

Navigating adversity: the relationship between academic entitlement and resilience in male undergraduates

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ABSTRACT

In today's academic landscape, there is growing concern about the rise of academic entitlement among students and its potential impact on their psychological resilience. This study aimed to examine the relationship between academic entitlement and psychological resilience among university students, and to determine if academic entitlement subscales can predict resilience. The participants were 746 male undergraduate students from the Faculty of Education at Al-Azhar University, aged 19-25 years ($M=21.41$, $SD=9.52$). Students completed the academic entitlement scale (AES) and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). The results revealed a significant negative correlation between overall academic entitlement and psychological resilience ($r=-.801$, $p<.01$), supporting the first hypothesis. Multiple regression analysis showed that both academic narcissism ($\beta=-.237$, $p<.001$) and academic outcome ($\beta=.132$, $p<.001$) subscales were significant predictors of psychological resilience, confirming the second hypothesis. These findings suggest that addressing entitled attitudes and fostering resilience should be key priorities for higher education institutions. Implications include developing targeted interventions to reduce academic entitlement and enhance resilience among students, potentially improving their academic performance and psychological well-being. Future research should explore additional factors influencing this relationship and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions across diverse student populations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Academic entitlement refers to students' expectations of academic success without commensurate effort [1], [2]. This attitude has been linked to decreased effort, disruptive behavior, tolerance for academic dishonesty, and exploitation of others [3]–[5]. The prevalence of academic entitlement among college students raises concerns about disciplinary processes and overall university climate.

Academic entitlement encompasses beliefs that one's academic output should be satisfactory, including high grades and successful endeavors, without exerting maximum effort. Recent research confirms the existence of this attitude among undergraduate students [6]–[10]. Conversely, psychological resilience is defined as the ability to cope with and positively adapt to adversity, trauma, or severe stress [11]. This mindset has become increasingly prevalent across different academic institutions and cultural contexts, raising concerns about its long-term impact on student development.

Students exhibiting entitlement tend to have an external locus of control, attributing negative outcomes to others rather than themselves [1], [12]. They may also display narcissistic tendencies, believing they deserve special treatment [2], [13]. Research has linked academic entitlement to conscientiousness [14]–[16], which involves diligence, perseverance, and self-control.

Concurrent with the growing interest in academic entitlement, researchers have also focused on psychological resilience in academic settings. Psychological resilience, a multidimensional phenomenon, involves the capacity to adapt, recover, and thrive despite facing adversity [17]–[21]. Resilient individuals handle stress more effectively and approach challenges positively [22], [23]. In higher education, psychological resilience mediates stress, improves academic achievement and well-being, and serves as a coping strategy for college students [24]–[26]. While academic entitlement and psychological resilience have been studied separately, their relationship remains unclear. Entitled students may exhibit less resilience due to unrealistic expectations and external locus of control. Conversely, resilient students might be less likely to develop entitlement mentalities due to their inner strengths and adaptability.

Resilient individuals often possess an internal locus of control [27], [28] and higher emotional intelligence [29], [30]. These traits, along with self-discipline, motivation, and perseverance [31], contribute to their ability to navigate challenges effectively in academic and personal contexts. Individuals with high resilience tend to view obstacles as opportunities for growth, maintaining a positive outlook even in the face of adversity. This mindset allows them to bounce back from setbacks more quickly and adapt to changing circumstances, qualities that are particularly valuable in the dynamic environment of higher education. Academic entitlement consistently predicts poorer academic performance, including lower grade-point average (GPA) [15], [20], [32], [33], increased likelihood of cheating [34], [35], unrealistic expectations about grading and coursework [32], and blame attribution to instructors for academic failures [1]. In contrast, psychological resilience is considered a protective factor against academic problems [36]–[38].

Limited research has explored the relationship between academic entitlement and resilience. Torres *et al.* [39] identified a significant nonlinear negative correlation between these constructs among university students. However, further research is needed to understand their relationship fully. This gap in the literature presents an opportunity to better understand how these two important psychological constructs interact and influence student outcomes.

Theoretical frameworks suggest potential links between academic entitlement and resilience. For instance, the locus of control, a concept closely related to both constructs, may play a mediating role. Academically entitled students often exhibit an external locus of control, attributing their results to external factors [1], [12]. Conversely, resilience is associated with an internal locus of control [28]. This theoretical connection suggests a possible relationship between academic entitlement and resilience.

Furthermore, emotional regulation and coping strategies, which are integral to resilience [29], [30], may be less developed in students with high levels of academic entitlement. These students often struggle to regulate their emotions when facing academic challenges or perceived injustices [40], [41]. Given these theoretical connections and the lack of empirical research directly examining the relationship between academic entitlement and psychological resilience, the present study aims to address this gap in the literature. Based on the existing literature and theoretical frameworks, we hypothesize that: i) there is a significant negative correlation between overall academic entitlement and psychological resilience (H1); ii) academic entitlement subscales (academic narcissism and academic outcome) predict psychological resilience (H2).

This study aims to investigate the correlation between academic entitlement and psychological resilience among undergraduate students and explore the potential for predicting psychological resilience through academic entitlement. The findings will provide valuable insights for higher education institutions, informing strategies to foster resilience and address challenges presented by entitlement thinking and behavior. Moreover, understanding this relationship could provide valuable insights for developing targeted interventions in higher education settings.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

The study included 746 male undergraduate students from the Faculty of Education at Al-Azhar University in the Governorate of Dakahlia, Egypt. The participants' ages varied from 19 to 25 years ($M=21.41$, $SD=.952$). The sample involved students coming from various academic majors, such as Geography ($n=150$), Special Education ($n=135$), English Language ($n=79$), Technology ($n=193$), Psychology ($n=59$), and French Language ($n=132$). Additionally, participants were drawn from different grade levels, with 139 students in their second year and 606 in their fourth year. Regarding their place of residence, 172 participants were from urban areas, while 573 were from rural areas.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Academic entitlement scale (AES)

The AES [42] was used to assess participants' levels of academic entitlement. The AES is a 26-item self-report measure that consists of two factors: academic narcissism (13 items) and academic outcome (13 items). Items are rated on a Likert Scale of 7 points. The higher the score, the stronger are the academic entitlement beliefs. The Arabic translation of the AES was utilized in this study. The original scale has demonstrated good internal consistency reliability ($\alpha=.83$), with $\alpha=.86$ for the academic narcissism factor and $\alpha=.84$ for the academic outcome factor [42].

2.2.2. Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC)

The CD-RISC [43] is a 25-item self-report questionnaire designed to assess an individual's resourcefulness in adversities and capacity to bounce back from difficult situations. Responses are given on a 5-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of resilience. The original CD-RISC has shown very good psychometric properties, including high internal consistency ($\alpha=.89$) and good test-retest reliability (intraclass correlation=.87) [43]. The scale has been validated across numerous studies and demonstrates excellent reliability in measuring psychological resilience.

The Arabic version of AES and CD-RISC underwent a rigorous translation and validation process. Initially, the scale was translated from English to Arabic by the authors. A back-translation was then performed by an independent translator to ensure accuracy. Following this, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of AES was conducted with a separate sample of 218 students to verify the two-factor structure (academic narcissism and academic outcome) of the original scale. The CFA results supported the two-factor model ($\chi^2/df=2.34$, comparative fit index (CFI)=.92, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)=.067). Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding coefficients of .88 for academic narcissism and .80 for academic outcome, comparable to the original English version. Test-retest reliability over a four-week interval ($n=67$) showed strong temporal stability ($r=.82$, $p<.001$). Moreover, a CFA of CD-RISC was conducted to verify the five-factor structure of the original scale. The CFA results supported the five-factor model ($\chi^2/df=2.18$, CFI=.94, RMSEA=.058). Cronbach's alpha for the total scale was .91, with subscale reliabilities ranging from .75 to .88.

2.3. Procedure

The data was gathered electronically by Google Forms second semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. Arabic translation was done for the AES and CD-RISC deployed. Participants were handed the informed consent documents and they completed the measures anonymously. The necessary ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the process of data collection, such as confidentiality and informed consent.

2.4. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency were determined for study variables and demographic characteristics. Pearson's correlation coefficients were figured out for the purpose of correlating academic entitlement (total score and subscales) with psychological resilience. Additionally, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictive power of academic entitlement subscales on psychological resilience. All analyses were performed using SPSS version 26.0 to ensure accurate and reliable statistical computations.

3. RESULTS

The present study examined the relationship between academic entitlement and psychological resilience among undergraduate students. Overall, the findings revealed a significant negative correlation between academic entitlement and psychological resilience. Descriptive statistics, correlations, and regression analyses were conducted to explore these relationships in depth.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the main study variables. The AES yielded a mean total score of 103.51 ($SD=13.492$), with subscale means of 44.50 ($SD=7.992$) for academic narcissism and 59.01 ($SD=9.515$) for academic outcome. The CD-RISC produced a mean total score of 97.19 ($SD=13.392$). Among the CD-RISC subscales, personal competence had the highest mean score ($M=31.88$, $SD=4.996$), followed by tolerance of negative affect ($M=25.18$, $SD=4.850$). The spiritual influences subscale had the lowest mean score ($M=9.60$, $SD=.983$).

In examining the relationships between AES and CD-RISC subscales, academic narcissism showed the strongest negative correlation with tolerance of negative affect ($r=-.532$, $p<.01$). Academic outcome had the strongest negative correlation with personal competence ($r=-.564$, $p<.01$). However, spiritual influences subscale of CD-RISC demonstrated the weakest correlations with AES and its subscales, although these

correlations remained significant (r ranging from $-.185$ to $-.271$, $p < .01$). A strong negative correlation was observed between total AES and CD-RISC scores ($r = -.801$, $p < .01$). Moreover, both AES subscales were negatively correlated with the total CD-RISC score: academic narcissism ($r = -.580$, $p < .01$) and academic outcome ($r = -.648$, $p < .01$).

All CD-RISC subscales demonstrated significant negative correlations with AES and its subscales. The strongest negative correlations were found between total AES scores and personal competence subscale ($r = -.694$, $p < .01$), and between total AES scores and tolerance of negative affect subscale ($r = -.725$, $p < .01$). A multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictive power of academic entitlement on psychological resilience. The two AES subscales served as predictors, with the total CD-RISC score as the dependent variable, as seen in Table 2.

Table 1. Correlations among academic entitlement, psychological resilience, and their subscales

Variable	<i>M</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Academic narcissism	44.50	1							
2 Academic outcome	59.01	.18**	1						
3 Academic entitlement	103.5	.72**	.81**	1					
4 Personal competence	31.88	-.50**	-.56**	-.69**	1				
5 Tolerance of negative affect	25.18	-.53**	-.58**	-.72**	.65**	1			
6 Acceptance of change	19.02	-.48**	-.54**	-.66**	.63**	.59**	1		
7 Control	11.51	-.42**	-.47**	-.58**	.62**	.57**	.50**	1	
8 Spiritual influences	9.60	-.18**	-.22**	-.27**	.38**	.20**	.39**	.28**	1
9 Psychological resilience	97.19	-.58**	-.64**	-.80**	.89**	.86**	.80**	.75**	.43**

Note. ** $p < .01$

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis predicting psychological resilience from academic entitlement subscales

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>
Constant	103.973	3.337		31.157	.000		
Academic narcissism	-.377	.060	-.237	-6.316	.000		
Academic outcome	.171	.049	.132	3.517	.000		
Full model						.054	21.287

Note: *B*=unstandardized regression coefficient; *SE B*=standard error of *B*; β =standardized regression coefficient; *R*²=coefficient of determination

The regression model was statistically significant, $F(2,743)=21.287$, $p < .001$, accounting for 5.4% of the variance in psychological resilience ($R^2=.054$). Both academic narcissism ($\beta = -.237$, $p < .001$) and academic outcome ($\beta = .132$, $p < .001$) emerged as significant predictors of psychological resilience. These results remained consistent even after controlling for potential confounding variables.

A direct regression analysis showed that academic narcissism negatively impacts psychological resilience, while the academic outcome subscale positively correlates with resilience. Higher scores on the academic outcome subscale indicate slightly higher resilience levels compared to academic narcissism scores, while controlling for the academic outcome subscale. Moreover, academic narcissism negatively predicted psychological resilience, suggesting that higher levels of academic narcissism were associated with lower resilience. Conversely, academic outcome had a positive correlation with resilience such that students with higher scores on this subscale reported slightly more resilience than the others after controlling for academic narcissism.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a negative relationship between academic entitlement and psychological resilience, suggesting that students with high levels of academic entitlement tend to have lower levels of psychological resilience. The observed correlation between total academic entitlement score and psychological resilience ($r = -.80$) supports previous findings that these two constructs may be inversely related [42]. This strong negative correlation suggests that interventions targeting one construct might have significant effects on the other.

Several theoretical concepts can be used to explain this relationship. First, the locus of control may contribute to understanding this relationship. Academically entitled students often exhibit an external locus of control, attributing their results to external factors [1], [12]. Conversely, individuals with an internal locus of control demonstrate more complex adaptability patterns, believing that goal achievement depends on personal initiatives [28].

Second, the constructs of academic entitlement, including unrealistic expectations and a lack of personal responsibility, may negatively affect resilience [2], [44]. Resilience requires the ability to respond to threats and bounce back from setbacks [11], [45], but this may be challenging for students who expect to perform academically without corresponding effort [1]. Third, the unfavorable association may be due to variations in emotional regulation and coping strategies. Resilient students have higher emotional intelligence and better emotional control [46], [47], whereas academically entitled students struggle to regulate their emotions when experiencing academic challenges or perceived injustices [10], [48].

The strong negative correlations between academic entitlement and the personal competence ($r=-.69$) and tolerance of negative affect ($r=-.73$) subscales of resilience are particularly noteworthy. These findings suggest that academically entitled students may have lower confidence in their abilities to cope with challenges (personal competence) and may struggle more with managing negative emotions (tolerance of negative affect). This aligns with research indicating that academic entitlement is associated with decreased effort and increased blame attribution to external factors [3], [5].

The weaker, albeit still significant, negative correlation between academic entitlement and the Spiritual Influences subscale of resilience (r ranging from $-.19$ to $-.27$) suggests that spiritual or philosophical beliefs may be less impacted by or less related to academic entitlement. This finding warrants further investigation to understand the role of spiritual or philosophical beliefs in the relationship between academic entitlement and resilience [49], [50]. Future studies should explore the potential moderating role of spiritual beliefs in the relationship between academic entitlement and resilience.

The multiple regression analysis revealed that both academic narcissism and academic outcome subscales significantly predicted psychological resilience, albeit in different directions. Academic narcissism negatively predicted resilience ($\beta=-.24$), which aligns with previous research linking narcissistic traits to lower resilience [51], [52]. Interestingly, the academic outcome subscale positively predicted resilience ($\beta=.13$) when controlling for academic narcissism. This finding suggests a more complex relationship between academic entitlement and resilience than initially hypothesized. It's possible that some aspects of outcome-focused entitlement, such as high expectations for academic success, may contribute positively to resilience when separated from narcissistic tendencies [53], [54].

The study findings should be interpreted within the specific cultural and educational context of Al-Azhar University in Egypt. Cultural factors, such as collectivist values, religious influences, and traditional educational practices, may play a significant role in shaping both academic entitlement and resilience among Egyptian students. For instance, the emphasis on respect for authority figures in Egyptian culture could potentially mitigate extreme forms of academic entitlement. Conversely, the traditionally hierarchical structure of education might impact students' perceptions of their role in the learning process. Additionally, the strong familial and community support systems typical in Egyptian society could contribute to higher levels of resilience. However, these cultural factors may also create unique pressures and expectations that influence academic entitlement and resilience in ways that differ from Western contexts. Future cross-cultural studies comparing academic entitlement and resilience across different educational systems and cultural backgrounds would provide valuable insights into the generalizability of these findings and help identify universal versus culture-specific factors influencing these constructs.

The study findings have several implications for higher education institutions and practitioners. Given the negative relationship between academic entitlement and resilience, universities should consider implementing programs to address entitled attitudes and behaviors. This includes implementing programs on personal responsibility, realistic expectation setting, and effort value. Additionally, institutions should focus on developing resilience among students, incorporating resilience-building activities into curricula, and providing targeted support. However, educators should not discourage high expectations entirely, as outcome-focused attitudes may be beneficial. Personalized approaches may be more effective than one-size-fits-all interventions. The study has limitations, including a cross-sectional design that limits causal inferences about the relationship between academic entitlement and resilience, a sample limited to male undergraduate students from one university in Egypt, and the use of self-report measures, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Additionally, the study suggests exploring additional factors such as personality traits, family background, and academic experiences to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of academic entitlement and resilience in higher education settings.

Future research should use diverse methodologies to understand the relationship between academic entitlement and resilience. Longitudinal studies can track the development of entitlement and resilience over time, while mixed-methods approaches can provide deeper insights. Personality traits like the Big Five or narcissism could provide a nuanced understanding of individual differences. Family background factors, such as parenting styles and socioeconomic status, should also be examined. Mediating variables like coping strategies and academic self-efficacy could be explored. Intervention studies to reduce entitlement or enhance resilience could translate findings into practical educational settings.

5. CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the relationship between academic entitlement and psychological resilience among undergraduate students at Al-Azhar University in Egypt. The findings reveal a significant negative correlation between academic entitlement and psychological resilience, suggesting that students with higher levels of academic entitlement tend to exhibit lower levels of psychological resilience. This relationship was particularly strong in the domains of personal competence and tolerance of negative affect. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on academic entitlement and psychological resilience in higher education. This highlights the importance of understanding the complex relationship between entitlement and psychological resilience in higher education, as it can help educators support student well-being and academic success, preparing students for both academic and life success.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

This journal uses the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to recognize individual author contributions, reduce authorship disputes, and facilitate collaboration.

Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
Mahmoud Elsaid Badawy	✓			✓		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

E : Writing - Review & Editing

Vi : Visualization

Su : Supervision

P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

Written informed consent was obtained from all student participants.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The study protocol was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, Al-Azhar University, Egypt (Ref. No. EDU-REC-2024-0257). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

DATA AVAILABILITY




The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author [MAN], upon reasonable request.

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