

# Academic Goals and Self-Protection Motivational Strategies

**Antonio Valle<sup>1</sup>, José C. Núñez<sup>2</sup>, Ramón G. Cabanach<sup>1</sup>,  
Susana Rodríguez<sup>1</sup>, Julio A. González-Pienda<sup>2</sup>,  
Pedro Rosario<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup>Dept. of Developmental & Educational Psychology, Univ. of La Coruña, Spain

<sup>2</sup>Dept. of Psychology, University of Oviedo, Spain

<sup>3</sup>Dept. of Educational Psychology, University of Minho, Portugal

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**Spain / Portugal**

*Antonio Valle.* Universidad de A Coruña, Departamento de Psicología. Plaza Feijóo s/n. 33003 Asturias. Spain.  
E-mail: [jcarlosn@telecable.es](mailto:jcarlosn@telecable.es)

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## Abstract

Individuals can use a variety of strategies to deal with threats to their self-worth. Three such strategies self-handicapping, defensive pessimism and self-affirmation have receive little attention to date and their explanations are the focus of this study. According to the self-worth theory of motivation, the need to protect one's self-worth arises primarily from a fear of failure and the implications this failure may have for one's private and public sense of ability and subsequent self-worth. Surveys were administered to 607 Spanish university students.

Results indicate that learning orientation would reduce the likelihood of choosing self-handicapping and self-affirmation strategies, but defensive pessimism is not related to this orientation. On the other hand, we found that performance-avoidance orientation does not have significant relations with self-handicapping and self-affirmation. We suggest that we should be cautious when systematizing the association between performance motives and self-worth protection strategies.

**Keywords:** academic goals, self-affirmation, self-handicapping, defensive pessimism, university students.

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