

# Citation Bias in Ego Depletion Research: A Follow-Up to Hardwicke et al. (2021)

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## Poster

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## Abstract

Introduced in the late 1990s, the notion that self-control relies on limited resources and becomes depleted with repeated exertion (termed ego-depletion) quickly gained popularity in social psychology. However, over the past decade, this effect has faced heavy criticism, with failed multi-lab replication attempts and null meta-analytic findings rendering it highly controversial. Nonetheless, proponents of the theory identified possible weaknesses in such studies. Hardwicke et al. (2021) observed that between 2017 and 2019 (immediately following the publication of a failed replication) the number of citations of classic ego-depletion articles barely declined. Moreover, these citations were predominantly favorable to the effect's existence while omitting contrary evidence. In this follow-up, we re-evaluate citation trends of classic ego-depletion articles, extending the analysis over a longer time span, during which two additional important multi-lab replication studies have been published. Building on Hardwicke et al. (2021) framework, we examine (1) the number of citations of the original ego-depletion articles up to 2025, (2) whether these citations are favorable or unfavorable, (3) how often evidence challenging ego-depletion is omitted, and (4) whether citations explicitly defend the effect's credibility. We discuss our findings and their implications for self-correction mechanisms in scientific literature.

## Keywords

citation bias; ego-depletion; meta-research; self-correction

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