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Between past experiences and future goals: academic achievement goals, gender, and performance in higher education

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Entre experiências passadas e objetivos futuros: as metas de realização académica, o género e rendimento no ensino superior

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Entre experiencias pasadas y objetivos futuros: las metas de logro académico, el género y el rendimiento en la educación superior

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Abstract: *The present study analyses the relationship between academic goals and academic achievement among higher education students, considering gender and prior grade retention. A total of 482 students from two Portuguese higher education institutions (one public and one private), enrolled in Engineering, Education, Psychology, and Business Administration programmes, completed an online questionnaire. The mean age was 22.4 years (SD = 6.99); 51.4% were male and 27.4% had a history of grade retention. Academic goals were assessed using the Academic Goals Inventory for Higher Education, while academic achievement and sociodemographic data were collected through self-report. Female students reported significantly higher mean scores in mastery and performance goals; male students showed higher levels of social pressure avoidance goals, although these differences were not statistically significant. Students with a history of retention demonstrated a stronger orientation towards mastery goals. Correlations between goals and academic achievement were significant: among students with retention, only mastery goals were associated with achievement; among those without retention, both mastery and performance goals were related to achievement. Linear regression analyses indicated that, although statistically significant, academic goals accounted for a small proportion of the variance in achievement, regardless of gender or retention history. These findings highlight the need for inclusive pedagogical practices focused on motivation and student engagement, fostering greater equity in higher education.*

Keywords: *Academic achievement goals. Academic performance. Grade retention. Gender. Higher education.*

Resumo: O presente estudo analisa a relação entre metas académicas e desempenho académico em estudantes do ensino superior, considerando o género e o histórico de retenção escolar. Participaram 482 estudantes de duas instituições de Ensino Superior portuguesas (uma pública e uma privada), das áreas de Engenharia, Educação, Psicologia e Administração e Gestão de Empresas, que responderam a um questionário online. A idade média foi de 22,4 anos (DP = 6,99); 51,4% eram do género masculino e 27,4% tinham histórico de retenção. As metas académicas foram avaliadas através do Inventário de Metas Académicas para o Ensino Superior, sendo o desempenho e os dados sociodemográficos recolhidos por autorrelato. As estudantes do género feminino apresentaram médias significativamente superiores nas metas de aprendizagem e de rendimento; os estudantes do género masculino revelaram valores mais elevados nas metas de evitamento da pressão social, sem significância estatística. Estudantes com histórico de retenção evidenciaram maior orientação para metas de aprendizagem. As correlações entre metas e desempenho foram significativas: no grupo com retenção apenas para metas de aprendizagem; no grupo sem retenção, para metas de aprendizagem e de rendimento. A regressão linear indicou que, embora significativas, as metas explicam uma parcela reduzida da variância do desempenho, independentemente do género ou da retenção. Os resultados sublinham a necessidade de

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práticas pedagógicas inclusivas, centradas na motivação e no envolvimento, promovendo maior equidade no ensino superior.

Palavras-chave: Desempenho académico. Ensino superior. Gênero. Metas de realização académica. Retenção escolar.

Resumen: *El presente estudio analiza la relación entre las metas y el rendimiento académicos en estudiantes de educación superior, considerando el género y el historial de repetición escolar. Participaron 482 estudiantes de dos instituciones de educación superior portuguesas (una pública y una privada), de las áreas de Ingeniería, Educación, Psicología y Administración y Gestión de Empresas, quienes respondieron a un cuestionario en línea. La edad media fue de 22,4 años (DE = 6,99); el 51,4% eran del género masculino y el 27,4% tenían antecedentes de repetición. Las metas académicas se evaluaron mediante el Inventario de Metas Académicas para la Educación Superior, mientras que el rendimiento y los datos sociodemográficos se obtuvieron por autoinforme. Las estudiantes del género femenino presentaron medias significativamente superiores en las metas de aprendizaje y de rendimiento; los estudiantes del género masculino mostraron valores más elevados en las metas de evitación de la presión social, sin significación estadística. Los estudiantes con antecedentes de repetición evidenciaron una mayor orientación hacia las metas de aprendizaje. Las correlaciones entre metas y rendimiento fueron significativas: en el grupo con repetición solo para las metas de aprendizaje; en el grupo sin repetición, para las metas de aprendizaje y de rendimiento. El análisis de regresión lineal indicó que, aunque significativas, las metas explican una proporción reducida de la varianza del rendimiento, independientemente del género o de la repetición. Los resultados subrayan la necesidad de prácticas pedagógicas inclusivas, centradas en la motivación y el compromiso, que promuevan una mayor equidad en la educación superior.*

Palabras-clave: *Educación superior. Género. Metas de logro académico. Rendimiento académico. Repetición escolar.*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education currently plays a central role in contemporary societies, not only as a space for technical and scientific qualification, but also as a context for personal, social, and professional development (Almeida, 2019; Almeida *et al.,* 2022; Farias; Gouveia; Almeida, 2024; Weatherton; Schussler, 2021). In parallel, the expansion of access, driven by policies of democratisation and internationalisation, has increased the heterogeneity of the student body and posed new challenges for institutions in promoting academic success and reducing inequalities (Almeida, 2019; Almeida Et Al., 2022; Farias; Gouveia; Almeida, 2024; Weatherton; Schussler, 2021). In this context, understanding the factors associated with academic performance has become a scientific and political priority (Araújo, 2017; Richardson; Abraham; Bond, 2012; York; Gibson; Rankin, 2015).

Academic success is a multidimensional construct that goes beyond academic performance, integrating persistence, degree completion, academic integration, and wellbeing (Araújo, 2017; Marinho-Araújo; Ferreira; Almeida, 2024; York; Gibson; Rankin, 2015). Nevertheless, academic performance – operationalised through grades, pass rates, or completed credits – remains a central indicator for institutional assessment and for monitoring individual trajectories (Almeida *et al.,* 2022; Farias; Gouveia; Almeida, 2024; Richardson; Abraham; Bond, 2012).

Research shows that performance results from the interaction of institutional, pedagogical, and individual factors (Almeida, 2019; Crosier; Mäki, 2022; Fokkens-Bruinsma *et al.*, 2020; OCDE, 2023). Among the former, motivational climate, assessment practices, and academic support stand out (Almeida, 2019; Crosier; Mäki, 2022; Fokkens-Bruinsma *et al*., 2020). Among individual factors, cognitive, emotional, and motivational variables are included, with academic achievement goals playing a particularly prominent role (Bakhtiar; Hadwin, 2021; Bardach *et al.*, 2019; Elliot; Hulleman, 2017; Schunk; Dibenedetto, 2022).

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT GOALS

Achievement Goal Theory is one of the main frameworks for studying motivation in

educational contexts (Elliot; Harackiewicz, 1996; Elliot; Hulleman, 2017). From this perspective, students regulate their behaviour in evaluative situations according to the goals they adopt and the meaning they attribute to success and failure (Bzuneck; Boruchovitch, 2019; Senko, 2019). Goals organise task interpretation, regulate effort, and influence persistence (Bzuneck; Boruchovitch, 2019; Senko, 2019).

Initial formulations distinguished mastery (or learning) goals from performance goals (Dweck, 1986; Nicholls, 1984). The former focus on the development of competences and intrapersonal progress, whereas the latter focus on demonstrating competence through normative comparison (Anderman, 2020; Elliot; Hulleman, 2017). The 2 × 2 model (ELLIOT; Mcgregor, 2001) added the distinction between approach and avoidance, resulting in four types of goals. Despite subsequent developments, this model remains widely used in empirical research (Bardach *et al.*, 2019).

2.1 ACHIEVEMENT GOALS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The literature shows that masteryapproach goals are associated with deep learning strategies, greater selfregulation, and better performance (Harackiewicz *et al.*, 2002; Pintrich, 2000; Schunk; Dibenedetto, 2022). Students who endorse these goals tend to interpret difficulties as opportunities for growth and show greater resilience (Diaconu-Gherasim *et al.*, 2024).

In contrast, performanceavoidance goals are associated with anxiety, surface learning strategies, and lower achievement (Urdan; Kaplan, 2020; Bardach *et al.*, 2020). Performanceapproach goals show more ambivalent effects, as they may be related to high grades in competitive contexts but also to greater emotional vulnerability (Schunk; Dibenedetto, 2022).

Metaanalyses indicate that correlations between achievement goals and performance tend to be weak to moderate, varying according to goal type and methodological characteristics (Bardach *et al.*, 2020; Wu; Fu, 2024). Thus, goals explain only part of the variability in academic achievement.

2.2 GENDER AND MOTIVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Gender differences in higher education reflect complex patterns. Although in many contexts women show higher completion rates and better grades, inequalities in the distribution across scientific fields persist (Eccles; Wigfield, 2020).

Studies indicate that female students tend to report higher levels of mastery goals and greater academic engagement (Struck Jannini; Akdemir; Menekse, 2024). Male students, in turn, more frequently endorse performance goals, especially in competitive contexts (Cheryan *Et Al.*, 2017; Stolk; Gross; Zastavker, 2021). However, results are not homogeneous and depend on disciplinary and cultural contexts (DELA ROSA; BERNARDO, 2013a, 2013b; LALANDE et al., 2019).

It is important to emphasise that withingroup variability often exceeds average gender differences, which calls for integrative analyses (Boden *et al.*, 2023; OCDE, 2023).

2.3 GRADE RETENTION HISTORY AND MOTIVATIONAL TRAJECTORIES

Grade retention has been associated with lower academic selfconcept, higher dropout risk, and greater emotional vulnerability (Almeida, 2019; Casanova; Bernardo; Almeida, 2019). From a motivational perspective, experiences of failure may foster avoidance goals and selfprotective strategies (Diaconu-Gherasim *et al.,* 2024). However, the effects are not uniform. Recent studies suggest that, in supportive contexts, experiences of failure can promote resilience, selfregulation, and goal redefinition (Li *et al.*, 2024; Sparks *et al.*, 2025). In higher education, where students have greater autonomy, achievement goals may mediate the relationship between past experiences and current performance (Li *et al.*, 2024; Sparks *et al.*, 2025).

2.4. INTEGRATION OF VARIABLES AND STUDY AIMS

Analysing achievement goals in isolation is insufficient when they are not considered alongside sociodemographic characteristics and prior educational trajectories (Wang; Yu, 2023). Gender and grade retention history can influence competence beliefs, academic identity, and achievement goals (Wang; Yu, 2023). However, studies that jointly integrate these variables remain scarce.

This study therefore seeks to examine: (a) differences in achievement goals as a function of gender; (b) differences according to grade retention history; (c) associations between goals and academic performance; (d) the combined predictive contribution of these variables; and (e) possible interaction effects in explaining achievement. By integrating motivational variables and differentiated educational trajectories, the study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of factors associated with academic performance in higher education, with implications for pedagogical practices and institutional policies oriented towards the promotion of mastery goals and more equitable and sustainable academic contexts (Almeida *et al.,* 2022; OCDE, 2023, 2024).

3. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURE

3.1 PARTICIPANTS

The sample comprised 482 higher education students from two Portuguese institutions (one public and one private), enrolled in programmes in Engineering (33.3%), Education (24.7%), Psychology (20.7%), Business Administration and Small Business Management (13.8%), and Sports Sciences (7.4%). The mean age of participants was 22.4 years (SD = 6.9), 51.4% identified as male, and 27.4% reported a history of grade retention.

3.2 INSTRUMENTS

Academic achievement goals were assessed using the Academic Goals Inventory for Higher Education (IMA-ES) (Miranda; Almeida, 2017), validated for the Portuguese university context by Wekey (2020). This selfreport instrument consists of 17 items randomly distributed across three dimensions: masteryoriented goals, performanceoriented goals, and social pressureavoidance goals. Responses are given on a 4point Likerttype scale, according to frequency (1 = never; 4 = always). In the present study, internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were 0.885 for Masteryoriented Goals, 0.867 for Performanceoriented Goals, and 0.717 for Social Pressureavoidance Goals, slightly higher than those reported by Wekey (2020) (0.867, 0.674, and 0.762, respectively).

Demographic data (gender, age, programme, institution) and grade retention history were collected through selfreport, as was academic performance, indicated by students' most recent selfreported grade point average.

3.3 PROCEDURES

Data were collected via an online questionnaire distributed to students through institutional channels (academic email and institutional digital platforms). Anonymity and confidentiality of responses were guaranteed, as well as informed consent, in accordance with ethical principles for research in education.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics, version 28. To examine group differences (by gender and by grade retention history), independentsamples Student's ttests were conducted. Effect sizes were estimated and interpreted using Cohen's d (d > 0.2 indicating a small effect, d > 0.5 a moderate effect, and d > 0.8 a large effect; COHEN, 1988). Pearson correlations were computed to explore relationships between academic achievement goals and academic performance. Finally, multiple linear regression analyses were performed to examine the contribution of academic goals to explaining variance in academic performance,

considering gender and grade retention history as moderating variables.

4 RESULTS

4.1 DIFFERENCES IN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT GOALS BY GENDER

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and independentsamples ttest results for gender differences in academic achievement goals. Statistically significant differences were found in two of the three dimensions. Female students reported significantly higher mean scores in masteryoriented goals (M = 20.7; SD = 3.05) than male students (M = 19.6; SD = 3.68), t(496) = −3.77, p < .001, with a smalltomoderate effect size (d = 0.33). Similarly, for performanceoriented goals, female students also showed higher mean scores (M = 18.2; SD = 2.12) compared to male students (M = 17.1; SD = 2.93), t(496) = −5.07, p < .001, with a moderate effect size (d = 0.43).

Regarding social pressureavoidance goals, male students had a slightly higher mean score (M = 11.5; SD = 4.81) than female students (M = 10.8; SD = 4.26); however, this difference was not statistically significant, t(496) = 1.65, p = .099, and the effect size was small (d = 0.16). Overall, gender was associated with differences in academic achievement goals, particularly in the dimensions traditionally considered more adaptive (mastery and performance), with higher levels among female students. Nonetheless, effect sizes were small to moderate, indicating differences of modest magnitude.

Table 1 - Differences in achievement goals according to gender: descriptive statistics, t-tests, and effect size (Cohen's d)

Goals	Gender	M (SD)	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Learning-oriented goals Female	Male	19.6 (3.68)	-3.771	496	0.000	0.33
	20.7 (3.05)					
Performance-oriented goals Female	Male	17.1 (2.93)	-5.071	496	0.000	0.43
	18.2 (2.12)					
Social pressure-avoidance goals	Male	11.5 (4.81)	1.653	496	0.099	0.16
	Feminino	10,8(4,26)				

Source: Own elaboration (2025).

4.2 DIFFERENCES IN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT GOALS BY GRADE RETENTION HISTORY

Table 2 compares academic achievement goals between students with and without a grade retention history. A statistically significant difference was observed only for masteryoriented goals. Students with a retention history showed a higher mean score (M = 20.6; SD = 3.28) than those without retention (M = 19.9; SD = 3.48), t(496) = 2.083, p = .038, with a small effect size (d = 0.21). For performanceoriented goals and social pressureavoidance goals, no statistically significant differences were found, and effect sizes were very small (d ≤ 0.11).

Table 2 - Differences in Academic Goals as a Function of Retention History: Descriptive Statistics, t Tests, and Effect Size (Cohen's d)

Academic goals	Retention history	M (SD)	t	df	p	d
Learning-oriented goals	Yes	20.6 (3.28)	2.083	496	.038	0.21
	No	19.9 (3.48)				
Performance-oriented goals	Yes	17.4 (2.48)	-1.136	496	.257	0.11
	No	17.7 (2.69)				
Social pressure avoidance–oriented goals	Yes	10.9 (4.70)	-0.758	496	.449	0.09
	No	11.3 (4.51)				

Source: Own elaboration (2025).

These findings suggest that grade retention history is specifically – albeit modestly – associated with higher levels of masteryoriented goals, with no relevant differences in the other motivational dimensions.

4.3 CORRELATIONS BETWEEN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT GOALS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE BY GENDER AND GRADE RETENTION HISTORY

Among male students, positive correlations were observed between masteryoriented goals and academic performance (r = .83) and between performanceoriented goals and performance (r = .99). Social pressureavoidance goals also showed a positive, though smaller, correlation (r = .29). Among female students, correlations between mastery goals and performance (r = .105) and between performance goals and performance (r = .097) were positive but of small magnitude, whereas social pressureavoidance goals were not associated with performance (r = .003). Despite these differences, caution is warranted, as the magnitude of the correlations did not result in significant predictive models when variables were analysed jointly (see Section 4.4).

Regarding grade retention history, among students with retention, mastery goals were positively correlated with performance (r = .185; p < .05), whereas performance and avoidance goals showed no significant associations. Among students without retention, both mastery goals (r = .107; p < .05) and performance goals (r = .123; p < .05) showed positive but small correlations with academic performance. Overall, correlations were mostly low, indicating that academic achievement goals are related to performance, but with limited magnitude.

4.4 MULTIPLE LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSES

To address the objectives related to the predictive contribution of academic achievement goals, separate multiple linear regression models were estimated by gender and by grade retention history.

For gender, the model was not statistically significant among male students, R^2 = .011, F(3, 249) = 0.904, p = .440, and none of the academic goals emerged as a significant predictor of performance. Similarly, among female students, the model was not significant, R^2 = .015, F(3, 225) = 1.167, p = .323, with no significant predictors.

Regarding grade retention history, among students with retention the model yielded R^2 = .038, F(3, 128) = 1.680, p = .174, and among

those without retention, R^2 = .018, F(3, 346) = 2.149, p = .094. In both cases, the models were not statistically significant, and academic achievement goals did not present significant individual predictive contributions.

5 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This study aimed to analyse differences in academic achievement goals as a function of gender and grade retention history, as well as to examine the association and predictive contribution of these goals to academic performance among higher education students. The findings are interpreted within Achievement Goal Theory, developed from the work of Carol Dweck and John Nicholls and later systematised by Elliot in the 2 × 2 framework (Elliot; McGregor, 2001). This framework posits that achievement goals organise the interpretation of evaluative situations and influence patterns of effort, persistence, and selfregulation (ames, 1992; urdan; kaplan, 2020).

Empirical results showed positive associations between mastery goals and academic performance, although of small magnitude, consistent with systematic reviews and meta-analyses reporting weak to moderate correlations between masteryapproach goals and academic achievement (Bardach *et al.,* 2019, 2020; Wu; Fu, 2024). The longitudinal meta-analysis by Vu *et al.* (2024), in particular, highlights reciprocal relations between motivation and performance over time, suggesting that the effects of goals are dynamic and context-dependent.

The literature indicates that mastery goals are more strongly associated with proximal processes – such as deep learning strategies, selfregulated learning, and engagement – than with final grades (Pintrich, 2000; Linnenbrink-Garcia; Wormington, 2019). Studies in higher education contexts show that academic self-efficacy and selfregulation act as key mediators (Fokkens-Bruinsma *et al.,* 2020; Bakhtiar; Hadwin, 2021; Schunk; Dibenedetto, 2022). Likewise, Ribeiro, Ribeiro and Pereira (2022) observed that motivation, satisfaction, and selfefficacy jointly explain a larger share of variance in performance than achievement goals alone.

When analysed through multiple regression models, achievement goals displayed limited explanatory power, converging with reviews that show a reduced incremental contribution of goals once prior cognitive variables and competence beliefs are taken into account (Richardson; Abraham; Bond, 2012; Bardach *et al*., 2020). These findings reinforce the view that goals operate within broader motivational systems, interacting with institutional and pedagogical factors (Almeida *et al*., 2022; Fong *et al*., 2017).

Significant differences were found in mastery and performance goals, with higher means among female students and small-tomoderate effect sizes. This pattern aligns with studies indicating a stronger orientation toward mastery goals among female students (Miranda; Almeida; Lozano, 2011; Struck Jannini; Akdemir; Menekse, 2024). Recent research suggests that these differences may reflect academic socialisation processes and differentiated sociocultural expectations (Eccles; Wigfield, 2020; OCDE, 2023). In stem fields, for example, women may combine mastery and performance goals as a strategy for asserting themselves in contexts potentially marked by stereotype threat (Cheryan *et al.,* 2017; Stolk; Gross; Zastavker, 2021; Whitcomb *et al.,* 2020). However, the small effect sizes observed support evidence that withingroup variability tends to exceed mean gender differences (Boden *et al.,* 2023). The absence of significant interactions between goals and gender in predicting performance suggests that the functional impact of goals is similar for both groups, echoing reviews that describe inconsistent moderating effects of gender on motivation–achievement relations (Wang; Yu, 2023).

Regarding grade retention history, differences emerged only in mastery goals, with slightly higher scores among students with retention. Although small, this effect is theoretically relevant. Traditionally, retention has been associated with lower academic selfcon-

cept and higher dropout risk (Almeida, 2019; Araújo, 2017). More recent evidence, however, suggests differentiated trajectories following experiences of failure. Studies on academic resilience indicate that the subjective interpretation of failure and social support can foster adaptive reorientation toward mastery goals (Li *et al*., 2024). Further research shows that resilience, selfregulation, and grit contribute to sustaining performance after adversity (Kvintová *et al.,* 2016; Sparks *et al.,* 2025). These findings help explain why retention was not associated with higher levels of avoidance goals in this sample.

The lack of significant differences in performanceavoidance goals partially contradicts literature linking failure experiences to defensive patterns (Leonte, 2023; Diaconu-Gherasim *et al*., 2024). This result suggests that, in higher education – a context characterised by greater autonomy and opportunities for identity redefinition – prior retention may be reinterpreted as a surmountable challenge, particularly when embedded in supportive pedagogical environments (Almeida *et al.,* 2022; Zepke; Leach, 2021).

Overall, the results partially support the assumptions of Achievement Goal Theory. Mastery goals are positively associated with performance, whereas avoidance goals, especially those related to social reinforcement, do not show consistent adaptive contributions, in line with evidence linking performanceavoidance goals to anxiety and internalising problems (Diaconu-Gherasim *et al*., 2024; MÖCKLINGHOFF *et al*., 2023). However, the small magnitude of associations and the low predictive power of the models point to the need for integrative perspectives: academic performance in higher education is multifactorial, resulting from the interaction of motivational, cognitive, emotional, and contextual variables (Richardson; Abraham; Bond, 2012; Marinho-Araújo; Ferreira; Almeida, 2024). Systemic and ecological approaches underscore this interdependence, emphasising the role of pedagogical practices, institutional climate, and student engagement (Crosier; Mäki, 2022; Das *et al*., 2024; OCDE, 2023, 2024).

6 CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study contributes to the literature by jointly considering achievement goals, gender, and grade retention history in the analysis of academic performance in higher education. The results indicate that achievement goals are a relevant component of students' motivational architecture; however, their impact appears predominantly indirect, depending on their articulation with competence beliefs, selfregulation processes, and contextual learning conditions. The absence of robust interactions between goals, gender, and retention history highlights the need for integrative models that simultaneously consider individual and contextual factors in explaining academic achievement (Almeida *et al*., 2022; OCDE, 2023, 2024).

From an applied perspective, these findings support the importance of promoting masteryoriented classroom climates, as advocated by Ames (1992), and of developing institutional support strategies that foster resilient and sustainable academic trajectories in higher education (Ames, 1992; Almeida *et al*., 2022).

6.1 THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results reinforce the relevance of promoting mastery goals in university contexts, given their consistent positive association with achievement (Anderman, 2020; Elliot; Hulleman, 2017; Senko, 2019). Pedagogical strategies focused on conceptual understanding, formative feedback, and valuing individual progress are empirically supported (Ames, 1992; Boruchovitch; Almeida; Miranda, 2017; Bzuneck; Boruchovitch, 2019). At the same time, the findings suggest that interventions focused exclusively on motivational orientation may be insufficient if not embedded in broader institutional policies addressing equity, psychoeducational support, and the development of selfregulation (Almeida *et al*., 2022; OCDE, 2024). Promoting academic success therefore requires a multilevel approach that

articulates classroom practices with structured institutional strategies (OCDE, 2024).

6.2 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The crosssectional design limits causal inferences and constrains understanding of how achievement goals evolve throughout students' academic trajectories. Longitudinal studies could clarify mediating and moderating mechanisms, particularly the role of academic selfefficacy, engagement, and institutional support (Schunk; Dibenedetto, 2022; Umemoto; Inagaki, 2023; Vu *et al*., 2024). Additionally, mixedmethod designs could deepen qualitative understanding of how academic failure is reinterpreted, especially among students with a retention history, allowing researchers to capture motivational dynamics not fully reflected in quantitative selfreport measures (Li *et al*., 2024; Sparks *et al*., 2025).

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