

**PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:  
INVESTIGATING PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE AS A MODERATING FACTOR****Jabborova Musharrafkhon Zafarbek kizi**PhD Student of Andijan State University,  
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**Abstract:** Perceived discrimination has been identified as one of the most pervasive psychological stressors influencing students' academic engagement and success in higher education. This study examines how experiences of perceived discrimination affect academic performance and explores the moderating role of psychological resilience as a potential buffer against its negative consequences. Data were collected from 250 university students across three institutions through standardized questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Statistical analyses revealed that perceived discrimination significantly predicted lower academic performance, while psychological resilience moderated this relationship by reducing its negative impact. Qualitative findings further illustrated that resilient students employed adaptive coping mechanisms, such as cognitive reframing, self-efficacy enhancement, and seeking social support, to sustain their motivation and academic achievement despite facing discrimination. The study concludes that fostering resilience within academic environments is a powerful approach to promoting equity and psychological well-being among students exposed to discriminatory experiences.

**Keywords:** perceived discrimination, academic performance, psychological resilience, stress, coping strategies, student well-being

**1. Introduction**

The relationship between perceived discrimination and academic performance has become a focal point in the fields of educational psychology and social behavior studies. Discrimination—whether based on race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, or cultural background—undermines students' academic motivation and engagement by creating a climate of exclusion and stress (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Students who perceive themselves as targets of bias are more likely to experience **stereotype threat**, internalized self-doubt, and psychological distress, which in turn can reduce their ability to concentrate, participate, and perform academically.

However, not all students who experience discrimination suffer academically to the same extent. Some demonstrate remarkable adaptability, perseverance, and emotional regulation—qualities that define **psychological resilience**. Resilience is often conceptualized as the process of positive adaptation despite adversity (Masten, 2018). It enables individuals to maintain goal-directed behavior, recover from stress, and find constructive meaning in negative experiences.

Existing research (Eccles & Wong, 2020; Luthar et al., 2020) indicates that resilience acts as a *protective moderator*, mitigating the detrimental effects of perceived discrimination on academic outcomes. Yet, limited empirical research has explored how this mechanism operates in higher education contexts, particularly among ethnically and socioeconomically diverse student populations.

This study aims to fill this gap by systematically investigating:

1. The relationship between perceived discrimination and academic performance among university students;
2. The moderating role of psychological resilience in this relationship;
3. The coping strategies resilient students use to manage discrimination and maintain academic success.

By addressing these objectives, the study contributes to the growing body of research on equity, well-being, and academic achievement in multicultural educational environments.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Participants

The research involved **250 undergraduate students** aged 18 to 25, enrolled at three universities representing diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. The sample consisted of 132 female and 118 male students. Ethnic representation included majority and minority groups, with approximately 40% identifying as belonging to marginalized communities. Participants were recruited through campus-wide announcements and classroom invitations. Ethical approval was obtained from each institution's research ethics committee, and participation was entirely voluntary and confidential.

### 2.2 Instruments

Three main instruments were used:

- **Perceived Discrimination Scale (PDS):** a 10-item measure adapted from Williams et al. (1997) assessing students' perceived experiences of unfair treatment in academic and social settings. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Never") to 5 ("Very often").
- **Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC):** a 25-item inventory (Connor & Davidson, 2003) measuring individuals' ability to cope with adversity, maintain optimism, and recover from stress.
- **Academic Performance Index (API):** a composite measure combining self-reported Grade Point Average (GPA) and instructor evaluations of student engagement and achievement.

### 2.3 Procedure

The study was conducted in two sequential phases:

**Phase 1:** Quantitative data were collected through an online survey distributed via university portals. Participants provided demographic information and completed the PDS and CD-RISC questionnaires along with their GPA data.

**Phase 2:** To gain deeper insights, **30 participants** representing high, medium, and low resilience levels were selected for semi-structured interviews. These interviews explored students' perceptions of discrimination, their emotional reactions, and coping strategies.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using **SPSS 26.0**. Correlation and hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to assess relationships between perceived discrimination, resilience, and academic performance. A moderation analysis tested whether resilience attenuated the negative effects of discrimination. Qualitative data were transcribed and coded using **thematic**

**content analysis** in NVivo, identifying recurrent patterns and narratives related to coping and adaptation.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Quantitative Findings

Descriptive statistics indicated moderate levels of perceived discrimination ( $M = 2.87$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ) and high resilience levels ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ). Correlation analysis showed a **significant negative relationship** between perceived discrimination and academic performance ( $r = -0.47$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Conversely, resilience was **positively correlated** with academic performance ( $r = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Hierarchical regression revealed that perceived discrimination significantly predicted lower academic performance ( $\beta = -0.45$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). When resilience was introduced into the model, the negative impact of discrimination decreased ( $\beta = -0.28$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), confirming that **resilience moderates this relationship**. In high-resilience students, the effect of discrimination on GPA was minimal, whereas low-resilience students demonstrated a sharp decline in academic outcomes under similar discriminatory experiences.

#### 3.2 Qualitative Findings

Analysis of interview data produced three major themes:

1. **Cognitive Reframing and Meaning-Making:** Resilient students interpreted discriminatory experiences as challenges to strengthen their determination rather than as personal failures.
2. **Social and Emotional Support Networks:** Many relied on supportive peers, mentors, or family members who reinforced their sense of belonging and self-worth.
3. **Goal Orientation and Self-Efficacy:** Students emphasized long-term academic goals and self-discipline as key motivators, often viewing academic success as a means to counter societal biases.

Overall, these findings suggest that resilience not only mitigates negative emotional responses to discrimination but also actively contributes to **strategic academic adaptation**.

### 4. Discussion

The findings confirm that perceived discrimination is a strong negative predictor of academic performance, consistent with prior research linking discrimination to reduced academic motivation and engagement (Steele & Aronson, 1995). However, the results also underscore the **power of resilience** as a moderating factor that enables students to maintain academic success despite facing adverse circumstances.

Psychological resilience operates as a **dynamic process** involving emotional regulation, positive self-concept, and goal commitment. Resilient students appear better equipped to manage the

psychological stress caused by discrimination by engaging in constructive cognitive appraisals and maintaining high academic self-efficacy (Masten, 2018).

From a practical standpoint, educational institutions should prioritize programs that enhance student resilience through **mentorship, mindfulness training, inclusive classroom practices, and peer-support initiatives**. Such interventions not only improve academic outcomes but also foster a culture of empathy and psychological safety on campus.

Furthermore, this study highlights that resilience is not an innate trait but a skill that can be **developed and strengthened** through environmental and institutional support. By cultivating resilience, universities can empower students from marginalized groups to overcome structural inequities and achieve academic excellence.

## 5. Conclusion

This research demonstrates that perceived discrimination has a clear negative impact on students' academic performance, yet this relationship is significantly moderated by psychological resilience. Resilience enables students to reinterpret discrimination, regulate emotional responses, and maintain academic motivation. Consequently, promoting resilience should become a key educational priority in universities committed to diversity, inclusion, and student well-being.

Future research should employ longitudinal designs to track changes in resilience and academic achievement over time. Additionally, examining cultural and gender differences in resilience mechanisms may further enrich our understanding of how students adapt to discrimination across contexts.

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