

## Introduction

Self-Discrepancy, referring to the discrepancy between people's self-state representations (e.g., actual self vs. ideal self), has been found to lead to emotional vulnerabilities like frustration, sadness, embarrassment, shame, etc. (Higgins, 1987)

Some researchers have proposed that escapism, which involves intentionally avoiding thinking about the discrepancies by directing attention to somewhere else, could be a way to mitigate the negative emotions evoked by self-discrepancies (Mandel et al., 2017).

Escapism related behaviors that were found prevalent among college students include playing video games (Beranuy, Carbonell, & Griffiths, 2013) and using social media (Whiting and Williams, 2013).

In the current study, we aim to get a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between self-discrepancy and escapism through video games and social media use among college students by investigating possible mediators including academic self-efficacy, academic identity and academic commitment.

In addition, as social comparison has been found to have an influence on the magnitude of self-discrepancy (McIntyre & Eisenstadt, 2011), we would also include social comparison orientation in our analysis to provide a more comprehensive picture of how self-discrepancy work in academic context.

# Academic self-discrepancy and escapism through video games and social media use among college students

Yiwen Yang & Jiahua Yang

## Method

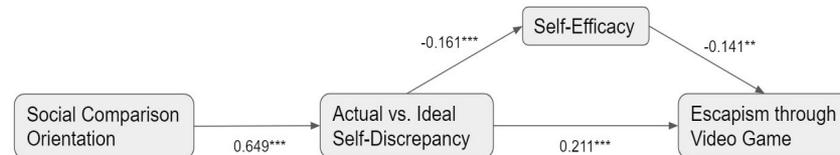
936 undergraduate college students participated in the study by taking an online survey distributed through Qualtrics. The survey included questionnaires asking about students' self-reported social comparison orientation, actual vs. ideal self-discrepancy, academic related self-efficacy, commitment and identity. All variables were measured on Likert scales and coded into numeric values. A path analysis was used to analyze the relationship between variables.

## Results

The fitted model obtained from the path analysis is shown below. As shown in the model, students' social comparison orientation positively and significantly predicted their perceived discrepancy between actual and ideal self. The actual vs. ideal self-discrepancy, in turn, positively and significantly predicted students' escapism through video games. The relationship between self-discrepancy and escapism through video games was partially mediated by students' academic self-efficacy, with self-discrepancy negatively predicted self-efficacy and self-efficacy negatively predicted escapism through video games.

Students' reported academic identity and commitment were not significant mediators and were omitted from the model.

The model fit was good for escapism through video game but the same model didn't fit for escapism through social media use.



## Conclusion

Results of the current study aligned with previous literature that social comparison orientation positively predicts the magnitude of self-discrepancy and actual vs. ideal self-discrepancy positively predicts college students' escapism through video games.

In addition, the current study found out one significant mechanism of the relationship between self-discrepancy and escapism through video games, which is via the mediation of self-efficacy. Although this is a partial mediation, it provides us with a better understanding of how self-discrepancy lead to escapism in video games. Surprisingly, the same path model didn't work for escapism through social media use. This result indicated that although social media and video games were both found to be important ways for college students to escape from reality, they may not work through the exact same mechanism.

## Reference

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