Perceived discrimination and academic resilience: A study of Albanian immigrant adolescents in Greece

Frosso Motti-Stefanidi, Vassilis Pavlopooulos
Department of Psychology, University of Athens, Greece

Jelena Obradović, Ann S. Masten
Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota, USA


✈ vpavlop@psych.uoa.gr
Resilience: Risk and protective factors

Resilience (i.e., successful adaptation under high adversity) is **not** viewed as a personality trait but rather as a dynamic process where resources and/or assets are organized on the basis of multi-level, ecological models (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Garmezy, 1985):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>locus of control, self-efficacy beliefs, intelligence, social skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>social-economic status of parents, quality of parent-child relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>supportive networks, state policies, minority status, perceived discrimination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The moderator-mediator variable distinction (Baron & Kenny, 1986) in the research on resilience.
Perceived discrimination as a possible mediator for adaptation of immigrants

- **Stereotype threat.** The awareness of being judged in terms of a stereotype poses a self-threat that affects performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

- **Coping strategies.** Downward social comparisons (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) or psychological disengagement (Shih, 2004) may undermine intrinsic motivation.

- **Acculturation.** Perceived discrimination is associated with increased stress and less willingness to adopt host culture identity (Ward et al., 2001).
Two dimensions of perceived discrimination

- **Perceived personal discrimination** is attributed directly to the self.

- **Group discrimination** is attributed to social groups to which the perceiver belongs, e.g., ethnic group, race, gender.

☞ The tendency to recognize greater discrimination against group, rather than against self, is protective for self-esteem (Crocker et al., 1998).
Research hypotheses

- It is expected that immigrant adolescents will perceive a higher level of discrimination against their ethnic group, rather than against self.

- Perceived personal discrimination will mediate the effect of stress on competence of immigrant adolescents.

- However, perceived group discrimination may not prove to be a vulnerability factor, at least to a lesser extent than perceived personal discrimination.
## Characteristics of the sample

\(N = 174\) immigrant adolescents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth</td>
<td>138 (79%) Albania (1st generation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36 (21%) Greece (2nd generation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>101 (58%) boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73 (42%) girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (yrs)</td>
<td>Mean = 13.0, Std.Dev. = .8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>min = 12.0, max = 14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of stay in Greece (yrs)(^a)</td>
<td>Mean = 5.0, Std.Dev. = 2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>min = 1.0, max = 12.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) 1st generation only
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Negative life events (25 items)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(adapted from Fthenakis &amp; Minsel, 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>School grades (Mean of 5 subjects)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Popularity (sociometric test; Coie et al., 1982)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived</td>
<td>Group discrimination (4 items, $\alpha = .87$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discrimination</td>
<td>Personal discrimination (4 items, $\alpha = .76$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(based on Phinney et al., 1998; Verkuyten, 1998)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analyses for Research Hypothesis 1

- *It is expected that immigrant adolescents will perceive a higher level of discrimination against their ethnic group, rather than against self.*
  - Paired samples T-test
    (perceived group vs. personal discrimination)
  
  Furthermore:
  - 2-way (country of birth X gender) analysis of variance
Means of perceived group and personal discrimination for the whole sample ($N = 174$ Albanian immigrants)

Paired samples T-test: $t(173) = 14.63, p < .001$
Means of perceived group and personal discrimination as a function of country of birth (1\textsuperscript{st} vs. 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation)

Perceived group discrimination: $F(1, 170) = .75, p = .389$
Perceived personal discrimination: $F(1, 170) = .07, p = .787$
Means of perceived group and personal discrimination as a function of adolescents’ gender

Perceived group discrimination: $F(1, 170) = .04, p = .847$
Perceived personal discrimination: $F(1, 170) = 4.01, p = .047$
Analyses for Research Hypotheses 2 and 3

- Exploring the mediating role of perceived discrimination in the resilience of Albanian adolescents

A series of regression analyses were performed, as suggested by Baron & Kenny (1986).

- Independent variable: Stress (negative life events)
- Dependent variables: Measures of competence (school grades, popularity)
- Mediator variables: perceived group and personal discrimination
- Covariates (to appear first in the analyses): gender, country of birth
Testing the mediation of perceived personal discrimination on school grades

1. Regression of school grades on stress

Block 1  gender: $\Delta R^2 = .10, F(1, 172) = 18.91, p < .001$
Block 2  country of birth: $\Delta R^2 = .06, F(1, 171) = 12.51, p = .001$
Block 3  stress: $\Delta R^2 = .03, F(1, 170) = 5.48, p = .020$
Testing the mediation of perceived personal discrimination on school grades

2. Regression of perceived personal discrimination on stress

Block 1 gender: $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $F(1, 172) = 4.16$, $p = .043$
Block 2 country of birth: $\Delta R^2 = .00$, $F(2, 171) = .02$, $p = .899$
Block 3 stress: $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $F(1, 170) = 4.32$, $p = .039$
Testing the mediation of perceived personal discrimination on school grades

3. Regression of school grades on perceived personal discrimination

Block 1 gender: $\Delta R^2 = .10$, $F(1, 172) = 17.68, p < .001$
Block 2 country of birth: $\Delta R^2 = .06$, $F(1, 171) = 11.69, p = .001$
Block 3 perceived personal discrimination: $\Delta R^2 = .10$, $F(1, 170) = 21.52, p < .001$
Testing the mediation of perceived personal discrimination on school grades

4. *Regression of school grades on personal discrimination and stress*

Step 1: gender: $\Delta R^2 = .10, F(1, 172) = 17.46, p < .001$
Step 2: country of birth: $\Delta R^2 = .06, F(1, 171) = 11.54, p = .001$
Step 3: perceived personal discrimination: $\Delta R^2 = .10, F(1, 170) = 21.24, p < .001$
Step 4: stress: $\Delta R^2 = .01, F(1, 169) = 2.66, p = .105$
Testing the mediation of perceived personal discrimination on popularity

1. Regression of popularity on stress

Block 1 gender: $\Delta R^2 = .00$, $F(1, 172) = .25$, $p = .616$
Block 2 country of birth: $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $F(1, 171) = 6.50$, $p = .011$
Block 3 stress: $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $F(1, 170) = 4.40$, $p = .037$
Testing the mediation of perceived personal discrimination on popularity

2. Regression of perceived personal discrimination on stress

Block 1  gender: $\Delta R^2 = .03, F(1, 172) = 4.16, p = .043$
Block 2  country of birth: $\Delta R^2 = .00, F(1, 171) = .02, p < .899$
Block 3  stress: $\Delta R^2 = .03, F(1, 170) = 4.32, p = .039$
Testing the mediation of perceived personal discrimination on popularity

3. Regression of popularity on perceived personal discrimination

Block 1 gender: $\Delta R^2 = .01, F(1, 172) = 1.40, p = .238$
Block 2 country of birth: $\Delta R^2 = .06, F(1, 171) = 9.50, p = .002$
Block 3 perceived personal discrimination: $\Delta R^2 = .07, F(1, 170) = 13.58, p < .001$
Testing the mediation of perceived personal discrimination on popularity

4. Regression of popularity on personal discrimination and stress

Step 1: gender: $\Delta R^2 = .01, F(1, 172) = 1.39, p = .241$
Step 2: country of birth: $\Delta R^2 = .06, F(1, 171) = 9.38, p = .003$
Step 3: perceived personal discrimination: $\Delta R^2 = .07, F(1, 170) = 13.41, p < .001$
Step 4: stress: $\Delta R^2 = .01, F(1, 170) = .37, p = .543$
Testing the mediation of perceived group discrimination on resilience

- Perceived discrimination against ethnic group failed to significantly predict either domain of competence (i.e. school grades or popularity) in the first steps of the analyses, before taking stress into account.

- Furthermore, perceived discrimination against ethnic group was not found to mediate the effect of stress on either domain of school competence.
Perceived personal discrimination fully mediated the effect of stress on both school grades and popularity, over and above gender and generation status…

...therefore, perceived personal discrimination can be considered as a risk factor for school competence of immigrant Albanian adolescents in Greece.

On the contrary, neither direct nor indirect relationships of perceived group discrimination with the two domains of competence were established...

...although adolescents reported essentially higher levels of group, compared to personal, discrimination.
Summary of findings and discussion

- The findings suggest that the predicament of social discrimination is considerably more important if it is perceived as a self-threat.

- Further research is needed in order to test if the mediating role of perceived discrimination is valid for other immigrant groups as well, and to study the prerequisites for differentiating between personal and group attributions.
References


