

# The Mediating Role of Academic Motivation Between Social Comparison and Self Handicapping

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## Abstract

Academic settings often encourage peer comparison and evaluation, shaping individuals' self-concept and influencing their actions, which can, in turn, impact their levels of academic motivation. The study investigates the relationship between self-handicapping behaviour and social comparison, with academic motivation as a mediating variable. There were 202 undergraduate and postgraduate students aged 21-24 years from Bengaluru who participated in the study. Participants completed the Self-Handicapping Scale, Social comparison, and Academic Motivation Scale. Mediation analysis was conducted to explore the relationships. The results highlighted an indirect relationship between behavioural self-handicapping and social comparison as well as direct relationship between claimed self-handicapping, suggesting that those prone to social comparisons are less likely to indulge in behavioural self-handicapping. Research findings indicate that academic motivation does not play a significant mediating role between social comparison and self-handicapping behaviour.

**Keywords:** self-handicapping behaviour, social comparison, academic motivation, students.

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

Academic settings inherently create environments where individuals are subjected to evaluation and comparison, eliciting a range of psychological responses. Students are frequently positioned in contexts that prompt self-assessment, driven by peer interactions, competitive atmospheres, and the pressures of academic performance. Within this framework, social comparison serves as a critical process, shaping students' self-perceptions and assessments of their abilities. Additionally, constructs such as self-handicapping and academic motivation are intricately linked with social comparison, highlighting the complex interplay of these factors.

#### 1.1 Social comparison

Researches show that academic settings like classrooms endorse a natural environment for social comparison as a result of academic evaluation, uncertainty and peer visibility. It starts from as early as 7-8 years and intensifies with cognitive factors and situational factors (Levine, 1983). Leon Festinger defines social comparison as the innate urge to evaluate oneself in comparison to others. Social comparison may involve indulging in the evaluation of one's abilities, opinions, or attributes in comparison to others in a similar context (Festinger, 1954). Various studies report amplification of social comparison due to growing

technology and digital advancement. Study reports increased comparison on lines of physical appearance, skin lightening and social media followers (Yahya et al., 2023).

A study done by Xing et al. (2022) delved into the aspect of perceived parental social comparison by surveying 368 adolescents. The study reveals that individuals who perceive their parents' social comparison as positive report higher self-efficacy and low self-handicapping behaviour. Similarly, individuals who perceived parents' social comparison as negative were likely to have higher self-handicapping behaviour and lower self-efficacy. Additionally, the study suggests that individuals tend to adopt their parents' social comparison pattern. (Xing et al., 2022).

A study by Lucas et al. (2007) conducted an experiment on 120 undergraduate students. The study aimed to measure the effect of status and gender on self-handicapping behaviour. The study gathered the data through standard ability tests and focus groups and was then analysed through one-way anova. The study found that men were more likely than women to participate in self-handicapping, and those assigned high status were more likely to do so than those assigned low status. (Lucas et al., 2007)

### **1.2 Self-Handicapping behaviour**

In academic settings, social comparison is not only driven by the desire to evaluate oneself but can also fuel behaviours like procrastination, test anxiety, and low self-esteem, all of which are significant predictors of self-handicapping (Barutçu Yıldırım & Demir, 2019). Self-handicapping occurs when individuals create barriers to accomplishment or manufacture excuses to maintain a perceived competence. (Kaur & Raji, 2022). Self-handicapping is a self-defence strategy. In essence, people "self-handicapped" by creating situational impediments to high performance (e.g., inadequate preparation, lack of sleep, etc.) to maintain the belief in high ability in the face of failure. The Journal of Personality reviews the consequences of self-handicapping behaviour and reveals that self-handicapping can lead to reinforcement of maladjusted behaviors, reduced competence satisfaction leading to negative mood, increased substance uses over time, and reduced intrinsic motivation for their jobs (Zuckerman & Tsai, 2005). Thus, the intricate interplay between predictors procrastination, test anxiety, self-esteem, and social comparison reveals how they collectively contribute to the development of self-handicapping behaviors, which ultimately hinders academic success and well-being.

A study conducted by Simek and Grum conducted correlational and comparative research on self-handicapping and the role of interpersonal competition. The study was administered to 748 high school students and discovered that self-handicapping behaviors are significantly predicted by motivation. The best indicator of self-handicapping was amotivation, or the absence of motivation, since learners who were disinterested in their studies were more inclined to put up barriers to defend their sense of worth. Self-handicapping was found to be inversely correlated with intrinsic motivation, suggesting that students who were motivated to learn for their own sake were less likely to participate in these practices. Students who were motivated by external rewards and assessments were more likely to self-sabotage; extrinsic motivation showed a more nuanced relationship, with less autonomous forms associated with higher levels of self-handicapping. Since the study mainly focuses on high school students it may have failed to capture the full spectrum of self-handicapping behaviour across different age groups.

A study conducted by Shams Nezhad et al. (2020) used descriptive correlational analysis to analyse the role of academic motivation and test anxiety in predicting students' self-handicapping behaviour and procrastination. The study administered to 340 people found that academic motivation plays a significant role in predicting self-handicapping behaviour among the students. The study states that low academic motivation can lead to self-handicapping tendencies. (Shamsnezhad et al., 2020).

Study administered by Clarke and MacCann (2016) on 484 university students using parallel and multifactor analysis identifies that internal self-handicapping represents affective and cognitive motivational components of behaviour. The study suggested that both motivational and behavioural manifestations of self-handicapping eventually affect academic performance adversely. (Clarke & MacCann, 2016).

A study done on 70 male and female collegiate golfers revealed that the participants who did not consider the events to be important to them personally showed high self-handicapping behaviour. Participants who would have a personal interest in the events are likely to have increased motivation than the participants who do not see the events as personally important. This shows the linkage between motivation and self-handicapping behaviour. (Kuczka & Treasure, 2005)

### **1.3 Academic Motivation**

Another factor that is influenced by both self-handicapping and social comparison is academic motivation. Academic motivation refers to a student's drive, reflected in their approach, persistence, and interest in academic subjects, particularly when their competence is evaluated based on a set standard of performance or excellence (DiPerna & Elliott, 1999; McClelland, 1961; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002). It is considered a specific form of effectance motivation, which is the "need" to achieve success or be effective in interacting with one's environment (Gresham, 1988) (McGrew, 2008).

A comparison conducted on 8<sup>th</sup> grade students by Şahin et al. (2010) found that social comparison affects academic motivation. Students that indulge in upward social comparison can experience increase or decrease in motivation levels. Additionally, their levels of academic motivation can also impact indulgence in social comparison. Students high in academic motivation may be more likely to compare themselves with others to assess their performance and identify further improvement. The study however looks over vital aspects like teaching method, individuals' differences in cognition. (Şahin et al., 2010).

Another study by Wheeler (1966) done on 127 males investigated motivation as a determinant of upward comparison. The results revealed that upward comparison will lead to increase in motivation. The study reports positive correlation between both the variables motivation and social comparison. However, the study is aged and revised study with advancement should be done to maintain relevance. (Wheeler, 1966) Research done by Brown et al. (2012) on 100 participants to administer growth light on the gender difference. The study revealed that growth motivation was related to self-handicapping behaviour in women but not men. Drawbacks of the study include limitations of the measurement tool (Brown et al., 2012).

While each of these dimensions has been researched independently, their interplay and possible interconnections are relatively unknown, particularly in the context of student population. Understanding how academic motivation influences the link between self-handicapping behaviour and social comparison can yield useful insights to further enhance the learning process.

The variables self-handicapping behaviour, social comparison, and academic motivation have been studied in isolation and paired to a certain extent. Research has proven a negative correlation between self-handicapping behaviour and academic motivation stating that an increase in academic motivation leads to a decrease in self-handicapping behaviour. Additionally, social comparison and academic motivation report that high academic motivation is related to high social comparison. Highly limited studies have been done on self-handicapping behaviour and social comparison. The study reports a negative view of social comparison is related to self-handicapping behaviour. The variables of self-handicapping behaviour, social comparison, and academic motivation are unexplored and hold enormous potential that can enhance

work efficiency and personal growth.

However, there remains a substantial gap in the literature regarding the combined influence of self-handicapping, social comparison and academic motivation on students' academic and personal outcomes. This is particularly important since reliance on self-handicapping strategies such as procrastination or creating excuses for potential failures can reinforce maladaptive behaviour patterns, diminish a student's sense of competence, and lead to lower intrinsic motivation. Over time, this can negatively affect academic performance, satisfaction, and progression through their educational careers.

The primary objective of this study is to explore the relationship between social comparison and self-handicapping behaviour, with academic motivation serving as a mediating variable, particularly in the context of students. In today's increasingly competitive and digital academic environment, students often engage in heightened social comparison, whether through interactions with peers or exposure to social media. This continuous comparison can significantly influence their academic performance, personal development, and well-being, especially during critical phases such as transitioning to higher education or preparing for careers. The impact of social comparison in these contexts is particularly profound, as it affects students' self-image, self-esteem, and overall motivation to succeed.

Thus, this study aims to investigate the intricate relationship between social comparison and self-handicapping behaviour, with particular attention to the mediating role of academic motivation. Academic motivation may play a critical role in either mitigating or exacerbating the effects of social comparison and self-handicapping on student performance. By understanding how these variables interact, this research will contribute valuable insights into how students navigate competitive academic environments and how interventions can be designed to enhance their motivation and reduce maladaptive behaviors that hinder success.

The findings of this study aim to provide valuable insights for future researchers to develop strategies that enhance students' personal growth and academic success. By understanding the influence of academic motivation, this research can offer long-term benefits for academic performance and personal development. Additionally, educational institutions may leverage these insights to formulate student support programs that promote motivation, reduce self-handicapping behaviors, and foster a more supportive and engaging learning environment, ultimately improving overall student and academic well-being.

## **Chapter III**

### **Materials and Method**

#### **3.1 Aim**

To examine the relationship among social comparison and self-handicapping behaviour with academic motivation as a mediating variable in students.

#### **3.2 Objective**

1. To investigate the relationship among self-handicapping behaviour, social comparison, and academic motivation.
2. To assess the role of academic motivation as a mediator between self-handicapping behaviour and social comparison.

#### **3.3 Hypotheses**

H1: There will be a significant relationship between social comparison and self-handicapping behaviour.

H2: Social comparison will have relationship with academic motivation.

H3: There will be mediating effect of academic motivation on the relationship between self-handicapping behaviour and social comparison.

### 3.4 Research design

The correlational design enabled the identification of associations among these variables, which facilitated understanding of how they might influence or relate to each other. Further, to investigate potential mediation effects, statistical techniques like regression analysis were utilized. The mediating role of academic motivation was analysed. The study used standardized self-report measures to capture data from 202 participants. These measures included scales for assessing levels of claimed and behavioural self-handicapping, social comparison, and various forms of academic motivation (intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation).

### 3.5 Operational defining

#### Self-handicapping behavior

“Self-handicapping is a self-protective mechanism. In essence, people “self-handicap” by creating situation-based obstacles to high performance (e.g., inadequate preparation, lack of sleep, alcohol use) to preserve the perception of high ability in the face of failure” (Jones & Berglas, 1978).

#### Social comparison

“Social comparison is the idea that people learn about their own attitudes, beliefs and abilities by comparing themselves to the other people around them (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2010)”

#### Achievement motivation

“The striving to increase or to keep as high as possible, one’s own capabilities in all activities in which a standard of excellence is thought to apply and where the execution of such activities can, therefore either succeed or fail. (Heckhausen, 1967, p. 4-5)

### 3.6 Participant

A total of 202 participants aged 18-24 years old participated in the study. The rationale for selecting a sample of young adults aged 18-24 years stems from the distinct challenges this group faces during a critical transitional phase. Snowball sampling was deployed to connect to the participants. This period often marks the final stages of higher education or the early phase of their careers, where academic performance and future career prospects are closely intertwined. During this time, young adults are particularly vulnerable to social comparison. The pressure to succeed academically and secure a promising career can lead to heightened levels of self-handicapping behaviour as individuals attempt to protect their self-esteem in the face of potential failure. Social comparison becomes a significant factor in shaping their perceptions of success and failure, making it a crucial variable to examine in relation to self-handicapping behaviour. Given the focus on academic and career related stressors, the exclusion of those from the LGBTQIA+ community ensures that the sample remains homogeneous in terms of the specific challenges faced during this transitional period.

### 3.7 Inclusion Criteria:

1. College students from age 18-24.
2. Individuals who can read and understand English.

### 3.8 Exclusion Criteria:

1. Employed participants that belong to LGBTQIA+ criteria.
2. Individuals below 18 or above 24.
3. Individuals who do not know English.

### 3.9 Procedure

The study focused on college students aged 18-24 years. Participants were recruited using a snowball sampling technique, where initial participants referred to their peers, allowing the sample to grow within the college environment. Once recruited, students were administered three scales: the Social Comparison Scale, the Academic Motivation Scale, and the Self-handicapping Scale. These instruments assessed how students compare themselves to others, their level of academic motivation, and the extent to which they hinder their own performance. The data collected was analysed using linear regression to explore the relationships between social comparison and self-handicapping behaviour with the mediating role of academic motivation.

### 3.10 Tools

#### 3.10.1 Self-handicapping scale:

The Self-handicapping Scale developed by Ms. Mandeep Kaur and Dr. Navdeep Singh Raji in 2022 is a tool designed to measure self-handicapping tendencies among tertiary students in the Indian context. Self-handicapping refers to behaviors or strategies individuals adopt to create obstacles to their own performance, allowing them to attribute potential failures to external factors rather than personal traits such as intelligence or skill. Self-handicapping behaviour is categorized into two dimensions: Claimed Self-handicapping and Behavioral Self-handicapping. Claimed self-handicapping involves verbal claims of external obstacles, while behavioural self-handicapping involves actions that genuinely impede performance. The scale demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.779, indicating reliable psychometric properties.

#### 3.10.2 Social Comparison Scale:

Gibbson and Bunk developed the Social Comparison Scale (SCS) as an assessment tool in 1999. It measures people's proclivity to engage in social comparison processes. The scale includes items that ask about comparing oneself to others through 11 items to be scored on 5 points starting from I disagree strongly to I agree strongly. Higher scores are suggestive of a positive self-evaluation and lower scores indicate negative self-evaluation. Internal consistency was high, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .78 to .85 ensuring robust reliability. Temporal stability showed moderate correlations (.71-.72) over different intervals, reflecting sensitivity to situational factors.

#### 3.10.3 Academic motivation scale:

The Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) designed to measure students' motivation towards academic activities, developed by Robert J. Vallerand and his colleagues in 1990s. AMS evaluates intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and motivation among students. The scale is applicable to a wide age range, from junior college students to higher education learners. The AMS consists of 28 items, each scored on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "Not at all" (1) to "Exactly" (7). The scale is broadly divided into Intrinsic motivation - to know, Intrinsic motivation - toward accomplishment, Intrinsic motivation - to experience stimulation, Extrinsic motivation - identified, Extrinsic motivation - introjected, Extrinsic motivation - external regulation, Amotivation and a cumulative self-determination index. The internal consistency of .81 and test-retest correlation of .79.

### 3.11 Data Analysis

The research employed various statistical techniques to explore the relationships between self-handicapping, social comparison, and academic motivation. Descriptive statistics provided a

comprehensive overview of the sample's characteristics, including means, medians, and standard deviations for each variable. The Shapiro-Wilk test assessed the normality of distributions, revealing that while some variables approached normality, others showed significant deviations.

The study also used correlation analysis to examine the relationships between key variables. This approach helped identify the strength and direction of associations between social comparison, claimed self-handicapping, behavioural self-handicapping, and academic motivation. Additionally, mediation analysis was conducted to determine if academic motivation influenced the relationship between social comparison and self-handicapping.

### 3.12 Ethical consideration

The study was reviewed by the institutional review board of Christ University, India. Participants were provided with a consent form prior to their involvement in the research study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and individuals were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without facing any consequences. Confidentiality was maintained, and participants were assured that their personal information will be handled with care. All collected data was securely stored to prevent unauthorized access. The researcher took appropriate measures to minimize any potential harm and provided referrals for supportive services if the study lead to any distress or discomfort. Throughout the study, the autonomy and dignity of participants was respected, ensuring that no one is pressured or coerced into participating.

## Chapter IV

### Results

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 provide an overview of the primary variables related to self-handicapping, social comparison, and academic motivation among 202 participants. The sample consisted of 87 females (43.1%) and 115 males (56.9%). Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 24 years. The largest age group was 20 years, comprising 76 participants (37.6%), while the smallest was 23 years, with only 3 participants (1.5%).

The mean score for Claimed Self-handicapping was 17.36 (SD = 4.65), and for Behavioural Self-handicapping, it was 10.44 (SD = 3.63). The mean score for Social Comparison was 30.62 (SD = 7.15). The Self-determination Index, representing overall autonomous motivation, had a mean score of 11.004 (SD = 6.25).

In terms of intrinsic motivation, the mean scores were as follows: To Know (M = 4.55, SD = 1.43), Toward Accomplishment (M = 4.23, SD = 1.26), and To Experience Stimulation (M = 4.24, SD = 1.32). Among extrinsic motivations, Identified Regulation had a mean of 4.58 (SD = 1.47), Introjected Regulation had a mean of 4.31 (SD = 1.43), and External Regulation reported a mean of 4.50 (SD = 1.55). The mean score for Amotivation was 3.70 (SD = 1.43).

The Shapiro-Wilk test assessed the normality of distributions for all variables. Some variables, including Claimed Self-handicapping ( $p = .062$ ) and Social Comparison ( $p = .387$ ), were normally distributed, while others, such as Behavioural Self-handicapping ( $p = .003$ ), Intrinsic Motivation to Know ( $p = .003$ ), and Amotivation ( $p < .001$ ), displayed significant deviations from normality.

Table 2 presents the correlation matrix for Social Comparison, Self-handicapping (claimed and behavioural), and Academic Motivation, revealing significant relationships between these variables. Social Comparison is positively correlated with Academic Motivation ( $r = .81$ ) and significantly positively correlated with Claimed Self-handicapping ( $r = .469$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Conversely, it is significantly negatively correlated with Behavioural Self-handicapping ( $r = -.252$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This indicates that individuals with

higher social comparison tendencies exhibit higher academic motivation and claimed self-handicapping but lower levels of behavioural self-handicapping.

Claimed Self-handicapping is positively correlated with Behavioural Self-handicapping ( $r = .372, p < .01$ ), which is consistent with the notion that both reflect self-defensive strategies. However, Claimed Self-handicapping has a small and non-significant negative correlation with Academic Motivation ( $r = -.056$ ). Similarly, Behavioural Self-handicapping shows a non-significant negative correlation with Academic Motivation ( $r = -.084$ ), suggesting that individuals with higher behavioural self-handicapping tendencies may exhibit slightly lower academic motivation.

In summary, the findings highlight the complex interplay between social comparison, self-handicapping behaviours, and academic motivation. The strong positive relationship between Social Comparison and Academic Motivation underscores the potential motivational benefits of social comparison, while the contrasting patterns of self-handicapping behaviours reflect the nuanced ways individuals manage self-evaluation and performance challenges.

Table 3 presents the correlation matrix for Social Comparison, Self-handicapping (claimed and behavioural), and Academic Motivation. Social Comparison is positively correlated with Claimed Self-handicapping ( $r = .469, p < .01$ ), while showing a significant negative correlation with Behavioural Self-handicapping ( $r = -.252, p < .01$ ). Claimed Self-handicapping is positively correlated with Behavioural Self-handicapping ( $r = .372, p < .01$ ) but has a small negative correlation with Academic Motivation ( $r = -.056$ ).

## Chapter V

### Discussion

The study sought to examine the relationship between social comparison and self-handicapping behaviour, with academic motivation as a mediating variable. The findings offer significant insights into the interplay between these variables, particularly within the academic context of students.

#### 5.1 Relationship Between Social Comparison and Self-Handicapping Behaviour

The results of the study indicate that social comparison has a significant positive relationship with claimed self-handicapping ( $r = .469, p < .01$ ) and a significant negative relationship with behavioural self-handicapping ( $r = -.252, p < .01$ ). This suggests that higher levels of social comparison are associated with increased engagement in claimed self-handicapping but reduced engagement in behavioural self-handicapping. These findings align with previous research, such as Lucas et al. (2007), who proposed that upward social comparison can drive individuals to maintain or improve their status, reducing self-sabotage behaviours. In our study, the inverse relationship between social comparison and behavioural self-handicapping supports this notion, revealing that individuals motivated by social comparison may focus on improvement rather than creating barriers to success.

Additionally, research by Kuczka and Treasure (2005) emphasized that perceived importance and motivation influence self-handicapping behaviours. Individuals who view outcomes as significant are less likely to self-sabotage, as also indicated in our findings. The positive correlation between social comparison and claimed self-handicapping suggests a potential strategic use of self-handicapping to manage impressions while maintaining efforts for success.

#### 5.2 Social comparison and academic motivation.

The results in Table 2 highlight the lack of significant relationships between social comparison and academic motivation ( $r = 0.81, p > 0.05$ ), as well as academic motivation and the dimensions



of self-handicapping. This indicates that, in the present sample, social comparison does not directly influence students' academic motivation, nor does motivation show any noteworthy connections to claimed or behavioural self-handicapping.

This finding diverges from the study by Şahin et al. (2010), which emphasized the bidirectional influence of social comparison and academic motivation. According to their research, upward social comparison could either enhance or hinder motivation depending on the individual's interpretation of the comparison. Furthermore, the study suggested that students with high academic motivation actively engage in social comparison to evaluate their performance and strategize improvement. Similarly, the work of Wheeler (1966) posited that upward social comparison positively correlates with increased motivation. The present study's lack of a significant relationship could be attributed to differences, such as demographic variations or limited sample size.

### 5.3 Mediating Role of Academic Motivation

The mediation analysis demonstrated a significant direct effect of social comparison on self-handicapping ( $\beta = -0.143$ ,  $SE = 0.0344$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but the indirect effect through academic motivation was minimal ( $\beta = 0.0001$ ,  $SE = 0.0036$ ) and statistically insignificant. These findings suggest that academic motivation does not significantly mediate the relationship between social comparison and self-handicapping.

While academic motivation has been a critical factor in self-handicapping behaviours our results indicate that its role in this specific dynamic may be limited. For instance, the weak correlations between academic motivation and both claimed ( $r = -0.056$ ) and behavioural self-handicapping ( $r = -.084$ ) reflect a minimal influence in mediating the effects of social comparison.

The lack of significant mediation could be attributed to the multidimensional nature of academic motivation. Previous studies, such as Clarke and MacCann (2016), suggest that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations may affect self-handicapping in distinct ways. Our findings imply that the pathways connecting these variables might be more complex than initially hypothesized, potentially involving other mediators like self-esteem or resilience.

Moreover, prior research, such as Wheeler (1966), indicates that upward social comparison can enhance motivation, thereby reducing self-handicapping tendencies. However, our results suggest that the direct effects of social comparison on self-handicapping may bypass academic motivation, reinforcing the need for further exploration of alternative mediators or moderators in this relationship.

### 5.3 Conclusion

This study examined the relationships between social comparison, self-handicapping behaviours (claimed and behavioural), and academic motivation among students. The findings revealed significant correlations, highlighting the nuanced dynamics of these constructs. Social comparison was positively associated with claimed self-handicapping but negatively associated with behavioural self-handicapping. This indicates that while social comparison can drive individuals to engage in impression management strategies, it also reduces tendencies toward creating actual barriers to performance.

The mediation analysis showed that academic motivation does not significantly mediate the relationship between social comparison and self-handicapping behaviours. Despite prior evidence suggesting the critical role of motivation in influencing self-handicapping, our findings suggest that other factors may play a more prominent role in this relationship.

These results contribute to the growing understanding of how social and motivational factors interact to influence self-defensive behaviours. They underscore the importance of fostering environments that

encourage healthy social comparison while addressing factors like resilience and self-esteem to mitigate self-handicapping. Future research could explore alternative mediators, such as self-regulation or emotional resilience, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics. In practical terms, the study suggests that educators and institutions should focus on creating competitive yet supportive academic settings that promote self-improvement rather than self-sabotage. Encouraging positive peer interactions, providing constructive feedback, and building students' confidence can help reduce self-handicapping tendencies and enhance overall academic performance.

### 5.5 Limitation

One of the primary limitations is the relatively small sample size, consisting of 202 participants, which may limit the generalizability of the results to a broader student population. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported measures, which can be prone to social desirability bias, where participants might provide responses that they believe are more socially acceptable rather than truthful. Furthermore, the analysis did not account for potential confounding variables, such as personality traits or environmental factors, that might influence these behaviors.

### 5.6 Recommendation

Future research should consider employing a more diverse and larger sample that includes students from different cultural backgrounds and educational settings to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Researchers could explore the impact of potential confounding factors, such as personality traits, socio-economic status, or specific academic environments, that might influence these behaviors. Additionally, incorporating objective measures or observational techniques alongside self-report tools could help reduce the risk of social desirability bias and provide a more accurate representation of these behaviors. Investigating interventions designed to enhance academic motivation could also be a fruitful area of study, examining their effectiveness in reducing self-handicapping tendencies and promoting positive social comparisons among students.

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