




# The Impact of Self-Efficacy Training on Goal Setting and Academic Persistence

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## 1. Round 1

### 1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the introduction (paragraph 3), the authors state: “Research consistently shows that when students set specific, attainable goals...” This claim should be supported by at least two additional references from recent meta-analyses or systematic reviews to strengthen the empirical foundation.

In the “Study Design and Participants” section, the use of purposive sampling appears inconsistent with the claim of randomization. The authors should clarify how random assignment was conducted following purposive selection to ensure methodological rigor.

In the “Measures” section for Goal Setting, while the authors provide strong psychometric support, the cultural adaptability or prior validation of the Button et al. (1996) scale in Bulgarian populations should be discussed.

In the “Measures” section for Academic Persistence, the authors cite Cronbach’s alpha but should also mention whether they calculated reliability coefficients for the current sample. This is essential for internal consistency reporting.

The demographic data in the “Findings and Results” section states that participants were from Greece, which directly contradicts earlier claims that the participants were from Bulgaria. This inconsistency must be resolved to maintain the study’s validity.

In Table 1, the presentation of descriptive statistics is informative, but a graphical representation (e.g., line chart of means over time) could enhance interpretation of group differences visually and improve reader engagement.

In the discussion (paragraph 5), the phrase “suggesting that self-efficacy training can be successfully adapted...” could be more robust if the authors discussed potential cultural moderators or barriers to adaptation in Eastern Europe.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

## 1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the introduction (paragraph 5), the phrase “students face obstacles such as academic pressure or uncertainty about their future” would be more impactful if connected to evidence from regional studies (e.g., Eastern Europe or Bulgaria specifically), since the sample is Bulgarian.

In the final paragraph of the introduction, the authors note: “As academic environments continue to demand greater independence...” This observation is timely but could benefit from a brief mention of the post-pandemic context, as remote learning has significantly influenced student self-efficacy and persistence.

In the “Intervention” section (Session 4), the authors introduce SMART goals, but they do not report how adherence to SMART goal criteria was assessed or reinforced throughout the intervention. Including a fidelity check or worksheet description would enhance clarity.

In Session 6, “Participants watched brief videos...” — it would strengthen the intervention design if the authors specify whether these videos were culturally relevant or tailored to the participants’ context.

In the “Data Analysis” section, the authors mention “assumptions were tested and confirmed” yet inconsistently refer to variables such as “well-being” and “academic achievement,” which do not appear in the study focus. This discrepancy should be corrected.

In Table 2, while effect sizes ( $\eta^2$ ) are reported, the authors should interpret these values within the text (e.g., small, medium, large) to aid readers unfamiliar with effect size conventions.

In the Bonferroni results (Table 3), although p-values are provided, confidence intervals for mean differences should also be included for completeness and precision.

In the discussion (paragraph 2), the authors state: “This finding resonates with studies showing that self-efficacy fosters the willingness to engage in goal-oriented behaviors...” — they could enhance this point by briefly distinguishing between mastery and performance goal orientations.

Authors uploaded the revised manuscript.

## 2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.