not clearly and completely stated beforehand to avoid any possible reactions. The data was collected through an online questionnaire, and it took approximately 15 minutes. Psychology students studying at a state university in Ankara participated in the study in exchange for extra course credits in psychology class. The data collection process ended at the end of the third week. Survey flow was arranged accordingly to assign participants randomly to one of the groups (i.e., positive feedback, negative feedback, no-feedback).

Firstly, the participants were given the Academic Self-Handicapping Scale and the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale as trait variables. Then, the Reaction to Social Situations Test was presented and the groups that received positive or negative feedbacks related to the need for social approval were given predetermined scores and appropriate feedbacks. Afterwards, the General Self-Efficacy Scale was given as a measure of the dependent variable. After completing the survey, the participants were given e-mail addresses so that they could reach the researchers when they had any questions or were curious about the results of the study.

### Statistical Analysis

Moderation analysis by using Hayes Macro, Pearson's correlation analysis, independent samples t-tests, and one-way between-subjects Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted to investigate the relationship between variables and how perfectionism and academic self-handicapping affect self-efficacy according to different levels of the need for social approval. After gathering the whole data, the data analyzed by the help of SPSS 21.0.

## Results

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations between perfectionism, academic self-handicapping, and self-efficacy

Variables	n	M	SD	1	2	3
1.Perfectionism	121	59.4	10.35	—		
2.Academic self-handicapping	121	14.85	4.07	.107	—	
3.Self-efficacy	121	57.65	11.15	-.21*	-.42**	—

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Inter-correlations and the descriptive statistics of the dependent and the independent variables, namely perfectionism, academic self-handicapping, and self-efficacy, were given in Table 1.

A Pearson's correlation analysis with a .05 alpha level was conducted to examine the relationships among perfectionism, academic self-handicapping, and self-efficacy. The correlational analysis demonstrated that there was a significant and negative relationship between perfectionism and general self-efficacy, ( $r = -0.211$ ,  $p < .05$ ). There was also a negative significant relationship between academic self-handicapping and general self-efficacy ( $r = -0.429$ ,  $p < .001$ ). However, as shown in Table 1., no significant correlation was found between perfectionism and academic self-handicapping ( $r = .107$ ).



**Group Differences in terms of Self-Efficacy**

Table 2. One-way ANOVA for participants’ self-efficacy scores by conditions of the need for social approval

Source	df	SS	MS	F	P
Between groups	2	526.18	263.09	2.16	.12
Within groups	118	14381.23	121.87		
Total	120	14907.42			

Before conducting the ANOVA, the homogeneity of variance assumption was checked through Levene’s test. The result was not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ); therefore, the homogeneity of variance assumption was verified. Then, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was performed to find any possible differences in self-efficacy scores between groups (positive feedback, negative feedback, and no-feedback). As shown in Table 2, no significant differences were found in self-efficacy scores across groups [ $F(2, 118) = 2.16, p = .120, p > .05$ ].

**Moderation Analyses**

Two separate moderation models were created in Hayes’s Model 1 (2018) using Hayes Macro in Process version 4.0 for SPSS 21.0. In the first model (see Figure 1.), the need for social approval’s moderating effect on the relationship between perfectionism and self-efficacy was examined through PROCESS macro version 4.0 (Hayes, 2018). The independent variable (X) was perfectionism, the dependent variable (Y) was self-efficacy, and the moderator variable (W) was groups or conditions of the need for social approval (positive feedback, negative feedback, and no-feedback). The sample size of the first model was 121, the general effect of the model was significant ( $p = .026$ ). However, the moderation effect of the need for social approval for its different levels was not significant ( $p = .86$ ). Similarly, the interaction effect between these levels and perfectionism was not significant ( $p = .599$ ).

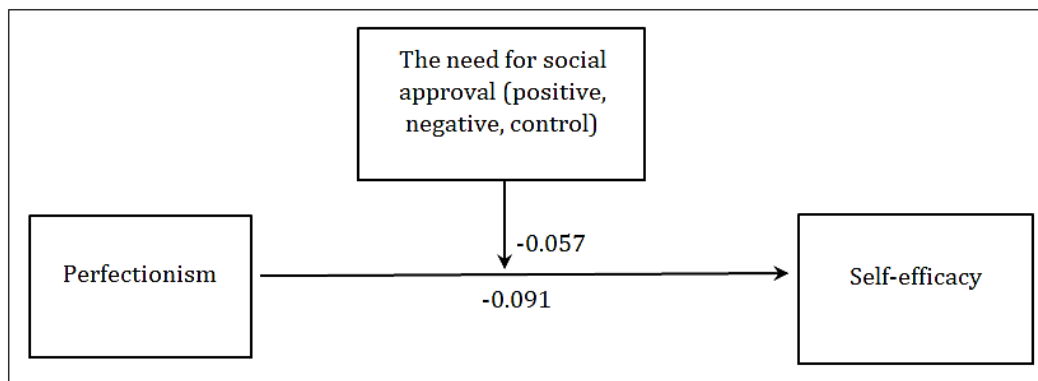


Figure 1. The proposed moderation model 1

In the second model (see Figure 2.), the independent variable (X) was academic self-handicapping, the dependent variable (Y) was self-efficacy, and the moderator variable (W) was groups or conditions of the need for social approval (positive feedback, negative feedback, and control). The general effect of the overall model and the effects of different levels were significant ( $p < .001$ ). Also, the interaction effect was significant in 90% CI [-1.0392, .0179] ( $p = .058$ ). The need for social approval moderated the relationship between academic self-handicapping and self-efficacy significantly only in the positive feedback condition ( $p < .001$ ) and the control condition ( $p < .001$ ). Higher levels of academic self-handicapping were associated with lower self-efficacy levels when there was no feedback related to the social approval ( $b = -1.066, t = -4.7, p < .001$ ). Also, high academic self-handicapping was associated with low self-efficacy in positive feedback condition ( $b = -1.58, t = -5.1, p < .001$ ). Nevertheless, the participants in the positive

feedback condition had higher self-efficacy levels than those in the control condition, which indicates the effect of giving positive feedback.

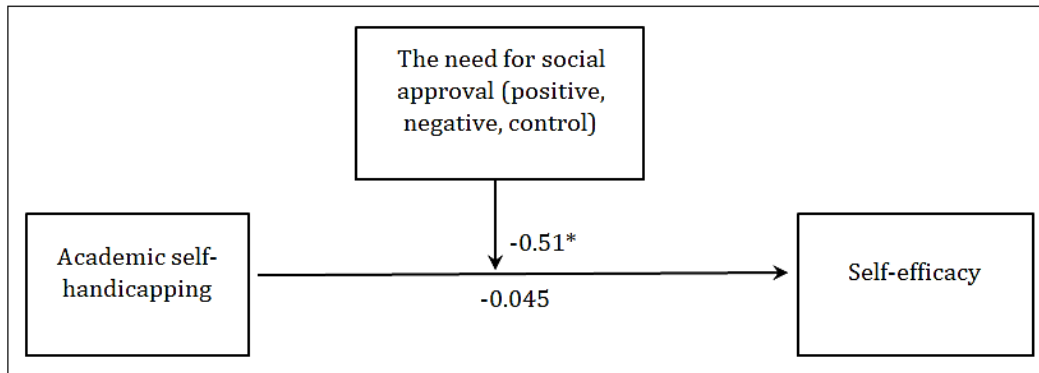


Figure 2. The proposed moderation model 2

## Discussion

It was first hypothesized that significant differences in self-efficacy levels were expected between the groups; however, according to the results, participants' self-efficacy scores did not differ across groups. For the second hypothesis, it has been examined whether the different levels of the need for social approval have an effect on the relationship between perfectionism and self-efficacy. The moderation analysis demonstrated that the need for social approval did not have a moderator role in this relationship. As the perfectionism levels of the participants increased, their self-efficacy levels decreased regardless of receiving feedback (positive or negative).

Only the third hypothesis indicating the moderating role of the need for social approval in the second model was supported in the expected direction. The need for social approval had a significant moderator role in the relationship between academic self-handicapping on self-efficacy in both positive feedback condition and control condition. When participants who did more academic self-handicapping received positive feedback, their levels of self-efficacy decreased less than others. In other words, when individuals who tend to engage more in behaviors that impede their academic performance received the information that they have a high cohesion with society, their beliefs about their general ability are less weakened than those who received no feedback.

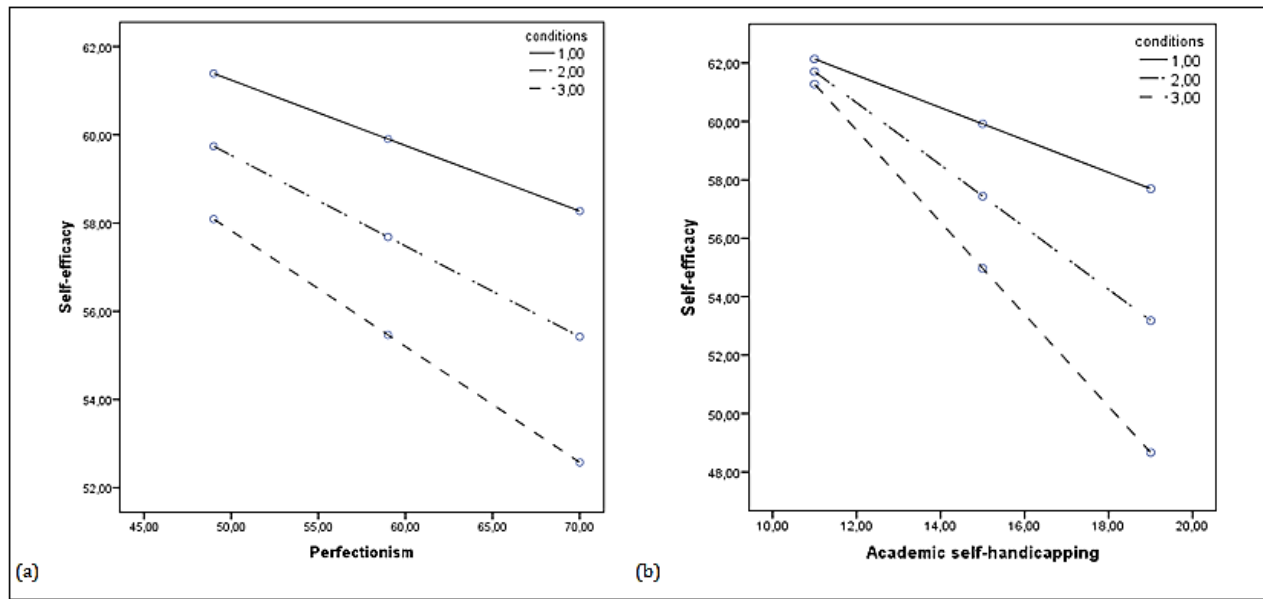


Figure 3. The Plot of Moderation Model for the Relationships between (a) Perfectionism and Self-efficacy, and between (b) Academic Self-Handicapping and Self-efficacy across the Need for Social Approval  
 Note: 1,00=Negative feedback condition, 2,00= Positive feedback condition, 3,00=Control condition

Also, when participants who were more prone to academic self-handicapping did not receive any feedback, their levels of self-efficacy decreased more than that of other conditions. However, no significant effect of receiving negative feedback was observed in the negative association between academic self-handicapping and self-efficacy. As shown in Figure 3., the fact that people who are more prone to academic self-handicapping received no feedback further lowered their self-efficacy. In other words, when individuals who tended to engage more in behaviors that impede their academic performance did not receive any information related to their cohesion with society, the decrease in their beliefs about their general ability was observed more than those who received positive or negative feedback.

The results of the correlation analysis supported earlier findings in the literature (Akar et al., 2018; Stewart & George-Walker, 2014; Tice & Baumeister, 1990), except it did not report a significant association between academic self-handicapping and perfectionism. Participants who were more perfectionists had lower levels of self-efficacy, and those who showed more tendency in academic self-handicapping had lower levels of self-efficacy. Since perfectionist individuals set high standards for themselves, they tend to seek flawless outcomes and strive for better performance than their current accomplishments (Rice et al., 1998). In that way, they usually make unhealthy evaluations about themselves and think that their efforts and abilities are less and insufficient than they should be (Stewart & George-Walker, 2014). Consequently, their perception about their competency or adequacy required to complete different tasks is impaired and their self-efficacy decrease.

Previous studies have suggested that self-handicapping is negatively associated with self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy (Thomas & Gadbois, 2007; Tice & Baumeister, 1990; Zabihollahi et al., 2013) and perfectionism (Stewart & George-Walker, 2014). Individuals who use self-handicapping strategies tend to attribute general consequences more to external sources and are less likely to ascribe accomplishments to personal sources or abilities, consequently affecting their self-efficacy negatively (Greenlees, Jones, Holder, & Thelwell, 2006; Snyder et al., 2014). Moreover, it has been known that individuals who show maladaptive perfectionism use more self-handicapping strategies for their possible failures (Stewart & George-Walker, 2014). However, the results of the correlational analysis did not display a significant link between academic self-handicapping and perfectionism in the direction expected.

### ***The moderating role of the need for social approval***

Prior to the work of Crowne and Marlowe (1964), the concept of the need for social approval was discussed and measured indirectly in the research on social desirability. They hypothesize that dependency on others' approval brings a lack of independence, and thus individuals who are motivated to be approved are more prone to social influence and conformity. Many subsequent studies supported this hypothesis. They reached a conclusion that approving one's own self favorably derived not only from the need for approval but also from vulnerability in self-esteem and defense mechanisms. Also, they stated that the self-evaluative style based on the approval need was more related to self-protection or defense than impression management. In the scale designed to measure the need for social approval (Karaşar & Ögülmüş, 2016b), there are items addressing the desire to be accepted and approved by others and anxiety derived from possible negative evaluations. Those who want to create a good image and manage their own image in others' eyes consider about socially acceptable values and actions and behave accordingly.

Individuals need to develop strong relationships and close bonds by interacting with their social environment. The need for approval of human beings manifests itself in the interpersonal relationships they establish in their social environment, especially in romantic and close relationships. For example, Elaine Hatfield (Walster, 1965) examined whether it is rewarding for people to obtain approval from others after being exposed to manipulations that undermine or support their self-esteem. Female participants with shattered self-esteem rated a man who had a close conversation with them before the experiment as more attractive because they needed approval after an ego-damaging blow.

As in other dispositional characteristics, the need for social approval can be discussed in the distinction between interdependent self and independent self, mainly in the context of self-construal. Independent self is shaped around individual characteristics, goals, needs, and choices, and individual is at the center, whereas interdependent self is formed around social identity, community values, and group goals, and emphasize the conformity and solidarity (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In this regard, interdependent view of self includes the desire and the need for obtaining social approval (Lalwani, Shavitt, & Johnson, 2006). The fact that individuals identify social approval as a need is expected to be related to how they construct their selves and in which country cultural dimension they are in. Turkey's individualism score was demonstrated as 37 in Hofstede and their colleagues' studies (2010); that is why, the dominant cultural dimension in Turkey is collectivism (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Considering that people living in Turkey are close to an interdependent self under the influence of the collectivist culture, it seems possible that these people need social approval more than those with an independent self. Correspondingly, a possible explanation for the moderator effect of the need for social approval might be that gaining social approval through the information of high cohesion with society and success feedback positively influences people's self-perceptions about their general abilities and ability to cope with challenges.

As mentioned earlier, individuals use academic self-handicapping strategies to maintain their position and value in the eyes of others. This study showed that when individuals using these strategies a lot were given information that their answers were similar to the answers of social environment, their self-efficacy was positively affected. Specifically, receiving positive information that their reactions to social situations are approved by others has led to positive changes in people's beliefs about their level of control over their own behavior.

On the other hand, the concept *self-serving bias* consists of methods applied to maintain people's self-esteem and positive impression in the eyes of others. Attributing failure to external factors and success to internal factors is one of the indicators of this bias (Alexitch, 2005). In this context, self-handicapping strategies are behavioral methods of self-serving bias. When individuals received success feedback indicating high score from the Reaction to Social Situations Test, they may attribute this success to themselves and evaluate their general abilities more positively. Individuals use self-handicapping strategies for possible failures in order to escape from responsibility (Snyder et al., 2014). However, when they receive success feedback and social approval in this study, it is possible that they see themselves as responsible for this success and evaluate themselves as more competent. This study makes a valuable

contribution to the literature by showing a moderating role of receiving social approval. Namely, in the negative relationship between academic self-handicapping and self-efficacy, receiving positive social approval feedback, indicating high scores on the Reaction to Social Situations Test, resulted in higher scores on the General Self-Efficacy Scale than that of control condition.

### ***Limitations and recommendations for further research***

Moving on to the limitations and suggestions for future work, one of the limitations is that the present study was conducted online and accessible on both cell phones and computers; therefore, there might have various possible distractions that might have affected the effectiveness of manipulation regarding the need for social approval. Another limitation is using a convenience sample that was made up of only university students. Despite its limitations, the study offers valuable insights into the interaction effect between academic self-handicapping and the need for social approval on self-efficacy.

Further studies might examine the effects of the need for social approval and academic self-handicapping on self-efficacy among different age groups because previous studies revealed the differences in the need for social approval across students from different age groups (Göller, 2010; Karaşar & Ögülmüş, 2016a). Also, the characteristics of the society or culture have some impacts on the need for social approval like socially integrated societies promote the need for social approval of others (Twenge & Im, 2007). Therefore, further research is required to investigate the need for social approval in the context of different cultures and the structure of the society, especially in which cohesion and harmony are important. Considering the moderator role of social approval in the relationship between academic self-handicapping and self-efficacy, it is recommended to investigate the need for social approval with academic achievement or academic self-efficacy in future research.

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## Sosyal Onay İhtiyacının Mükemmeliyetçilik, Akademik Kendini Engelleme ve Öz-Yeterlik Arasındaki İlişkiye Etkileri

### Geniş Özet

Davranışları etkileyen eğilimsel faktörlerden biri olan sosyal onay ihtiyacının bireyin kendi yetenekleri ve yetkinliği hakkındaki değerlendirmelerinde bir etkiye sahip olup olmadığını görmek açısından çalışılmaya değerdir. Ancak Türkçe alanyazındaki çalışmalar sosyal onay ihtiyacının etkisine ve diğer değişkenlerle olan ilişkisindeki rolüne yeterince değinmemiştir. Buradan yola çıkarak bu çalışma, sosyal onay ihtiyacının öz-yeterlik ve mükemmeliyetçilik arasındaki ilişkideki rolü ve etkisine dair bir içgörü sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Aynı şekilde, sosyal onay ihtiyacının farklı seviyelerinin öz-yeterlik ve akademik kendini engelleme arasındaki ilişki üzerindeki rolünü ve etkisini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu doğrultuda sosyal onay ihtiyacının düzenleyici değişken olarak ele alındığı iki farklı model hazırlanmıştır. Çalışmaya 121 üniversite öğrencisi (71 kadın) katılmıştır. Katılımcılara Frost Çok Boyutlu Mükemmeliyetçilik Ölçeği (Frost, Marten, Lahart ve Rosenblate, 1990) ve Akademik Kendini Engelleme Ölçeği (Urdu ve Midgley, 2001) verildikten sonra araştırmacılar tarafından bu çalışma için hazırlanan Sosyal Durumlara Tepki Testi sunulmuştur. Bu test, katılımcıların sosyal durumlara karşı tepkilerinin ölçüldüğünü düşündürmek amacıyla günlük yaşamlarında karşılaşılabilecekleri çeşitli sosyal durumlar hakkında sorular içermektedir. Bu testi tamamladıktan sonra, katılımcılar olumlu geri bildirim koşulu, olumsuz geri bildirim koşulu ve kontrol koşulu olmak üzere üç koşuldaki birine çevrimiçi bir anket aracı tarafından seçkisiz olarak atanmıştır. Katılımcılara sosyal onay ihtiyacı ile ilgili toplumla uyumlu cevap verip vermedikleri yönünde olumlu geri bildirim (testte yüksek puan) ya da olumsuz geri bildirim (testte düşük puan) verilmiştir veya herhangi bir geri bildirim verilmemiştir. Sosyal onay ihtiyacı ile ilgili manipülasyonun ardından Genel Öz-Yeterlik Ölçeği (Sherer vd.,1982) bağımlı değişkenin ölçüm aracı olarak verilmiştir.

Elde edilen veriler, Pearson korelasyon analizi, tek yönlü ANOVA ve düzenleyici değişken analizi ile test edilmiştir. Korelasyon analizi sonucuna göre genel öz-yeterlik ile mükemmeliyetçilik arasında negatif yönde anlamlı derecede zayıf bir ilişki bulunmuştur ( $r = -0.211, p < .05$ ). Öz-yeterlik ile akademik kendini engelleme arasında orta düzeyde negatif ve anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur ( $r = -0.429, p < .001$ ). Bu sonuçlar alan yazındaki önceki bulguları desteklemiştir (Akar vd., 2018; Stewart ve George-Walker, 2014; Tice ve Baumeister, 1990). Ancak beklenenin aksine mükemmeliyetçilik ile akademik kendini engelleme arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunamamıştır.

Birinci hipotez bağlamında, sosyal onay ihtiyacı ile ilgili gruplar arasında öz-yeterlik düzeyleri bakımından beklenen farklılıkları bulmak amacıyla tek yönlü varyans analizi (ANOVA) gerçekleştirilmiştir. Analiz sonuçlarına göre, grupların öz-yeterlik seviyeleri arasında anlamlı bir fark bulunamamıştır. İkinci ve üçüncü hipotezler için, Hayes'in düzenleyici değişken modeli (2018) doğrultusunda iki farklı düzenleyici değişken modeli oluşturulmuştur. İkinci hipotez bağlamında sosyal onay ihtiyacının farklı düzeylerinin mükemmeliyetçilik ve öz-yeterlik arasındaki ilişkide bir etkisi olup olmadığı incelenmiştir. Analiz sonuçlarına göre, mükemmeliyetçilik ile öz-yeterlik arasındaki ilişkinin sosyal onay ihtiyacının farklı koşullarına göre anlamlı bir değişiklik göstermediği görülmüştür. Üçüncü hipotez bağlamında, akademik kendini engelleme ve öz-yeterlik arasındaki ilişkide sosyal onay ihtiyacının düzenleyici değişken etkisine işaret eden bir model oluşturulmuştur. Modelin genel etkisi ve sosyal onay ihtiyacının farklı düzeylerinin etkisi anlamlı bulunmuştur ( $p < .001$ ). Sosyal onay ihtiyacı ile akademik kendini engellemenin etkileşim etkisinin %90 güven aralığında anlamlı olduğu görülmüştür ( $p = .058$ ). Sosyal onay ihtiyacı, akademik kendini engelleme ile öz-yeterlik arasındaki negatif ilişkide olumlu geri bildirim ve kontrol koşullarında anlamlı şekilde düzenleyici rol oynamıştır. Akademik olarak kendilerini daha fazla engelleyen katılımcılar olumlu geri bildirim aldıklarında öz-yeterlik düzeyleri daha az düşüş göstermiştir. Başka bir deyişle, akademik performanslarını engelleyen davranışlara daha fazla yönelen katılımcılar, toplumla uyumlarının yüksek olduğu bilgisi ve başarıları geri bildirim aldıklarında genel yeteneklerine ilişkin inançları herhangi bir geri bildirim almayan katılımcılara kıyasla daha az zayıflamaktadır. Ayrıca, geri bildirim verilmeyen gruptaki katılımcılar, akademik olarak kendilerini engellemeye daha yatkın olduklarında, öz-yeterlik düzeyleri diğer koşullara göre daha fazla düşmüştür.

Sonuç olarak, akademik performansını engelleyen davranışlara daha fazla yönelen ve toplumla uyumu ile ilgili herhangi bir bilgi almayan katılımcıların genel yetenekleri ve yetkinliklerine yönelik inançlarında olumlu veya olumsuz geri bildirim alan katılımcılara göre daha fazla azalma görülmüştür. Mevcut çalışmada, birbirlerinden bağımsız olarak öz-yeterlik ile ilişkili olan akademik kendini engelleme, mükemmeliyetçilik ve sosyal onay ihtiyacı kavramları kapsamlı bir çerçevede incelenmiştir. Ayrıca bu çalışma, sosyal onay ihtiyacının deneysel bir düzende ele alması ve sosyal onay ihtiyacının akademik kendini engelleme ve öz-yeterlik arasındaki ilişkide düzenleyici rolü olduğunu göstermesi bakımından literatüre katkı sağlamıştır.