

Enhancing self-efficacy in digital weight management: real world insights

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Background

Self-efficacy (SE), the belief in one's ability to achieve desired outcomes, is critical for behaviour change. Lower SE is associated with disengagement, suboptimal outcomes in behavioural interventions, lower socioeconomic status, and health inequities (Myers-Ingram et al., 2023; Hardman et al., 2020). Reimbursed digital weight management programmes often serve harder-to-reach populations who report lower SE (Finnie et al., 2023).

Aims

This study tested whether personalising a reimbursed digital weight management intervention for individuals with lower SE could improve outcomes.

Methods

At enrolment, SE was measured using a single-item Likert scale (1–10): “How confident are you in reaching your goal(s) with the Oviva Direkt Programme?” Scores <5 were classified as low SE. Evidence-based behaviour change techniques for improving SE—verbal persuasion, graded tasks, focus on past success, problem-solving, and feedback (West et al., 2019)—were delivered through five weekly tailored messages and human coaching. Participants in a German 12-week digital programme were randomised into an active group receiving SE messages (n=706) or a control group with standard messages (n=708). Groups were balanced for gender, age, and SE distribution.

Results

By week 12, participants in the active group achieved significantly greater weight loss (4.9% vs. 3.9% in the control group). Self-reported SE in the active group increased from 4.34 to 5.76. Attrition rates were similar across groups, with 12-week data collected for 22.5% (active) and 21.4% (control).

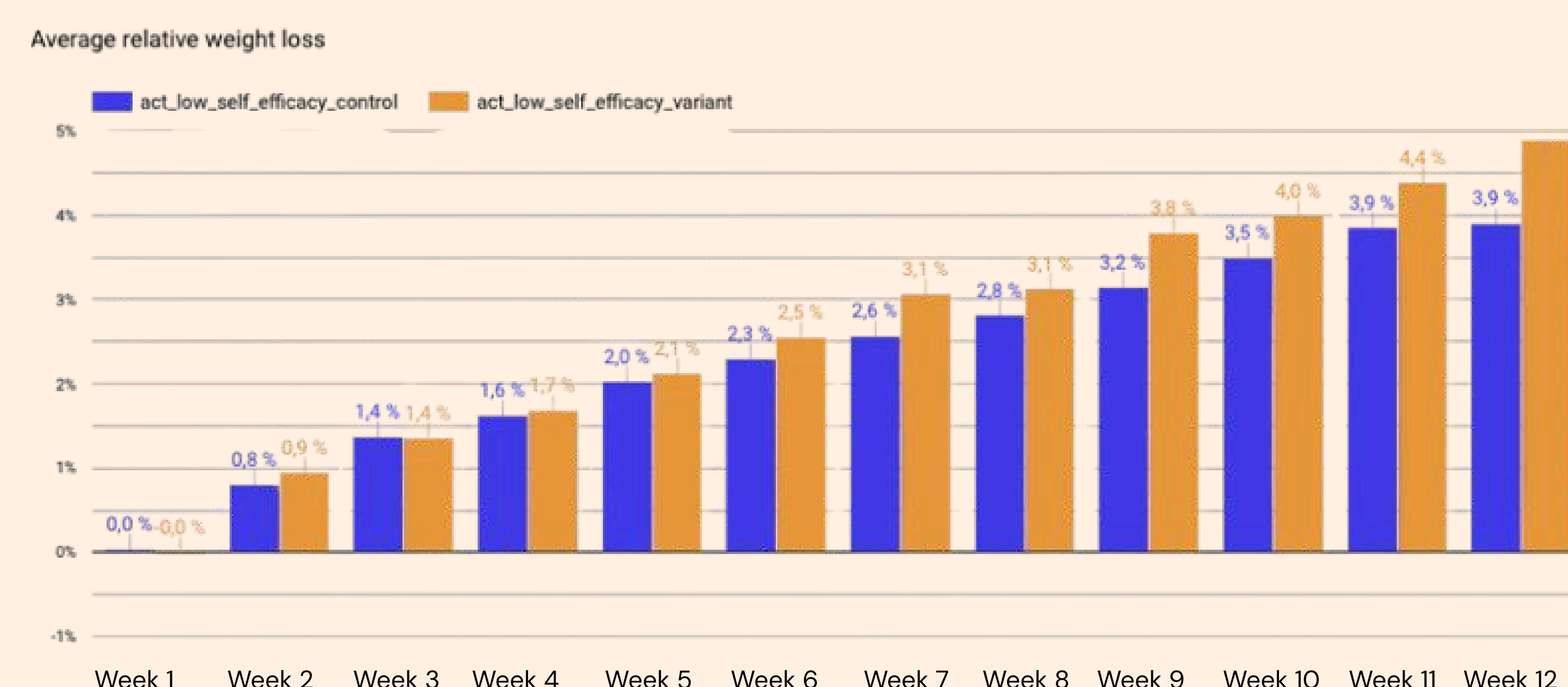


Figure 1. Differences in reported weight loss between active and control groups from weeks 1–12

Conclusion

Tailored SE messaging and coaching were associated with improved weight loss and participant empowerment through increasing SE. These findings highlight the value of personalising digital interventions to address health inequities and support sustainable behaviour change and warrant further research.

References:

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