Self-Esteem, Self-Handicapping, and Social Desirability:
A Mediational Analysis

Valentin Top
University of the Antilles

Fabien Fenouillet
University of Paris

Guillaume R. Coudevylle
University of the Antilles

This research investigates the mediational role of social desirability in the relationship between self-esteem and self-handicap. The aim is to understand the impact of the two dimensions of social desirability on the tendency to self-handicap. Using Baron and Kenny's (1986) four-step procedure, 180 freshmen in sports science at the University of the French Antilles completed online surveys on self-esteem, social desirability, and self-handicap. Quantitative analysis shows that the self-deception dimension of social desirability is a partial mediator of this relationship, consistent with the idea that excuses and self-handicapping behaviors are not aligned with social norms.

Keywords: self-esteem, self-handicapping, social desirability, self-deception, mediation

INTRODUCTION

Students vary in their responses to evaluation situations and exams. When faced with stressful situations, some students tend to offer excuses and complain more about factors such as fatigue, illness, or an unfavorable context than others. In contrast, some students may procrastinate or make unwise choices to mitigate their fear of failure or of being judged by others. These excuses and behaviors, counterproductive to achieving success, were first described as "self-handicapping strategies" by Berglas and Jones (1978). Self-handicapping is a strategy individuals engage in to protect their self-esteem. The terminology for these strategies can vary in the scientific literature, with alternative terms such as "self-sabotage strategies" or "self-defeating behaviors".

Self-Esteem and Self-Handicapping Strategies

Self-esteem was first defined by James (1890) as "the consciousness of one's worth" but it remains a complex and abstract concept. According to Harter (1990), this notion refers to how "individuals love, accept, and respect themselves as individuals." "Situations in which the stakes are relatively high, and failure would have significant repercussions on self-esteem, are conducive to the emergence of protective

strategies. Individuals facing situations that could harm their "image" (evaluation, performance, etc.) resort to such strategies to make excuses before a task, attributing their future performance to factors other than a lack of skill (Famose, 2001). These individuals seek to shield themselves from the responsibility of failure, which could undermine their sense of competence. According to Berglas and Jones, individuals seize the opportunity to disassociate themselves from failure, excusing it through an external locus (fatigue, mood, illness, etc.) and internalizing success by attributing it to an internal locus (personal performance, mastery, etc.). Higgins and Snyder (1990) argue that uncertainty about performance outcomes motivates using self-handicapping strategies. They contend that individuals with low self-esteem are more likely to use self-handicapping strategies because they frequently encounter situations where the outcome of the task is uncertain, leading to performances in which they lack confidence in their ability to produce the desired result (Martin & Brawley, 2002; Prapavessis & Grove, 1998; Higgins & Snyder, 1990; Coudevylle, Martin Ginis, & Famose, 2008).

Self-Esteem, Self-Handicapping Strategies, and Social Desirability

In this article, social desirability is considered a genuine personality characteristic that distinguishes individuals, thus being viewed as a trait variable (Schmitt & Steyer, 1993), rather than a state variable or bias. Social desirability is "the known adequacy of observed or anticipated behaviors of an individual to the motivations or affects attributed to typical members of a social collective" (Pansu & Beauvois, 2004, p. 171), which means anticipating social judgments to manage impressions. The link between self-handicapping and social desirability can be established, as these are concepts influenced by various factors. Let's consider the example of a perceived stressful and threatening environment such as an academic evaluation (Thompson, 1995). This environment could influence an individual's actions, but the person may also act to protect themselves. They would position themselves based on their own beliefs while also being influenced by the judgments of others (Kolditz & Arkin, 1982). According to Nura et al. (1995), individuals internalize the judgments of others about themselves. Thus, self-handicapping strategies involve both the public self (i.e., the images others project onto us) and the private self (i.e., our self-definition and identity choices). Tice (1991) suggests that individuals with low self-esteem engage in self-handicapping strategies to protect themselves, while those with high self-esteem also do, but they do so to enhance their self-worth. This implies that everyone engages in self-handicapping, which is not realistic. Therefore, there must be an intermediate or mediating variable (e.g., social desirability) in the relationship between self-esteem and self-handicapping. Social desirability can be divided into two distinct dimensions: self-deception and other-deception. According to Pauls and Crost (2004), self-deception is a defensive strategy associated with social conformity, whereas other-deception is an offensive strategy aimed at gaining positive regard. Following this reasoning, a student profile characterized by high social desirability and high self-esteem would tend to employ self-handicapping strategies to protect their self-esteem in evaluation situations. Paulhus and Reid (1991) further clarify that individuals with high self-deception scores also possess high self-esteem, as well as low scores of neuroticisms, depression, and social anxiety. It is crucial to analyze the distinct impact of these two dimensions of social desirability (other-deception vs. self-deception) on the inclination to engage in self-handicapping. The conceptualization of social desirability into two factors of self-deception and other-deception (conscious deception of others vs. unintentional self-deception), which gained prominence from Paulhus's work (1984), is not novel. It is already highlighted in the works of Meehl and Hathaway (1946), who explore unconscious self-deception and role-playing. Consequently, self-deception appears to be linked to an unconscious distortion of reality that safeguards self-esteem, while other-deception is associated with deliberate and conscious falsification, necessitating actions to preserve self-esteem. The most prevalent behavioral self-handicapping strategies observed in the academic domain involve an intentional lack of preparation or deliberate effort reduction by students during evaluation situations (Tice & Baumeister, 1990; Tice, 1991). Given the relationships between self-esteem and social desirability on the one hand, and those between self-esteem and self-handicapping on the other hand, it is beneficial to examine the role of social desirability as a potential mediator of the relationship between self-esteem and self-handicapping. To our knowledge, no article addresses the potential mediation of social desirability in the relationship between self-esteem and self-

handicapping strategies. Thus, the present study aimed to investigate these mediated relationships among freshmen majoring in sports and exercise science. In sports and exercise science, athletes' mental well-being is paramount, with low self-esteem and maladaptive coping mechanisms posing risks to psychological health. This study explores the role of social desirability as a potential mediator, aiming to uncover insights for more effective interventions. The social pressures in sports, where athletes navigate societal expectations and seek social approval, highlight the significance of understanding how social desirability influences self-esteem management. Examining the relationships between self-esteem, social desirability, and self-handicapping in the context of sports and exercise science is relevant due to the unique challenges and dynamics present in this field. The study's outcomes could contribute not only to academic knowledge but also to the development of practical strategies to support the psychological well-being and performance of individuals in sports-related disciplines. Considering that sports and academic environments are contexts that promote the emergence of self-handicapping strategies (Jones & Berglas, 1978), we explored the mediational relationships between self-esteem and claimed self-handicapping in freshmen majoring in sports and exercise science. It was hypothesized that the negative relationship between self-esteem and self-handicapping would be mediated by social desirability, specifically through its dimensions of self-deception or other-deception.

METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 180 freshmen majoring in sports and exercise science, comprising 110 women and 70 men (M_{age} = 19 years; SD = 2.21). These participants were recruited from the University of the French West Indies in Guadeloupe. The survey was distributed to 572 freshmen in sports and exercise science.

Measures

The Characteristics Section

Before commencing the questionnaire, three personal data points were collected: date of birth, gender, and weekly frequency of sports activities—encompassing all types of sports. This information was gathered to create categories or distinct profiles.

General Self-Esteem

The French version of Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (1965), as adapted by Chabrol et al. (2006), was used to assess general self-esteem. This scale comprises 14 items that encompass a spectrum of self-worth statements and has consistently exhibited acceptable internal consistency reliability, with coefficient alphas ranging from 0.70 to 0.90 (Vallieres & Vallerand, 1990). Respondents rated each item on a five-point Likert-type scale, with options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Social Desirability (Self-Deception and Other-Deception)

The questionnaire developed by Tournois, Mesnil, and Kop (2000) is a measurement tool for assessing social desirability in a French population, with two dimensions (self-deception and other-deception). This scale comprises 36 items designed to evaluate the tendency to present an excessively positive self-image. Each dimension consists of 18 items and has consistently demonstrated acceptable internal consistency reliability, with coefficient alphas ranging from 0.82 to 0.86 (Tournois et al., 2000). Respondents rated each item on an eight-point Likert-type scale, with response options ranging from 1 (False) to 4 (True).

Self-Handicapping

The questionnaire developed by Kraïem and Bertsch (2011) is a French version of the Self-Handicapping Scale (SHS), originally developed by Jones and Rhodewalt (1982). The SHS assesses a relatively stable tendency (trait) to engage in self-handicapping strategies. Psychometrics qualities indicate that this SHS French form constitutes a valid instrument that research on self-handicapping could use in

French-speaking population. The internal consistency for each dimension, "Declared" (α = .75) and "Behavioral" (α = .65), was assessed using Cronbach's alphas (Kraïem & Bertsch, 2011). The internal consistency of the "Declared" dimension is acceptable; however, that of the "Behavioral" dimension falls below the generally accepted threshold of 0.70, as proposed by Nunnaly (1978). Nevertheless, this result aligns with the data obtained from the original version of the questionnaire (McCrea, Hirt, Hendrix et al., 2008). This scale comprises 23 items, with respondents providing their responses on a 4-point Likert-type scale: (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree).

Procedure

This study employed an online questionnaire-based approach. The participants recruited for this research were freshmen majoring in sports and exercise science. Prior to participating, students were presented with a request for consent to use their data for research purposes, which was included in the title of the online questionnaire. The participants were provided with information about the confidential and anonymous nature of the collected data. They were also informed that there were no right or wrong answers and were encouraged to respond as honestly as possible.

Analyses

Baron and Kenny (1986) advocated the three-step procedure to assess the hypothesized mediating roles of social desirability in the relationship between self-esteem and claimed self-handicapping. First, the potential mediator (social desirability, encompassing self-deception and other-deception) was regressed on the independent variable (self-esteem). The dependent variable (self-handicapping) was then regressed on the potential mediator. Lastly, the dependent variable was regressed on both the independent and potential mediators. Mediation is indicated when significant associations are observed in the first two steps and when the relationship between self-esteem (the independent variable). Self-handicapping (the dependent variable) becomes non-significant (indicating perfect mediation) or is reduced (suggesting partial mediation) when the mediator is introduced into the model (third step).

Furthermore, the significance of the mediated effect was determined using a Sobel test. The sample for the experimental analysis comprised 180 participants who provided valid responses to both the self-handicapping scale and the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, and 177 participants who provided valid responses to both the social desirability scale and the self-esteem scale. This means three participants were excluded due to missing data for the social desirability scales. Upon closer inspection of the items of the social desirability scale, it becomes apparent that some items are reversed, suggesting that achieving a high score on them goes against the rationale of self-handicapping strategies. This aspect will be carefully taken into consideration in our analysis.

Results

The Table 1 presents Pearson correlations of the studied variables. Regarding our research hypothesis of mediating the two dimensions of social desirability (Social Desirability Scale Self-deception or Social Desirability Scale Other-deception) on the relationship between self-esteem (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale) and self-handicapping (Self-Handicapping Scale), the following findings are noted: Consistent with the research conducted by Johnson (1997), a positive correlation exists a positive correlation is observed between self-esteem and the self-deception, dimension of social desirability($r = .454$; $p < .001$). A strong negative correlation is observed between the self-deception dimension of social desirability and trait self-handicapping ($r = -.530$; $p < .001$). A strong negative correlation is identified between self-esteem and trait self-handicapping ($r = -.508$; $p < .001$). No correlation is found between the other-deception dimension of social desirability and self-esteem. A weak negative correlation is noted between other-deception and trait self-handicapping ($r = -236$; $p < .001$). A negative correlation is evident between self-deception and declared self-handicapping when the two dimensions of self-handicapping are separated ($r = -.576$; $p < .001$). No correlation is observed between self-deception and behavioral self-handicapping ($p = ns$).

TABLE 1
CORRELATIONS FOR STUDY VARIABLES (N=180)

Variable	1.RSES	2.SD	3.OD	4.SHS	5.SHS-D	6.SHS-B
1. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	-	,454**	,102	-,508*	-,498**	-,100
2. Self-deception		-	,418**	-,530**	-,576*	,114
3. Other-deception			-	-,236*	-,075	-,142
4. Self-Handicapping Scale				-	,780**	,339**
5. Self-Handicapping Scale-Declared					-	-,104
6. Self-Handicapping Scale-Behavioral						-

To examine the direct relationship between self-esteem and self-handicapping, self-handicapping was regressed on self-esteem. The analysis revealed a significant overall model :

$$[F(1, 178) = 62.044, p < .001, R^2 = .258] \tag{1}$$

And self-esteem emerged as a significant negative predictor of self-handicapping (β = -.508; $p < .001$). To investigate the relationship between self-esteem and the potential mediators, each potential mediator was regressed on self-esteem. The regression analysis of self-deception on self-esteem indicated a significant effect :

$$[F(1, 175) = 45.458, p < .001, R^2 = .206] \tag{2}$$

With self-esteem being a significant positive predictor of self-deception (β = .454; $p < .001$). However, regressing other-deception on self-esteem did not yield a significant effect :

$$[F(1, 175) = 1.826, p > .05, R^2 = .01] \tag{3}$$

Finally, the relationship between self-esteem and self-handicapping was reevaluated with the influence of the remaining potential mediator (i.e., self-deception). The regression of self-handicapping on both self-deception and self-esteem produced a significant effect

$$[F(2, 174) = 50.766, p < .001, R^2 = .368] \tag{4}$$

Self-esteem remained a significant negative predictor of self-handicapping (β = -.333, $p < .001$), and self-deception continued to be a significant negative predictor of self-handicapping (β = -.378, $p < .001$). However, the β coefficient for self-esteem was reduced due to self-deception. In summary, self-deception, but not other-deception, was identified as a partial mediator in the relationship between self-esteem and self-handicapping (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1
LINEAR MODEL TEST
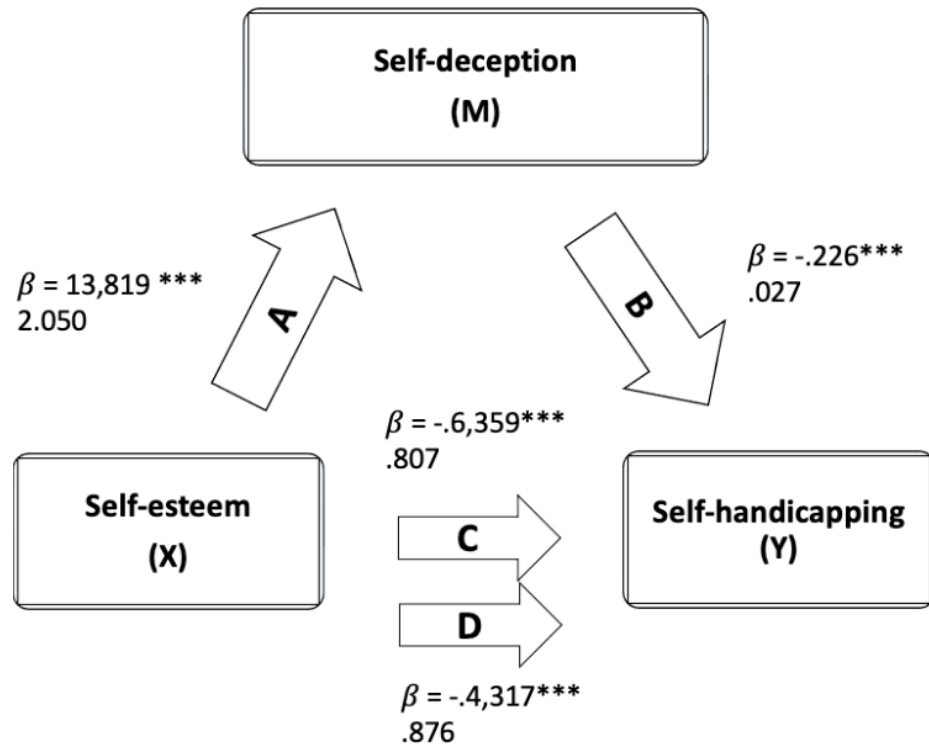
To assess the significance of this mediated effect, a Sobel test was conducted, involving the division of the products of the unstandardized regression coefficients for Paths A (β = 13.819) and B (β = -0.226) by a standard error term2 (resulting in a z score). The Sobel test yielded a significant result (z score = -5.2501, $p < .05$). Given the previous results, particularly the validation of self-deception as a mediator, we compared the means of self-esteem with the means of social desirability (self-deception dimension) and those of self-handicap trait. The quantitative variable, self-esteem was transformed into a categorical variable using quartiles. This transformation is necessary for the analysis by means of comparison. We obtained four quartiles:

- Very low self-esteem for this group (0 to 2.8), corresponding to group one.
- Low self-esteem for this group (2.8 to 3.1), corresponding to group two.
- High self-esteem for this group (3.1 to 3.5), corresponding to group three.
- Very high self-esteem for this group (3.5 to 3.8), corresponding to group four.

Observations from this table indicate that the mean for the entire sample (row "Total") is 69.99 for self-deception (n = 177) and 78.19 for self-handicap trait (n = 179). The respondents were divided into four groups corresponding to possible values of self-esteem.

- Group 1 (Very low SE): This group comprises respondents with very low self-esteem. Participants (n = 48; n = 50) in the first quartile of self-esteem exhibit a mean self-deception score of 59.58 and a mean of 83.16 for self-handicap trait.
- Group 2: This group consists of respondents with low self-esteem. It is notable that participants (n = 42) in the second quartile of self-esteem show a mean of 71.02 for self-deception and 78.29 for self-handicap trait.
- Group 3 comprises respondents with a high level of self-esteem. It is noteworthy that participants (n = 51) in the third quartile of self-esteem exhibit a mean of 72.39 for self-deception and 75.35 for self-handicap trait.

- Group 4 consists of respondents with a very high level of self-esteem. It is observed that participants (n = 36) in the fourth quartile of self-esteem present a mean of 79.25 for self-deception and 75.19 for self-handicap trait.

TABLE 2
MEAN COMPARISON: SELF-ESTEEM, SELF-DECEPTION AND SELF-HANDICAP

Self-Esteem	Statistics	Self-Deception	Self-Handicapping
1 (Very low)	Mean	59,58	83,16
	N	48	50
	Standard deviation	13,413	4,519
2 (Low)	Mean	71,02	78,29
	N	42	42
	Standard deviation	14,165	7,076
3 (High)	Mean	72,39	75,35
	N	51	51
	Standard deviation	13,632	6,219
4 (Very high)	Mean	79,25	75,19
	N	36	36
	Standard deviation	16,838	5,840
Total ➔	Mean	69,99	78,19
	N	177	179
	Standard deviation	15,905	6,766

Considering all the results from Table 2 comparing the means, it can be noticed that as self-esteem increases (trending towards 4), the score for self-deception increases. In contrast, the score for self-handicap trait decreases. However, these results do not allow us to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the three variables as these are descriptive analyses. Considering the results of this test, we assume that the self-deception scores are not normally distributed in this sample. The results of the normality tests allow us to proceed with non-parametric analyses.

TABLE 3
LEVENE'S TEST OF EQUALITY OF ERROR VARINANCES

		Levene's Statistics	DF1	DF2	Sig.
SD	Based on the mean	,583	3	173	,627
	Based on the median	,459	3	173	,712
	Based on the median with adjusted degrees of freedom	,459	3	163,702	,712
	Based on the trimmed mean	,536	3	173	,658

Given the difference in distribution, these results allow us to proceed with the Kruskal-Wallis test. The Kruskal-Wallis test, also known as one-way ANOVA on ranks, is a non-parametric method used to check whether samples originate from the same distribution.

TABLE 4
KRUSKAL-WALLIS TEST STATISTIC

	SD
H test	37,005
DF	3
Asymptotic significance	,000

We obtain a significant result $p < .001$ for the Kruskal-Wallis test with a Chi-square of 37, indicating a significant difference between the compared groups. This demonstrates an effect of self-deception $\chi2(3) = 37.005$, $p < .001$.

DISCUSSION

The primary objective of the current study was to investigate the potential mediating role of social desirability, particularly self-deception in the relationship between self-esteem and self-handicapping. Firstly, self-esteem emerged as a significant negative predictor of self-handicapping when considered the sole predictor variable. This finding aligns with prior research showing similar results regarding the association between self-esteem and claimed self-handicapping within the context of sports and exercise science (Coudevylle, Martin Ginis, & Famose, 2008; Martin & Brawley, 2002, Study 2). Furthermore, these findings align with observations made in an academic context (Higgins & Snyder, 1990; Leyrit, 2012). These outcomes suggest that self-esteem may influence freshmen's self-deception tendencies and may thus indirectly impact their self-handicapping tendencies. Secondly, it was observed that self-esteem does not serve as a predictor of other deception. Specifically, the regression analysis of other-deception on self-esteem revealed no statistically significant effects. However, other-deception significantly and negatively predicts self-handicapping, as demonstrated by the regression of self-handicapping on both other-deception and self-esteem, yielding a significant overall model. This finding is of particular interest since other-deception is associated with the desire to please others. It suggests that deceiving others to gain their favor consciously influences the propensity to employ self-handicapping strategies. In such instances, priority is given to seeking social acceptance from others and, consequently, aligning with prevailing norms that discourage the use of excuses. Indeed, an individual who has internalized societal norms for the sake of social security may, through the lens of social desirability, develop an excessive reliance on and sensitivity to the approval of others, which can ultimately result in an anxiety-inducing interpersonal dynamic (Pasquier & Valéau, 2008). The assessment of academic self-handicapping has predominantly utilized the ASHS, which adopts an approach conceptualizing the measured construct as a deliberate and strategic process. However, the validity of such an approach raises considerable doubts. In contrast, the SHS (Jones & Rhodewalt, 1982) assesses strategies employed for managing public and/or private self-image more implicitly. Specifically, the items do not explicitly state the target of these strategies, but they are broad enough to encompass strategies for managing both public and private self-image (e.g., item 2). Examining these scales brings to light that the ongoing controversy surrounding the motives of self-handicapping has significantly influenced the design of these assessment tools. These strategies, rooted in the principles of causal attributions (Kelley, 1972), aim to proactively influence how both others and individuals perceive competence. Initially defined by Berglas and Jones (1978) as strategies driven by the need to manage one's public and private image of competence, they seek to uphold a positive self-image in both external and internal contexts. Authors, such as Breckler and Greenwald (1986) and Greenwald and Pratkanis (1984), emphasize the differentiation between public and private selves. The public self is concerned with making a favorable impression on others, and it becomes threatened when a task is performed in the presence of an external audience. On the other hand, the private self is linked to self-judgment and can feel threatened even in private task performance. Furthermore, Spalding and Hardin (1999) suggest that implicit and explicit self-esteem may most strongly predict different dimensions of behavior, such as consciously controlled versus unconsciously controlled behavior. Consequently, situations jeopardizing the public self

may prompt self-handicapping to manage the public self-image, while situations threatening the private self may lead to self-handicapping to preserve the private self-image. Taking this a step further, the connection between self-esteem and self-handicapping strategies may be unconscious. However, there is currently no consensus on this matter, and the debate remains open. However, if we presume that this relationship operates on an unconscious level, it is reasonable to assert that other-deception cannot function as a mediator. This dimension entails a deliberate and conscious act that contradicts the underlying unconscious dynamics in play. The study's findings revealed a negative correlation between social desirability and trait self-handicapping. This result is intriguing, especially considering the definition of self-handicapping as a strategic self-presentation tactic (Kolditz & Arkin, 1982). A closer examination of the items from the social desirability questionnaire (DS36, Tournois et al., 2000) sheds light on the logic underlying these results. Notably, item three within the other-deception dimension (e.g., "Sometimes I pretend to avoid something") is reversed, suggesting that a high score on this item contradicts the logic of self-handicapping strategies. Similarly, item two in the self-deception dimension (e.g., "I may sometimes doubt my abilities") is also a reversed item, running contrary to a person's inclination to employ self-handicapping strategies. An individual with a high social desirability score is likely to disagree with statements associated with self-handicapping (e.g., "I tend to procrastinate on tasks until the last moment"). The selection of a sports and exercise science freshmen population as the focus of this study was deliberate, as the combination of group learning and a significant level of physical engagement was considered a crucial contextual factor for this cohort. Indeed, these elements were perceived as essential conditions to foster active participation within the sample and, consequently, to enable a meaningful examination of the interplay among processes related to social desirability, self-esteem, and the propensity to utilize self-handicapping strategies.

CONCLUSION

The current research established that, among the social desirability factors investigated, self-deception emerged as a situational mediator in the relationship between self-esteem and the propensity for self-handicapping within the context of sports studies. However, this mediation effect was not observed for other-deception, as our sample exhibited non-significant associations with self-esteem. Our results align with Török et al.'s initial hypothesis (2014), demonstrating a negative correlation between social desirability and trait self-handicapping. A high score in either self-deception or other-deception corresponded to lower scores on the trait self-handicapping questionnaire. This outcome suggests that individuals with high social desirability tendencies are either genuinely deceiving themselves or deliberately deceiving others, making them less inclined to employ self-handicapping strategies. Furthermore, students with high self-esteem displayed elevated social desirability levels and a reduced inclination to employ self-handicapping strategies. This finding, supported by mean comparisons, held for both self-deception and other-deception dimensions. Thus, we can confirm a negative correlation between social desirability and trait self-handicapping within our study population. This finding aligns with the notion that excuses, and self-handicapping behaviors are incongruent with social norms and the pursuit of performance. In this analysis of the relationship between self-esteem and trait self-handicapping, we considered social desirability as a personality trait rather than a bias.

Additionally, the use of the measurement instrument (DS36) by Tournois, Mesnil, and Kop, which was inspired by Paulhus' (1991) Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIRD) questionnaire and assessed two distinct dimensions of social desirability (self-deception and other-deception), proved to be valuable in our analysis of self-handicapping. Despite these valuable contributions, certain limitations require attention. The findings of this study present divergent results where self-deception and other-deception exhibit an unexpected negative relationship with self-handicapping. High levels of self-deception and/or other-deception do not appear to foster a predisposition toward employing self-handicapping strategies. Instead, higher scores on social desirability (comprising self-deception and/or other-deception) correspond to lower trait self-handicapping scores. In line with the research conducted by Török et al. (2014), these results raise pertinent questions regarding the validity of self-reported methods in examining trait self-handicapping strategies. A person exhibiting high social desirability tendencies is predisposed to

provide socially expected responses, which may be at odds with the nature of trait self-handicapping questionnaires. The choice to administer digital questionnaires via an online platform can be seen as a potential limitation, as not all students may have had access to the internet for questionnaire completion. Furthermore, the administration conditions, whether anonymous or public, may significantly influence scores for other-deception (Paulhus, 1984). Self-deception, however, remains unaffected by these contextual influences (Paulhus et al., 1995), raising concerns about the potential impact of the anonymous administration conditions in this study on the results of the other-deception dimension of social desirability. The high number of questions, coupled with an allotted completion time of twenty minutes, may have influenced the response rate, and potentially contributed to questionnaire abandonment. The large number of questions within the given time frame may have posed a challenge for participation. Additionally, the choice of the Tournois, Mesnil, and Kop scale for measuring social desirability raises concerns. The theoretical concept of social desirability may lack precision and vary depending on the questionnaire designer. For example, Crowne and Marlowe (1960) associate social desirability with a "need for social belonging," while Wiggins (1959) interprets it as "concealment." These differing interpretations impact the construction of measurement scales. From an applied perspective, establishing a research protocol involving video recordings in authentic assessment contexts would be beneficial and intriguing. This could be followed by self-confrontation sessions with students exhibiting self-handicapping behaviors, high trait self-handicapping scores, and self-deception or other-deception. Through this protocol, students could watch videos of themselves to observe their behaviors or statements in real-life situations. This approach may promote awareness of the behaviors or statements employed, potentially reducing or eliminating self-handicapping strategies as students gain access to their full potential.

REFERENCES

Arkin, R.M., & Baumgardner, A.H. (1985). Self-Handicapping. In J.H. Harvey, & G. Weary (Eds.), *Attribution: Basic Issues and Applications* (pp. 169–202). Academic Press.

Baron, R.M., & Kenny, D.A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research : Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *51*(6), 1173–1182. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.51.6.1173

Berglas, S., & Jones, E.E. (1978). Drug choice as a self-handicapping strategy in response to noncontingent success. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *36*(4), 405–417. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.36.4.405

Berjot, S., Gregg, A., & Richards, L. (2004). *Feeling of Inadequacy Scale, Fleming & Courtney, 1984*. Paper session presented at the 5ème Colloque International de Psychologie Sociale en Langue Française de l'ADRIPS.

Chabrol, H., Rousseau, A., & Callahan, S. (2006). Preliminary results of a scale assessing instability of self-esteem. *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science*, *38*(2), 136–141.

Coudevylle, G.R., Joing, I., Robin, N., Page, A., Marrot, G., & Vors, O. (2020). Gestes professionnels des enseignants d'EPS en contexte de violence scolaire: Stratégies usuelles et complémentaires. *Contextes et Didactiques*, pp. 114–132.

Coudevylle, G.R., Gernigon, C., & Ginis, K.A.M. (2011). Self-esteem, self-confidence, anxiety and claimed self-handicapping: A mediational analysis. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *12*(6), 670–675. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2011.05.008

Crowne, D.P., & Marlowe, D. (1960). A new scale of social desirability independent of psychopathology. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, *24*(4), 349–354. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0047358

Ginis, K.A.M., Lindwall, M., & Prapavessis, H. (2007). Who Cares What Other People Think? Self-Presentation in Exercise and Sport. *Handbook of Sport Psychology*, pp. 136–157.

Greenwald, A.G., & Breckler, S.J. (1986). Motivational facets of the self. *Handbook of Motivation and Cognition: Foundations of Social Behavior*, pp. 145–164.

Greenwald, A.G., & Pratkanis, A.R. (1984). The self. In R.S. Wyer, Jr. & T.K. Srull (Eds.), *Handbook of social cognition* (vol. 3, pp. 129–178). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Harter, S. (1990). Processes underlying adolescent self-concept formation. In R. Montemayor, G.R. Adams, & T.P. Gullotta (Eds.), *Advances in adolescent development: An annual book series* (vol. 2, pp. 205–239). Sage Publications, Inc.

Higgins, R.L., & Snyder, C.R. (1990). Self-Handicapping from A Heiderian Perspective. In *Self-Handicapping* (pp. 239–273). Springer.

James, W. (2019). *The principles of psychology (1890): In two volumes* (vol. I). Independently Published.

Johnson, E.A., Vincent, N., & Ross, L. (1997). Self-deception versus self-esteem in buffering the negative effects of failure. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *31*(3), 385–405.

Jones, E.E., & Rhodewalt, F. (1982). *The Self-handicapping Scale*. Rhodewalt, Department of Psychology.

Kelley, H.H. (1973). The processes of causal attribution. *The American Psychologist*, *28*(2), 107–128. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0034225

Kolditz, T.A., & Arkin, R.M. (1982). An impression management interpretation of the self-handicapping strategy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *43*(3), 492–502. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.43.3.492

Kraïem, S., & Bertsch, J. (2011). Adaptation française d'une échelle d'auto-handicap: La Self-Handicapping Scale. *Revue Internationale de Psychologie Sociale*, *24*, 5–31.

Leyrit, A. (2012). Comprendre le rôle des stratégies de protection de soi dans la relation entre facteurs scolaires et estime de soi: Un enjeu pour la prévention de l'échec scolaire chez les adolescents. *Journal de Thérapie Comportementale et Cognitive*, *22*(4), 161–168. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtcc.2012.09.004

McCrea, S.M., Hirt, E.R., Hendrix, K.L., Milner, B.J., & Steele, N.L. (2008). The worker scale: Developing a measure to explain gender differences in behavioral self-handicapping. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *42*(4), 949–970. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2007.12.005

Meehl, P.E., & Hathaway, S.R. (1946). The K factor as a suppressor variable in the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, *30*(5), 525–564. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0053634

Nunnally, J.C. (1978). An overview of psychological measurement. *Clinical diagnosis of mental disorders: A handbook*, pp. 97–146.

Pansu, P., & Beauvois, J.L. (2004). Juger de la valeur sociale des personnes: Les pratiques sociales d'évaluation. In P. Pansu, & C. Louche (Eds.), *La psychologie appliquée à l'analyse des problèmes sociaux*. PUF.

Pasquier, D., & Valéau, P. (2008). Des figures de la désirabilité sociale à l'équilibre psychologique. *Perspectives différentielles en psychologie*, pp. 215–219.

Paulhus, D.L. (1984). Two-component models of socially desirable responding. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *46*(3), 598–609. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.46.3.598

Paulhus, D.L., & Reid, D.B. (1991). Enhancement and denial in socially desirable responding. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *60*(2).

Paulhus, D.L., & Reynolds, S. (1995). Enhancing target variance in personality impressions: Highlighting the person in person perception. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *69*(6).

Pauls, C.A., & Crost, N.W. (2004). Effects of faking on self-deception and other-deception scales. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *37*(6), 1137–1151.

Prapavessis, H., & Grove, J.R. (1998). Self-handicapping and self-esteem. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *10*(2), 175–184.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent: Self-image*. Princeton. University Press.

Schmitt, M.J., & Steyer, R. (1993). A latent state-trait model (not only) for social desirability. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *14*(4), 519–529.

Spalding, L.R., & Hardin, C.D. (1999). Unconscious unease and self-handicapping: Behavioral consequences of individual differences in implicit and explicit self-esteem. *Psychological Science*, *10*(6), 535–539. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9280.00202

Thompson, J.B. (1995). *The media and modernity: A social theory of the media*. Stanford University Press.

Tice, D.M. (1991). Esteem protection or enhancement? Self-handicapping motives and attributions differ by trait self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *60*(5), 711–725.

Tice, D.M., & Baumeister, R.F. (1990). Self-esteem, self-handicapping, and self-presentation: The strategy of inadequate practice. *Journal of Personality*, *58*(2), 443–464.

Török, L., Szabó, Z.P., & Boda-Ujlaky, J. (2014). Self-esteem, self-conscious emotions, resilience, trait anxiety and their relation to self-handicapping tendencies. *Review of Psychology*, *21*(2), 123–130.

Tournois, J., Mesnil, F., & Kop, J.-L. (2000). Autoduperie et hétéroduperie: Un instrument de mesure de la désirabilité sociale. *Revue Européenne de Psychologie Appliquée*, *50*, 219–232.

Wiggins, J.S. (1959). Interrelationships among MMPI measures of dissimulation under standard and social desirability instruction. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, *23*(5), 419–427. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0047823