

Am I Really Good? -- The Impact of Social Comparison and Temporal Comparison on Self-Evaluation

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How individuals evaluate themselves? In the present study we proposed that the self-evaluation should be influenced by both social comparison and temporal comparison. To be exact, we suggested that different temporal performance trends would affect one's self-efficacy, and then moderated the impact of social comparison on self-evaluation. Two experiments were conducted to examine our hypotheses. In Experiment 1, ninety-two participants were randomly assigned to a 3 (temporal comparison: improvement/same/deterioration) \times 2 (social comparison: upward/downward) between-subjects design. A series of false performance feedbacks of an ability tests were used to manipulate different trends of temporal comparison information and others' average performance was also provided at the end as social comparison information. The results showed that, the trend of temporal performance feedback did affect one's sense of self-efficacy, controllability, and future expectation. As predicted, a significant interaction effect of social comparison and temporal comparison on self-evaluation was found. The Experiment 2 tried to replicate the moderate effect of temporal comparison and further investigated the importance of the temporal performance trend. Seventy-five participants were randomly assigned to a 3 (temporal comparison: improvement with low average/same with moderate average/deterioration with high average) \times 2 (social comparison: upward/downward) between-subjects design. The results also showed a similar interaction effect as Experiment 1. Besides, the result demonstrated that it was the temporal performance trend, not performance average, moderated the impact of social comparison.

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