

## ACADEMIC SELF-HANDICAPPING, ACADEMIC BUOYANCY, AND SELF-CONCEPT IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between academic self-handicapping, academic buoyancy, and self-concept in college students. A correlation design was used to gather data from (N = 300) college students both male and female with the age range of 17 to 20 (M= 17.59, SD = .81) years. This sample was selected by using convenient sampling and the study used already established measures such as Academic Self Handicapping Scale (Gupta, 2020) Academic Buoyancy Scale (Martin, 2008) and Questionnaire of Self Concept\_18 (Deljos, 2022) for evaluation. The result showed academic buoyancy and self-concept had negative relationship with academic self-handicapping. While academic buoyancy was positively correlated with self-concept, suggesting that students who are more resilient in the educational setting have better self-perception or self-control. Moreover, academic self-handicapping and academic buoyancy was predicting the self-concept but academic buoyancy was not a mediator. These findings demonstrated that how self-concept and academic buoyancy can protector against self-defeating practices like self-handicapping. The study emphasizes how crucial it is to promote resilience and positive self-beliefs in academic interventions inevitable to enhance student performance.*

**Keywords:** *academic self-handicapping, academic buoyancy, self-concept*

### **Introduction**

Academic success is shaped by how students perceive their capabilities, cope with challenges, and manage setbacks. Behaviors and psychological states have big influence on learners' academic routine and overall well-being in the academic setting (Midgley & Urdan, 2001). A maladaptive strategy used by students to safeguard their self-image when they expect to fail is academic self-handicapping. Students who engage in self-handicapping make decisions that could negatively impact their academic performance. They can blame external, or circumstantial, factors for their disappointment (Gupta & Geetika, 2020). Behavioral and Claimed Self Handicapping are the dimensions of academic self-handicapping. Behavioral self-handicapping aims to purposefully create a barrier that prevents performance. This increases the likelihood of failure even as it lessens internal attributions in the event of failure (Ferrari & Tice, 2000). Claimed self-handicapping differs from behavioral self-handicapping includes the handicapper merely makes excuses for their incompetence to perform as well as they otherwise could, rather than sabotaging themselves (Singh, 2008). Fear of Failure, perfectionism, past academic experiences, lack of coping skills and low academic motivation, cultural and social influences are the factors of academic self-handicapping.

Academic buoyancy refers to students' capacity to navigate academic hindrances or obstacles that are common in the regular course of school life (Martin & Marsh, 2008). The 5-Cs; Confidence, Coordination, Control, Commitment, and Composition are five significant motivational indicators (Diertbote & Comas, 2024) of academic buoyancy that were established by Martin and Marsh (2006). The three categories of expectation, worth, and affective are intimately related to these five Cs (Pintrich, 2003). The smaller proportion of students, who experience major, severe, and prolonged adversities such as poverty, gang violence, chronic underachievement, bullying, school rejection, parental drug or alcohol abuse, learning disabilities, poor physical and mental health, and so on must be taken into account when defining academic buoyancy (Bellis et al., 2018). Family support, a strong relationship with a pro-social adult, an informal social network, and peer dedication to education, authoritative and compassionate parenting, and affiliations with pro-social groups are examples of family and peer variables. Some other factors also contribute in academic buoyancy (Cappella & Weinstein, 2001). Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is highly relevant because academic buoyancy involves students staying engaged and emotionally balanced in the face of routine pressures. SDT helps explain how internal motivation and psychological need satisfaction empower students to stay positive and persist through academic challenges.

Generalized self-evaluation, or self-appreciation, is a component of self-concept (Mares, 2013). Adolescents' beliefs, values, and attitudes are shaped by cultural and societal norms, which in turn affect how they perceive themselves (Vagnerova, 2001). Individual's self-concept form the source of their behavior, manipulating the multifaceted concept that includes self-actualization, self-acceptance, self-esteem, and self-awareness expectations, self-control, and social connections (Deljos et al., 2022). Numerous other self-concepts, including self-efficacy, self-esteem, self-image, and self-awareness, are linked to one's self-concept (Babu & Selvamari, 2019). According to Rogers, the self-concept is made up of three components ideal self, self-image and self-esteem. Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s, explains how people's sense of who they are is tied to the groups they belong to, such as nationality, religion, or social class. This group membership contributes significantly to a person's self-concept and self-esteem. People naturally seek to maintain a positive image of their own group (the "in-group") compared to others (the "out-groups"), which can influence attitudes and behaviors toward members of different groups. Individuals those are less confident in their academic capabilities are more self-handicap because failure would validate their negative self-perception (Luttrell & Foster, 2004). Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between academic self-handicapping, academic buoyancy and self-concept in college students.

### **Literature Review**

Academic self-handicapping behavior is linked to student motivation, perceived class goals, performance characteristics, time management techniques, study time savings, and, ultimately, academic success. Various studies were conducted relationship between academic buoyancy and self-handicapping. There is a chance that some students will start displaying academic handicapping when they encounter these difficulties and setbacks (Delojs et al., 2022). Students' academic lives have suffered as a result of self-handicapping (Ghadam et al., 2020). High self-handicappers used less productive study methods and spent less time for preparing tests. According to a study, students' grade point suffered when they self-handicapped (Bahrami, 2017).

Self-handicapping was positively correlated with surface learning and test anxiety and negatively correlated with self-concept clarity, deep learning, self-regulated learning, and exam marks (Thomas & Gadbois, 2007). Other cognitive factors and self-concept are negatively correlated with self-handicapping. Self-handicapping is more prevalent in people whose self-concept is threatened (Schwinger et al., 2014). Students who self-handicap more frequently may eventually experience undesirable outcomes including procrastination and low academic buoyancy (Aloka et al., 2022).

Several studies highlighted that academic self-handicapping associated with procrastination, poor study habits, low academic performance, and diminished self-concept and self-efficacy (Zamora, 2019). Another study showed that self-handicapping behaviors had a detrimental impact on academic performance and that academic psychological performance had a positive direct influence (Adil et al., 2021). Other researches have explored that factors such as time management, emotional regulation, and family support influence self-concept and buoyancy (Yasin, 2024). Self-handicapping tendencies were significantly predicted by cognitive distortions and self-esteem, and that women scored higher on self-handicapping than males (Yavuzer, 2015). Students' attitudes toward research were positively correlated with their academic buoyancy and self-efficacy (Sabina, 2019).

Positive academic self-concept is negatively correlated with self-handicapping and positively related to academic buoyancy (Ulfah et al., 2024). Positive relationship between life satisfaction and academic engagement, academic buoyancy, and self-worth (Khaksar & Jayervand, 2020). One study demonstrated positive correlation between academic adjustment and school involvement, academic identity, and academic buoyancy (Jafari & Abdizarrin, 2022). Academic procrastination was explained by the indirect influence of self-esteem through academic self-efficacy, and that academic self-efficacy fully mediated the relationship between academic procrastination and self-esteem (Batoool et al., 2017). Self-handicapping skills in academic contexts are negatively correlated with academic identity. Self-efficacy among students was negatively impacted by self-handicapping, and that metacognition had a partial mediating influence on self-efficacy and academic accomplishment (Khalid et al., 2023).

### **Study Rationale**

In college students, these variables play vital role to understand how students manage academic stresses, overcome hardship, and maintain their self-esteem (Sabzichi et al., 2022). This study provides guidance on improving flexibility and lowering maladaptive behaviors and gives valuable vision about how students cope, adapt and flourish in different academic situations (Collie et al., 2015). There is inadequate empirical research on the dynamic interaction of all variables and limited research on academic buoyancy in Pakistan. This study also addressed the gap by using the modern assessment tool of self-concept and academic buoyancy as a mediator with other study variables. Together, these constructs offer in-depth framework for comprehending, students' academic achievement and engagement.

### **Study Hypothesis**

- There would be a relationship between Academic Self-Handicapping, Academic Buoyancy, and Self-Concept in College Students.
- Demographics (age, gender, subject, family system, area of residence, qualification and institution) would likely to associate with Academic Self-Handicapping, Academic Buoyancy, and Self-Concept in College Students.

- Academic Self-Handicapping and Academic Buoyancy would likely to predict the Self-Concept in College Students.
- Academic Buoyancy would likely to mediate the relationship between Academic Self-Handicapping and Self-Concept in College Students.

### Methodology

The current study used a correlational research method to find out the relationship between academic self-handicapping, academic buoyancy and self-concept in college students. The sample was comprised of college students ( $N= 300$ ), with age range of 17 to 20 years ( $M = 17.59$ ,  $SD = .81$ ). Data from various government and private colleges was gathered using a convenient sampling technique. College students both boys and girls of intermediate (Medical or Non-medical) were included. Intermediate students from both public and private colleges were included. All other school and universities students were excluded. Participants with mental disability and drug addicts were excluded so that accurate findings could be reported. Students from Bachelors and other degree programs (Diplomas, associate degrees) in those colleges were excluded.

### Measures

#### Demographic Sheet.

All of the participant's basic information, such as age, gender, family system, area of residence, qualification, subject, and institution would be included on the demographic sheet.

#### Academic Self Handicapping Scale (ASH)

Academic Self Handicapping Scale (Gupta & Geetika, 2020) which consists on 22 items rated 5-point Likert scale, a set of preemptive behaviors or claimed obstacles. Items 1, 2, 7, 9, or 11 are scored in reverse. This scale has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.9 and has shown great internal consistency and good reliability.

#### Academic Buoyancy Scale (ABS)

Academic Buoyancy Scale (Martin & Marsh, 2008) which consists on 4 items such as subpar grades, exam pressure, conflicting deadlines, and challenging schoolwork rated 7-point Likert scale. Test-retest validity and internal consistency indicate that this scale has good reliability.

#### Questionnaire of Self Concept\_18 (QSC-18)

Questionnaire of Self Concept\_18 (Deljos et al., 2022) which consists on 18 items rated 4-point Likert scale. The scoring for items 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, and 18 are reversed. A standardized self-report questionnaire that evaluates a person's self-concept in six areas: social adaptability, work and studies, body confidence, resistance to anxiety, popularity in society, and sense of meaning and self-actualization. The Cronbach alpha is 0.93, and both face validity and content validity are strong.

### Procedure

Prior to data collection process, permissions from the respective authors of Questionnaire taken through mail. Data was collected from the different institution of Sheikhpura city. The goal of the study was explained to the authorities of institutions. After approval participants were recruited from various intermediate classes of different colleges. After providing a brief introduction, the researcher described the purpose of the research, gives instructions and measured participants that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. The whole administration took 10-15 minutes for each student; with a total of 300 questionnaires after this results were analyzed using SPSS.

## Results

This comprises of Academic Self Handicapping, Academic Buoyancy and Self Concept in college students. Descriptive statistics that were performed for data analysis of demographics and reliability coefficients for study variables, Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis to investigate the relationship between the study variables in college students, and mediation analysis to test the model using the Hayes Process command on SPSS version 27 and for additional analysis independent t-test was run.

**Table 4.1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables (N= 300)*

Characteristics	<i>f (%)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Age		17.59(0.81)
Gender		
Male	113(37.7)	
Female	187(62.3)	
Family System		
Nuclear	202(67.4)	
Joint	98 (32.6)	
Area of Residence		
Urban	82(27.3)	
Rural	218(72.7)	
Subject		
Medical	110 (36.6)	
Non-medical	190 (63.4)	
Institution		
Government	96 (32)	
Private	204 (68)	

*Note. For Gender; 1=Male. 2=Female; Subject; 1=medical, 2=non-medical; Family system 1= nuclear, 2= joint; Area of residence; 1=urban,2=rural; Institution; 1= Government, 2= Private*

**Table 4.2**

*Cronbach's Alpha Reliability of Study Variable (N=300)*

Variables	<i>l</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>
ASH	22	.82	56.5 12.0	30-95
AB	4	.52	24.1 1.95	12-28
CS	18	.69	53.7 5.84	40-71

**Note:** ASH=Academic Self Handicapping, AB=Academic Buoyancy, SC=Self Concept, *a* = Cronbach's alpha

Table 4.2 shown psychometric properties of the study variables. The internal consistency of all variable was between acceptable range, approximately above .5 or .8 and total reliability is 0.73.

**Table 4.3**

*Intercorrelation between the Study Variables.*

Variables	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Academic Self Handicapping	-	-.07	-.28**



Academic Buoyancy	.31**
Self-Concept	-

Note: \*\* $p < .01$

Table 4.3 showed the relationship between study variables. Academic self-handicapping had negative relationship with academic buoyancy and self-concept in college students. There was significant positive relationship between academic buoyancy and self-concept.

**Table 4.4**

*Correlation between Demographics and Study Variable*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Age	-	-.25**	-.00	.08	.22**	.12*	.21**	.04
Gender		-	-.09	-.08	-.13*	-.19**	-.03**	-.07
Family System			-	.01	.03	.04	.04	-.02
Area of Residence				-	.02	.01	.19**	.00
Subject					-	.05	-.01	-.14*
ASH						-	-.07	-.28**
AB							-	.31**
CS								-

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The above table 4.4 showed the Pearson correlation among academic self-handicapping, academic buoyancy and self-concept and other study variables. Age had positive relationship with all variables. Gender had negative significant relationship between with subject and academic self-handicapping. Subject had significant positive relation with ASH and significant negative relation with self-concept.

**Table 4.5**

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Study Variables*

Variables	B	95% CI for B		SE B	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
		LL	UL				
Step 1						.076	.076
Constant	61.3	58.2	64.4	1.6			
ASH	-.134	-.19	-.08	.03	-.28		
Step 2						.159	.159
Constant	39.9	31.6	48.2	4.2			
ASH	-.125	-.18	-.07	.03	-.26		
AB	.87	.55	1.18	.16	.29		

Note: R<sup>2</sup> = R-Square,  $\beta$  = Standardized Coefficient, B = Unstandardized Coefficient, CI = Confidence Interval, LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit

Table 4.5 showed the findings of a hierarchical regression analysis that examined academic self-handicapping and academic buoyancy as significant predictor of self-concept.

**Table 4.6**

*Mediation Analysis between Academic Self-Handicapping, Academic Buoyancy and Self-Concept in College Students.*

95% CI

Variable/Effect	B	SE(B)	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
<b>Direct Effect</b>						
ASH→AB	-.01	.01	-1.19	.237		
AB→SC	.87	.16	5.41	.000		
ASH→SC	-.13	.03	-4.87	.000		
<b>Indirect Effect</b>						
ASH→AB→SC	-.01	.01			.03	.01

Note; ASH = Academic Self-Handicapping, AB = Academic Buoyancy, SC= Self-Concept.

Table 4.6 showed the indirect effect of ASH on SC through AB was weak and statistically not significant. For additional analysis, t-test was run in table 4.7 and 4.8.

**Table 4.7**

*Independent t- test for Academic Self Handicapping, Academic Buoyancy and Self-Concept across Gender (Male, Female) in College Students (N = 300).*

Variables	Male n = 113		Female n =187		t(298)	p	Cohsen'd
	M	SD	M	SD			
Academic Self Handicapping	67.2	7.72	65.9	7.76	1.4	0.15	.18
Academic Buoyancy	21.0	3.92	18.3	3.92	5.2	.001	.65
Self-Concept	49.2	5.54	48.1	5.91	1.5	.12	-.05

Note; p = level of significance

Table 4.7 showed that Academic buoyancy scores were significantly higher for male than female, while academic self-handicapping and self-concept scores did not differ significantly by gender.

**Table 4.8**

*Mean Differences between Academic Self Handicapping, Academic Buoyancy and Self Concept across Institution (Government, Private) in College Students (N = 300)*

Variables	Government n = 96		Private n =204		t(298)	p	Cohsen'd
	M	SD	M	SD			
Academic Self Handicapping	67.0	7.91	66.2	7.70	0.75	0.45	.10
Academic Buoyancy	16.5	4.60	20.6	3.70	-7.7	.001	-1.0
Self-Concept	48.0	5.61	48.8	5.86	-.99	.33	-.13

Note; M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

Table 4.8 showed that academic buoyancy scores were much higher for private college students than government college students

## Discussion

The objective of this research is to investigate the relationship, prediction and mediation between the academic self-handicapping, academic buoyancy and self-concept in college students. While academic buoyancy has a positive correlation with self-concept, indicating that students who are more resilient in the face of academic challenges have a stronger self-concept, the study found a significant but strong negative relationship between academic self-handicapping and academic buoyancy. This suggests that students who engage in self-handicapping behaviors tend to hold lower academic self-perceptions. The overall findings, which included both

anticipated and surprising outcomes, helped to clarify these variables and how they relate to one another. According to Akola et al. (2022), students who engage in high levels of self-handicapping have a much harder time recovering from academic setbacks. They both show that students who use self-handicapping techniques are less likely to demonstrate academic buoyancy. While these both researches are conducted in different cultures. Moreover, Ulfah et al. (2024), reported students with higher degrees of academic resilience are probably better able to cope with academic stress and disappointments because they believe they are capable and competent. The results indicated relationship between demographic factors and the psychological constructs under study, provide modest support for this hypothesis. These results are consistence with previous research that highlights how adolescents' academic behaviors and psychological characteristics are impacted by maturation (Martin et al., 2013). Previous research has also documented gender differences in self-handicapping, with male students generally engaging in higher levels of this behavior (Urdan & Midgley, 2001). The results supported the hypothesis that self-concept is significantly predicted by both ASH and AB showing that academic and non-academic outcomes, such as motivation and self-esteem, are predicted by adaptation and associated constructs like buoyancy(Iqrar, 2023).The current study explore that how students' perceptions of their academic value and ability. The findings indicate that the association between academic self-handicapping and self-concept was not significantly mediated by academic buoyancy. The results of the current study do not support the hypothesis for a number of reasons. One of them is that participants may not have filled out the response form honestly, which could lead to statistical mistakes in the study. Self-concept may be more directly impacted by constant personal and social elements (Schwinger et al., 2014). Cultural variables or sample-specific traits also have effect on the absence of mediation. This mediational relationship was not examined in previous research. Some highly peculiar and novel findings from this study include the fact that academic buoyancy does not act as a mediator between academic self-handicapping and self-concept. This is an extremely impressive discovery that opens up new opportunities for future research.

### **Limitations & Suggestions**

Self-reported measures, which are subject to bias, were used in this study. Although the sample was educated, but it was difficult to understand by the participants due to language barrier. Longitudinal designs should be used in future studies to investigate how academic self-handicapping, self-concept, and buoyancy evolve over time. Questionnaire should be design in regional language of the sample population for the better understanding of the statement by the participants and for the sake of valid and reliable results.

### **Implication**

Self-handicapping behaviors can be decreased by creating programs that improve student's academic self-concept and teach resilience skills. It's important to educate coping mechanisms, give criticism, and promote a growth mindset. It gives students support in the form of peer mentoring, counseling, and stress management classes might help them become more resilient academically and generally. Students' academic performance can be enhanced by fostering self-reflection, and assisting them in adopting more constructive coping strategies.

### **Conclusion**

Students who have a strong, positive self-concept are more likely to exhibit academic buoyancy and are less likely to participate in self-handicapping activities.



Institutions can lessen self-handicapping habits and encourage more flexible reactions to academic stress by encouraging resilience-building techniques and a positive self-concept. Interventions that improve academic buoyancy and self-concept should be further investigated in future studies in order to improve students' academic performance and psychological health.

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