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Optimism and Proactive Habits: Predicting Academic Resilience and Achievement

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between optimism, proactive habits, and academic resilience and achievement among university students. Grounded in the positive psychology framework, it conceptualizes resilience as a mediating mechanism linking personal dispositions to academic performance outcomes. Data were collected from 70 valid respondents through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling SmartPLS 4.0. The results reveal that both optimism and proactive habits significantly enhance academic resilience, which subsequently exerts a positive influence on academic achievement. However, their direct effects on achievement were not statistically significant, indicating that resilience functions as a psychological bridge that converts positive personality traits into improved academic performance. Theoretically, this study enriches the understanding of non-cognitive predictors of academic success by integrating emotional and behavioral dimensions into a unified framework. Practically, the findings emphasize the importance of educational programs that promote positive thinking, adaptive coping, and self-regulation among students. Interventions such as cognitive-behavioral training, mentorship schemes, and resilience-based workshops can strengthen learners persistence in academically demanding contexts. Overall, this study contributes to educational psychology by providing empirical support for the mediating role of resilience, highlighting the value of psychological adaptability in sustaining achievement and well-being in higher education.

Keywords: Academic Achievement; Academic Resilience; Optimism; Proactive Habits; Academic Achievement

1. Introduction

Academic success requires more than intellectual ability it demands psychological strength and adaptive behavioral strategies that enable students to persist through difficulties. As higher education environments grow increasingly competitive and stressful, understanding the personal resources that foster resilience and achievement has become a central concern in educational psychology. Prior research has consistently demonstrated that students possessing robust psychological resources such as optimism, self-efficacy, and proactive coping tend to achieve superior academic performance and exhibit greater psychological well-being (Chemers et al., 2001; Rand et al., 2020). These findings underscore the importance of examining how positive psychological characteristics foster academic resilience and success among university students. Among these resources, optimism and proactive habits stand out as crucial determinants of academic well-being and performance (Holzer et al., 2022; Rand et al., 2020). Optimism provides a positive explanatory style that sustains motivation during setbacks, whereas proactive habits equip students to translate that motivation into effective action. Together, these traits may cultivate academic resilience, the capacity to adapt successfully to challenges and maintain learning engagement (Martin & Marsh, 2006).

Optimism, defined as a generalized tendency to expect favorable outcomes (Scheier & Carver, 1985), serves as a psychological buffer against stress and failure. Optimistic individuals are more likely to interpret difficulties as temporary and controllable, which encourages perseverance and effective coping (Carver & Scheier, 2014). In academic contexts, optimism has been linked to greater engagement, persistence, and emotional regulation factors that contribute directly to students' ability to recover from academic setbacks (Popa-Velea et al., 2021). Moreover, research suggests that optimism enhances subjective well-being and goal commitment, both of which are essential for sustained academic performance (Kim et al., 2019).

Parallel to optimism, proactive habits involve anticipating potential obstacles and initiating constructive behaviors before problems arise (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Proactive students demonstrate self-regulation, goal orientation, and persistence, all of which facilitate academic achievement (Crant, 2000). By taking ownership of their

learning, they engage in deliberate actions such as time management, planning, and self-monitoring that convert positive attitudes into measurable accomplishments. Li et al. (2024) found that self-regulation mediates the relationship between resilience and academic success, underscoring the pivotal role of proactive behavior in educational outcomes.

Academic resilience functions as the mechanism through which optimism and proactive habits influence performance. Resilient students effectively manage academic stressors, maintain motivation under pressure, and rebound from failure with renewed determination (Yang & Wang, 2022). Contemporary perspectives conceptualize resilience not as an inherent trait but as a dynamic process of adaptation shaped by interactions between individual dispositions and environmental supports (Rudd et al., 2021). Consequently, cultivating resilience may bridge the gap between positive psychological traits and actual achievement outcomes.

Despite growing attention to each of these constructs, limited empirical work has explored their combined effects. The primary purpose of this research is to investigate the influence of optimism and proactive habits on academic achievement through the mediating role of academic resilience among university students. By integrating emotional dispositions (optimism) and behavioral tendencies (proactive habits) within a unified conceptual framework, the study aims to deepen the understanding of how these non-cognitive traits jointly foster students' adaptability, persistence, and performance in higher education. This research further seeks to address the existing gap in educational psychology by providing empirical evidence on the combined effects of these psychological resources, thereby offering valuable insights for educators and policymakers in promoting resilience-based academic development. Understanding these interconnections offers practical implications for educators seeking to enhance students' psychological adaptability and academic success through targeted interventions that foster both positive outlooks and self-initiated learning behaviors. Similar to segmentation approaches in sustainable tourism, identifying subgroups with distinctive motivational traits enhances academic research on learning outcomes (Lee et al., 2024).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Optimism

Optimism is defined as a widespread propensity to anticipate positive outcomes from upcoming occurrences (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Carver and his coworkers (2010) assert that optimism improves comprehension of human attitudes and actions. In particular, optimistic people are driven to put out effort despite obstacles, have a positive outlook, and think that good things will happen in the future (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Optimism refers to the general expectation that good things will happen in the future (Carver & Scheier, 2014). Research has demonstrated that optimistic individuals are better equipped to handle stress, adapt to new situations, and recover from failure (Popa-Velea et al., 2021). In academic contexts, optimism helps students approach challenges with confidence, thereby fostering resilience. Popa-Velea et al. (2021) found that optimism was significantly associated with higher levels of academic resilience among university students, enabling them to maintain motivation and performance under stress. Similarly, Rand et al. (2020) found that optimism and hope jointly predict higher academic performance and persistence among university students.

2.2. Proactive Habits

The concept of proactivity introduces an individual's tendency to take responsibility for their actions and decisions, regardless of external factors. Rather than merely responding to circumstances, proactive individuals take initiative, set meaningful goals, and work intentionally to shape their own future (Parker et al., 2010). Proactive habits involve taking initiative, anticipating challenges, and employing effective self-regulation strategies (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Students with proactive habits are more likely to engage in goal-directed behaviors, manage their time efficiently, and persevere through difficulties (Li et al., 2024) highlighted self-regulation behaviors mediated the relationship between resilience and academic performance, underscoring the role of proactive habits in academic success(Li et al., 2024). Proactive people identify opportunities and act on them show initiative take action, and persevere until meaningful change occurs and people who are not proactive exhibit the opposite patterns. They fail to

identify, let alone seize, opportunities to change things. Less proactive individuals are passive and reactive, preferring to adapt to circumstances rather than change them (Crant, J. M. 2000).

2.3. Academic Resilience

According to Martin and Marsh (2006), academic resilience is the ability to overcome academic challenges like low grades or heavy workloads while continuing to make progress toward learning objectives. Students can flourish in demanding academic settings because it serves as a stress-reduction mechanism (Yang & Wang, 2022). Yang and Wang (2022) showed that academic progress in English as a Foreign Language learners was significantly predicted by resilience, especially when combined with motivating factors.

Over time, perceptions of resilience have evolved. Resilient children were first thought to be a fixed trait, "invulnerable" to the challenges of life. But these conceptualizations have changed throughout time to view resilience as a positive adaptation process that involves the dynamic interplay between an individual and their surroundings (Rudd et al., 2021).

2.4. Academic Achievement

Academic achievement encompasses measurable outcomes such as grades, test scores, and the successful completion of academic goals. It is influenced by both cognitive skills and non-cognitive traits like resilience, optimism, and proactive habits (Credé et al., 2010). Understanding the pathways through which these traits impact achievement can inform strategies for enhancing student performance.

Online learning environments and digital tools have been shown to improve student performance and engagement, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic (Li & Ma, 2023). Furthermore, it has been acknowledged that non-cognitive qualities like grit and tenacity play a significant role in long-term academic achievement.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Model

This figure 1 illustrates the research model, which examines the relationships among optimism, proactive habits, academic resilience, and academic achievement. The model hypothesizes that optimism and proactive habits influence academic achievement indirectly through the mediating role of academic resilience.

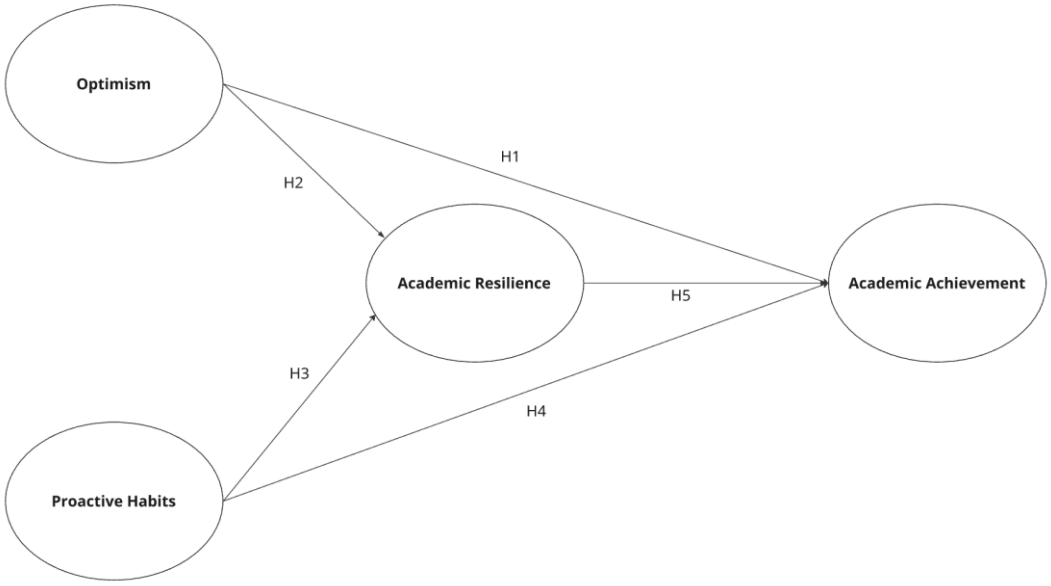

Figure 1. This is a figure.

Similar to how segmentation studies in sustainable tourism identify distinct market groups to enhance strategic understanding, academic research also benefits from identifying subgroups with unique learning and motivational characteristics (Lee et al., 2024).

H1**:** Optimism has a significant effect on academic achievement.
H2: Optimism have a significant effect on academic resilience.
H3: Proactive habits significant effect on academic resilience.
H4: Proactive habits have a significant effect academic achievement
H5: Academic resilience has a significant effect academic achievement.

3.2. Questionnaire Development

The study employed a structured questionnaire designed to measure the core variables optimism, proactive habits, academic resilience, and academic achievement. Each construct was assessed using well-established and validated measurement scales to ensure reliability and content validity.

3.2.1. Optimism

Optimism was measured through the Life Orientation Test Revised (LOT-R) developed by Scheier and Carver (1985). This instrument evaluates individuals' general expectations about positive and negative life outcomes. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with several statements reflecting their outlook on future events. Higher scores indicated a stronger tendency toward optimistic thinking.

3.2.2. Proactive Habits

Proactive habits were assessed using the Proactive Personality Scale proposed by Bateman and Crant (1993). This scale measures the extent to which individuals take initiative, identify opportunities, and persist in bringing about meaningful change. The items captured behaviors such as planning, self-management, and taking responsibility for learning outcomes.

3.2.3. Academic Resilience

Academic resilience was evaluated using the Academic Resilience Scale developed by Martin and Marsh (2006). This tool measures students' ability to recover from academic challenges and maintain consistent effort toward educational goals. It reflects emotional stability, adaptability, and persistence when facing difficulties in academic settings.

3.2.4. Academic Achievement

Academic achievement was operationalized using students' self-reported Grade Point Average (GPA), which serves as a reliable indicator of academic performance in educational research. Self-reporting allowed for practical data collection while maintaining confidentiality and encouraging honest response

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

Data for this study were obtained using a convenience sampling approach targeting international students enrolled at Kyungsung University. The survey was distributed during scheduled class sessions, digitally through students. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all respondents were informed of the study's purpose, assured of confidentiality, and provided informed consent before completing the questionnaire. After excluding incomplete or invalid responses, 70 valid responses were retained for analysis.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to test the measurement and structural models. PLS-SEM was chosen because it is robust to small sample sizes and relaxes the assumption of multivariate normality, making it appropriate for exploratory studies and complex models. Analyses were conducted using SmartPLS 4.0 with bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) to assess the significance of path coefficients (Hair et al., 2019).

3.4.1. Measurement Model Assessment

The reliability and validity of the measurement model were evaluated following the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2019). Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70 indicate acceptable reliability, while values between 0.80 and 0.90 suggest good reliability; coefficients above 0.90 denote excellent reliability. CR was also examined because it accounts for varying indicator loadings, and values exceeding 0.70 were considered satisfactory.

Convergent validity was verified by examining the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct. An AVE value of 0.50 or higher demonstrates that a construct explains more than half of the variance in its indicators, confirming adequate convergent validity.

Discriminant validity was assessed using both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. According to Hair et al. (2019), the square root of each construct's AVE should be greater than its correlations with any other construct, ensuring distinctiveness. In addition, HTMT values below 0.85 indicate satisfactory discriminant validity, confirming that the constructs are empirically distinct.

4. Result

Table 1. Respondents' Demographic Information (n = 70)

Demographic Information	Description	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	36	51.4%
	Female	34	48.6 %
Age	Under 18	1	1.4 %
	18–25	44	62.8 %
	26–30	19	27.1 %
	31–35	4	5.7 %
	36–40	1	1.4
	Above 40	1	1.4
Marital Status	Single	66	94.3 %
	Married	4	5.7 %
Nationality	Nepal	48	68.6 %
	Sri Lanka	2	2.9 %
	Bangladesh	8	11.4 %
	Pakistan	1	1.4%
	India	6	8.6 %
	Others	5	7.1 %
Education Level	Highschool and below	12	17.1 %
	Vocational School	5	7.1 %
	Undergraduate Degree	39	55.7 %
	Postgraduate Degree & Above	14	20 %

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 70 respondents who participated in the survey. The sample consisted of 51.4% male and 48.6% female participants, showing a nearly balanced gender distribution. In terms of age, the majority of respondents (62.8%) were between 18 and 25 years old, followed by 27.1% aged 26–30 years, while smaller

portions belonged to other age groups. Most participants were single (94.3%), and only 5.7% were married. Regarding nationality, the largest group was from Nepal (68.6%), followed by Bangladesh (11.4%), India (8.6%), and a few respondents from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and other countries. In terms of education level, over half of the respondents (55.7%) held an undergraduate degree, while 20% had a postgraduate degree or above, 17.1% had completed high school or below, and 7.1% attended a vocational school.

Table 2. Results of the Reliability and Validity Test Results

Constructs	Item	Loading	CR	AVE	Cronbach's alpha
Optimism	OP1	0.853	0.869	0.625	0.800
	OP2	0.867			
	OP3	0.875			
	OP4	0.883			
Proactive Habits	PH1	0.830	0.890	0.671	0.836
	PH2	0.827			
	PH3	0.845			
	PH4	0.772			
Academic Resilience	AR1	0.887	0.938	0.766	0.847
	AR2	0.899			
	AR3	0.839			
Academic Achievement	AA1	0.847	0.920	0.724	0.809
	AA2	0.822			
	AA3	0.882			

Table 2 summarizes the reliability and validity results for the study constructs. All factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming strong item

reliability. The Composite Reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.869 to 0.920, indicating good internal consistency among the items. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were all above 0.60, demonstrating adequate convergent validity. Similarly, Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged between 0.800 and 0.847, further confirming the reliability of the measurement scales. Overall, the results show that all constructs Optimism, Proactive Habits, Academic Resilience, and Academic Achievement meet the acceptable standards for reliability and validity.

Table 3. Results of the Fornell-Larcker criterion

Variables	AA	AR	OP	PH
AA	**0.851**			
AR	0.666	**0.875**		
OP	0.580	0.676	**0.790**	
PH	0.548	0.734	0.720	**0.819**

Note. Values in bold represent the square root of the variance extracted (AVE) and the values outside the diagonal represent the correlations between the constructs. OP: Optimism, PH: Proactive Habits, AR: Academic Resilience, AA: Academic Achievement

Table 3 presents the discriminant validity results using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), shown in bold along the diagonal, are all higher than the corresponding inter-construct correlations, confirming adequate discriminant validity among the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Specifically, the AVE square roots for Academic Achievement (0.851), Academic Resilience (0.875), Optimism (0.790), and Proactive Habits (0.819) all exceed their respective correlations with other constructs. These findings indicate that each construct is conceptually distinct and measures a unique aspect of the model, ensuring the robustness of the measurement framework.

Table 4. Results of Discriminant Validity Result (HTMT)

	AA	AR	OP	PH
AA				
AR	0.803			
OP	0.715	0.814		
PH	0.654	0.869	0.887	

Note. OP: Optimism, PH: Proactive Habits, AR: Academic Resilience, AA: Academic Achievement

Table 4 displays the results of the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, which provides a more stringent assessment of discriminant validity. All HTMT values were found to be below the recommended threshold of 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015), indicating that the constructs are empirically distinct from one another. The highest HTMT value was 0.887 between Proactive Habits and Optimism, which remains within the acceptable limit, confirming no significant multicollinearity issues. These results provide strong evidence of discriminant validity, supporting the notion that each construct, Optimism, Proactive Habits, Academic Resilience, and Academic Achievement, captures a unique conceptual domain within the measurement model.

Table 5. Results of Hypothesis Testing

	Path	Path Coefficient (β)	Standard Deviation	*t* Statistics	*p* Values	Results
H1	OP->AA	0.498	0.212	1.098	0.272	**Not Supported**
H2	OP->AR	0.307	0.140	2.191	0.029	**Supported**
H3	PH->AR	0.512	0.138	3.705	0.001	**Supported**
H4	PH->AA	0.015	0.182	0.082	0.935	**Not Supported**
H5	AR->AA	0.498	0.146	3.414	0.001	**Supported**

Note. OP: Optimism, PH: Proactive Habits, AR: Academic Resilience, AA: Academic Achievement

Table 5 presents the results of the structural model analysis. The findings indicate that Optimism has a significant positive effect on Academic Resilience (β = 0.307, t =

2.191, $p = 0.029$), supporting H2. Similarly, Proactive Habits exert a significant positive influence on Academic Resilience ($\beta = 0.512$, $t = 3.705$, $p = 0.001$), and Academic Resilience significantly predicts Academic Achievement ($\beta = 0.498$, $t = 3.414$, $p = 0.001$), supporting H3 and H5, respectively. However, the paths from Optimism to Academic Achievement ($\beta = 0.498$, $t = 1.098$, $p = 0.272$) and from Proactive Habits to Academic Achievement ($\beta = 0.015$, $t = 0.082$, $p = 0.935$) were found to be statistically insignificant, leading to the rejection of H1 and H4.

These findings confirm that academic resilience plays a full mediating role in linking optimism and proactive habits to academic achievement. In other words, students with higher optimism and proactive habits are more likely to achieve strong academic outcomes only when they also develop high levels of resilience to cope with challenges in their learning process.

4. Discussion

The findings of this research indicate that optimism and proactive habits significantly enhance academic resilience, which in turn positively affects students' academic achievement. However, their direct influence on achievement was not statistically significant, suggesting that resilience operates as the central pathway through which these traits contribute to better performance. In other words, students who possess a positive outlook and take initiative tend to perform well because they can adapt to stress, manage challenges effectively, and remain motivated toward their goals.

These results are in line with earlier studies emphasizing that optimistic and proactive individuals are more capable of maintaining motivation and self-discipline under demanding academic conditions (Carver & Scheier, 2014; Li et al., 2024; Yang & Wang, 2022). Optimism enables students to perceive difficulties as temporary and solvable, while proactive habits allow them to transform this positive mindset into concrete strategies for learning. When combined, these qualities create a strong foundation for academic resilience, helping students stay engaged and persistent in the face of obstacles.

The mediating effect of resilience observed in this study highlights its importance as a psychological bridge linking personality strengths with academic outcomes. This finding

supports the view that long-term success is not solely determined by intellectual ability but also by adaptive emotional and behavioral processes that allow students to recover from setbacks and continue progressing (Martin & Marsh, 2006). From a practical perspective, universities should design programs that promote positive thinking, goal setting, and proactive learning behaviors. Training that encourages reflection, self-regulation, and coping strategies can help learners develop stronger resilience and ultimately improve academic performance.

Overall, this study confirms that optimism and proactive habits contribute to achievement primarily through resilience, emphasizing the value of psychological adaptability as a core driver of academic success.

5. Implications

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This research advances the theoretical understanding of educational psychology by clarifying how optimism and proactive habits influence academic achievement through the mediating role of resilience. The findings show that these psychological traits do not directly determine performance but rather strengthen students ability to adapt and recover when faced with challenges. This supports the dynamic adaptation model of resilience, which emphasizes that resilience is not a fixed attribute but a process that evolves through continuous interaction between internal traits and external conditions (Rudd et al., 2021).

By integrating optimism, proactive behavior, and resilience within a single framework, this study provides a more holistic explanation of non-cognitive predictors of academic success. It highlights that emotional and behavioral strengths complement each other optimism fosters a positive mindset, while proactive habits translate that mindset into action. Together, they shape an adaptive system that enhances learning persistence and engagement. This theoretical contribution extends the literature beyond traditional cognitive models and reinforces the importance of psychological adaptability as a critical element of long-term academic development.

5.2 Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, the results offer valuable insights for educators, counselors, and academic institutions. Since resilience emerged as a key mechanism connecting optimism and proactivity with achievement, universities should focus on building programs that cultivate both positive attitudes and active learning behaviors. Interventions such as mentorship initiatives, self-regulation and goal-setting workshops, and cognitive-behavioral training can help students manage stress, remain motivated, and develop effective coping strategies during difficult academic periods.

Teachers can also integrate reflective learning activities that encourage students to evaluate progress, anticipate obstacles, and plan adaptive responses. Creating supportive classroom environments where effort, perseverance, and optimism are recognized can further strengthen students' resilience. Moreover, collaboration between academic advisors and mental health professionals can provide holistic support that combines emotional well-being with academic skill-building. By nurturing these psychological resources, institutions can enhance not only academic performance but also students' overall satisfaction and long-term personal growth.

6. Limitations and Future Research

Although this study provides meaningful findings, several limitations should be recognized when interpreting the results. First, the sample size was relatively small and mainly consisted of international students from a single university. Because the participants represented limited cultural and institutional backgrounds, the conclusions may not fully reflect the experiences of students in different educational systems. Future research should include larger and more diverse samples from various universities and countries. Doing so would allow researchers to examine whether the relationships among optimism, proactive habits, and academic resilience differ across cultural, social, or academic settings.

Second, the cross-sectional nature of this study limits its ability to explain causal relationships among variables. The findings show associations rather than long-term

effects. Future research could adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to capture how these psychological characteristics evolve over time. For instance, following students through several semesters or academic years would help determine how optimism and proactive behavior contribute to the development of resilience and how that resilience eventually affects academic performance.

Third, the study relied solely on self-reported data, which might include some degree of response bias or social desirability effects. Participants may have over- or under-estimated their levels of optimism, resilience, or achievement. To reduce this limitation, future studies could combine self-report questionnaires with more objective indicators, such as academic records, attendance, or teacher and peer evaluations. A mixed-methods approach using interviews or focus groups could also provide richer insights into how students apply optimism and proactive habits in their daily academic lives.

Fourth, only two psychological predictors, optimism and proactive habits, were considered in this research model. Academic achievement, however, is shaped by many interrelated personal and environmental factors. Future studies should therefore expand the framework by including other constructs such as grit, emotional intelligence, mindfulness, or social support. Exploring how these additional factors interact with optimism and proactivity would offer a more comprehensive picture of what drives academic resilience and success.

Finally, environmental and contextual factors were not deeply examined in this study. Future research could investigate how academic stress, teacher encouragement, institutional support, or cultural expectations influence the strength of these relationships. Cross-cultural comparisons would also be valuable for understanding whether these psychological mechanisms function similarly in both collectivist and individualist cultures.

Supplementary Materials: The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the author upon request.

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