



## Coping with Hostile Discrimination: The Roles of Self-Advocacy, Positive Psychology, and Unconscious Bias Training in Higher Education

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### ABSTRACT

The research on Coping with Hostile Discrimination through Self-Advocacy, Positive Psychology in Higher Education, and Unconscious-Bias Training mainly emphasizes on encountering issues related to hostile Discrimination leads to the development of negative feelings in the minds of female students, such as self-doubt due to which their aspirations related to careers also get negatively impacted. There is a lack of research studies regarding the importance of self-advocacy for dealing with the problem of hostile Discrimination. Moreover, in the previous empirical studies, the concept of unconscious bias training is also lacking, due to which their role in dealing with the pertinent issue is not clear. However, the concept of positive psychology has been referred to in the previous literature for dealing with hostile Discrimination. Hostile Discrimination leads to negative experiences in women's lives, such as the symptoms of depression and anxiety, along with reduced self-esteem in them. To conduct this research, a quantitative based study has been used. The sample size has been set at 345, and a margin for blank questionnaires has also been established. There were 320 fully completed questionnaires submitted by the respondents, which helped with the analysis and production of the results. This study has chosen a conventional sample size, aiding in reliable data. After the data collection and analysis, results indicated a significant relationship between positive psychology in higher education and hostile Discrimination. Whereas unconscious-bias training insignificantly moderates the relationship between self-advocacy and hostile Discrimination. The mediating impact of self-advocacy between positive psychology in higher education and hostile Discrimination was also significant. Apart from increasing the knowledge of the constructs under study, the present research has also been effective in practical implications. The present study has encouraged the management of various universities to take important measures to promote positive psychology in higher education. Fewer resources have forced the present study to focus only on Chinese universities. Future researchers could overcome this by integrating the universities from developed countries in the context of the present study.



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## **1. Introduction**

In recent times, the status of women has changed from the stereotypical concept of being housewives only and now they are performing their part equal to that of men in society. However, even after the change of perceptions about women, Discrimination is being faced by Chinese women in their daily life as far as their gender is concerned in this regard (Sanders, Rose, Booker, & King, 2021; Tait, 2021). There can be different forms of Discrimination such as being called a sexist name, getting unfair treatment by others, and facing discrimination based on the gender gap and being a woman. The females in China are facing problems related to Discrimination during their academic careers which can pose a serious barrier to their effective attainment of future careers by them (Groyecka-Bernard, Karwowski, & Sorokowski, 2021). Several events related to biased behavior, animosity, and malice have been observed around the world due to which the importance of positive psychology and self-advocacy has been highlighted with the help of which females can defend themselves against such issues (Buchanan & Wiklund, 2021). In this chapter of, the research study, the background of research has been explained along with describing the problem statement for identifying the gaps in previous literature studies based on which the idea of undertaking this research topic can be justified. The significance and scope of this study has also been described in addition to the objectives of conducting this research. In last, the structure of this whole research has also been given.

The major problem is that hostile Discrimination is being faced by women in different parts of the world and there is a need to cope with this problem by developing positive psychology and self-advocacy in women all over the world. It has been found that almost 100 percent of females in America have been subjected to Discrimination in the past years out of which 98 percent of cases are related to hearing a sexist joke and 94 percent of cases are related to sexual harassment as well. Most of these incidents have been reported at the workplace and also in educational institutes (Etengoff & Lefevor, 2021; Hickey & Cui, 2024). The factor of Discrimination has been encountered by females in colleges in which 75 percent of women face this challenge who are studying a degree with male-dominated major subjects and 72.5 percent of females faced this issue when studying a degree with gender-neutral major subjects (Etengoff & Lefevor, 2021; Grabe, 2020). The study "Coping with Hostile Discrimination through Self-Advocacy, Positive Psychology in Higher Education, and Unconscious-Bias Training" has been selected for research because encountering issues related to hostile Discrimination leads to the development of negative feelings in the minds of female students such as self-doubt due to which their aspirations related to careers also get negatively impacted (Beutel, Burge, & Borden, 2019). There is a lack of research studies regarding the importance of self-advocacy for dealing with the problem of hostile Discrimination. Moreover, in the previous empirical studies, the concept of unconscious bias training is also lacking due to which their role in dealing with the pertinent issue is not clear. However, the concept of positive psychology has been referred to in the previous literature for dealing with hostile Discrimination. Hostile Discrimination leads to develop negative experiences in the lives of women such as the symptoms of depression and anxiety along with reduced self-esteem in them (Ambrose, 2024; Beutel et al., 2019; Gisler, Kato, Lee, & Leung, 2018). They also develop a feeling of prejudice in their minds due to which their self-esteem and morale get lowered (Kirkman & Oswald, 2020). In Pakistan, 62% of the women are with low self-esteem (Urooj, Ahmad, Bhatti, & Hussain, 2022; Urooj, Bhatti, Ahmad, & Nawaz, 2023). Therefore, such matters are of great concern and require to be investigated so that the negative impacts can be explored for taking appropriate measures to mitigate their negative impacts (Kirkman & Oswald, 2020). Moreover, in this way, the gap in knowledge of the previous studies can also be filled as the concepts of self-advocacy, positive psychology, and unconscious-bias training have been undertaken in this research study with the help of which different impacts resulting from hostile Discrimination can be dealt with. The relevance and significance of this research study can be reflected with the help of ambivalent Discrimination theory according to which there are two components of Discrimination one is hostile Discrimination and the other one is benevolent Discrimination. But the rate of hostile Discrimination is more as compared to the other types and this trend can be observed.

This research study signifies that it is required that all the societies of this world should take serious measures for addressing the issue of hostile Discrimination (Kuchynka et al., 2018). Therefore, it is important to investigate the impacts being caused by hostile

Discrimination in the lives of women who are experiencing it in different forms. This research study has been undertaken for exploring the impacts of hostile Discrimination among higher education students studying in different universities in China so that different ways to deal with such situations can be investigated for reducing the negative impacts resulting from it. Moreover, different strategies will be suggested related to the development of positive psychology and self-advocacy through which better and deep insights can be developed among female individuals regarding the promotion of positive thoughts in their minds. In this way, their well-being can be made better by eliminating the negative feelings related to discriminating behaviors through which depressive symptoms can also be reduced (Lehavot, Beckman, Chen, Simpson, & Williams, 2019).

The research objectives of any study help in clearly defining the scope of that particular research so that the key variables can be focused through which the research process can be guided. Therefore, the research objectives for this study have been given as follows:

- To study the relationship between Positive Psychology and Hostile Discrimination in Higher Education Students of Chinese Universities.
- To understand the mediating role of Self Advocacy in the relationship between Positive Psychology and Hostile Discrimination in Higher Education Students of Chinese Universities.
- To investigate the moderating role of Unconscious-Bias Training in the relationship between Self-Advocacy and Hostile Discrimination in Higher Education Students of Chinese Universities.

Following research questions have been designed which will be addressed throughout this research study and these have been made following the research objectives of this study:

- What is the relationship between Positive Psychology and Hostile Discrimination?
- What is the mediating role of Self Advocacy in the relationship between Positive Psychology and Hostile Discrimination?
- What is the moderating role of Unconscious-Bias Training in the relationship between Self-Advocacy and Hostile Discrimination?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Positive Psychology in Higher Education**

The concept of positive psychology has been defined in various ways and with different terminology. Generally, positive psychology is the scientific study of what makes life most worth living (Lambert, Passmore, & Joshanloo, 2019). The rise of Positive Psychology demonstrates that there has been a significant shift in the last 20 years away from putting all of the focus on general psychology. Positive topics include flow, hope, courage, well-being, happiness, positive emotions, and strengths (Seligman, 2019). Williams, Horrell, Edmiston, and Brady (2018) say that P.P. research's three essential parts are "positive subjective experience, positive individual attributes, and positive institutions." A researcher shows that positive psychology (P.P.) is a scientific field that uses suitable research methods (Seligman, 2019). Positive psychology tries to use the best parts of the scientific method to figure out how to study the complicated ways people act. It doesn't depend on blind optimism, blind faith, self-deception, fleeting fashions, or waving your hands. Positive psychology has the potential to help not only individual students but also whole classes, entire class levels, and cohorts of students. A recent analysis of positive psychology indicators (PPI) for children and teens found that 75% of PPIs for young people were made for and done in school settings. Of those, 93% were done in groups (defined as an intervention that involves more than one student, such as a whole classroom) (Owens & Waters, 2020). Researchers have looked at how healthy PPIs work in school. It can be used to help many young adults, many of whom have had their college schedules severely messed up (Mendes de Oliveira, Santos Almeida, & Hofheinz Giacomoni, 2022). Even a small amount of positive psychology used over time could give students a much-needed morale boost. It shows how important it is to use positive psychology in the classroom, especially during tough times.

## **2.2. Hostile Discrimination**

Hostile Discrimination (H.S.) is a wrong and degrading way of thinking about women. They are seen as less competent and socially capable than men (Austin & Jackson, 2019). Discrimination has been linked to the ability to accept and understand sexual harassment. People with B.S. attitudes support some acts of kindness. Still, they also have negative and limiting ideas about women, like the idea that they need men to care for and protect them. Hostile Discrimination puts a high value on masculine strength to show that men are better than women. It is sexist and aimed at women who break the rules. Women who don't fit these stereotypes are seen as a threat to the status quo of patriarchy.

Open Discrimination keeps women in a position of inferiority. It can even lead to sexual harassment or other violence against women. Studies have shown that aggressive Discrimination makes people less likely to notice sexual harassment and less likely to support continuing investigations (Özdemir & Sakallı, 2022). Since H.S. followers think women are less important than men, they are more likely to excuse sexual harassment and even see it as harmless "flirting." People with more hostile sexist attitudes think that women can use their sexual charisma to get what they want (like money or a job) or control and eliminate harassers. It is because they believe in a hierarchy or natural power differences between men and women (i.e., that women are less than men) (Canto, Vallejo-Martín, Perles, & San Martín, 2020). How people in China react to sexual harassment is often based on how angry they are about Discrimination. Based on the results of the Xin Shi study, it seems that aggressive Discrimination, beliefs about "token resistance," and binge drinking could all hurt positive views about sexual consent. They could also be important starting points for efforts to stop sexual assault in China.

## **2.3. Self-Advocacy**

The term "self-advocacy" is used interchangeably with the broader term "self-determination," which is defined as the collection of skills, knowledge, and values that allow an individual to act in a goal-directed and self-regulated way. Schena, Rosales, and Rowe (2022) say that self-advocacy is being able to say what one wants and decide what resources one will use to get what one wants. Self-advocacy requires knowing one's self, knowing their rights, being able to communicate, and having the potential to be a leader. A strong understanding of oneself means knowing one's preferences, goals, learning style, strengths, flaws, accommodation needs, and the traits of one's disability. A well-rounded understanding of rights includes knowing one's rights, the rights of the community, the rights of children, how to stop violations, and how to fight for change. Self-determination is linked to essential learning outcomes and processes, like how well a student does in school and how willing they are to keep going when they face problems (Holzberg, Test, & Rusher, 2019). Even though research has been done on the development and predictors of self-determination from early childhood to early adulthood, little attention has been paid to how self-advocacy changes and what happens when students go to college. Self-advocacy skills are linked to academic success, college adaptability, and persistence (Riggs, 2020). New research shows that students who think they are better at self-advocacy also believe they can do well in college. In addition, students can advocate for themselves, that have been shown to help students do better in college.

## **2.4. Unconscious Bias Training (UBT)**

The goal of unconscious bias training (UBT) is to help people get over their natural biases. "Outgroups," defined as "demographically distinct groups" with a history of intergroup prejudice, stigma, discrimination, or persecution, are given legal protection. It includes groups defined by race and gender (Atewologun, Cornish, & Tresh, 2018). Noon (2018) says there are problems with UBT's basic ideas. In the case of racial bigotry, for example, UBT goes after people whose overt beliefs are different from their hidden ones. The modern racist is less likely to participate in UBT because their conscious, socially acceptable ideas may lead to disinterest in or even hostility toward out-groups (negative bias). Intergroup anxiety can be explained away when people learn more about discrimination. It can make an aversive racist worry too much about making a mistake and make people in outgroups act in a way that avoids conflict (Ruhl, 2020). It shows how helpless people feel when they have U.B. So, the moral and ethical debate is about whether

or not a person should be responsible for their actions, even if they didn't do them on purpose. There is a chance that talking about UBT could make people angry or prejudiced, so it is best to be careful (Oberai & Anand, 2018).

## 2.5. Theoretical Framework

The Well-Being Theory by (Maslow, 2000) states that self-happiness (advocacy), self-determination, and positive psychology are essential for a happy life. According to the well-being theory, the main goal is to increase people's feelings of happiness and satisfaction with life. The method used by the approach is based on ideas like PERMA, which shows how the five pillars of happiness (positive emotions, engagement, connections, a sense of meaning, and accomplishment) are all connected (McGonagle et al., 2020). So, it can be said that the benefits of diversity, like the results of self-advocacy and training to deal with unconscious bias, have made people forget how important it is to focus on people's well-being in diversity studies.

## 2.6. Relationship between Positive Psychology in Higher Education and Hostile Discrimination in Chinese Students

Positive psychology is essential to a human's life but still doesn't get much attention in the relative domain. Not so much detailed literature has been done on the following variables. The theory states that self-determination and self-advocacy are essential for a healthy life. Still, there have been problems between psychology's natural strengths and societal issues since the beginning. Many people who use critical concepts of positive psychology say that the well-being of individuals and society should be based on the ideas of freedom and social justice, which can be explained by Maslow's Theory of Well-Being (López-Sáez, García-Dauder, & Montero, 2020). However, Hegarty and Rutherford (2019) add to this background by saying negatively that positive psychology has a long history of being incredibly dismissive of approaches that consider social construction and context. The racist development of intelligence testing and I.Q. measurement is a great example of how a nervous society and a new field of psychology made clear distinctions between those who were deemed fit (i.e., upper class, educated, white, male) and those who were deemed unfit, undesirable, and dumb (that is, all others). All social institutions are based on the idea that people should be in charge of their own lives and the lives of those around them. These institutions always stress optimism and efficiency. Personal suffering often has a more critical social and political context.

Furthermore, women's feminism, and especially the feminism of women's color, should be the consciousness of misery. It would allow women to claim their right to be miserable in the face of persistent Discrimination and racism (Yakushko, 2018). Bancroft (2019) says that a person's sexual health is linked to physical, mental, and social health, even though it is hard to define and varies from culture to culture. One more research criticizes positive psychology's relation to Discrimination. It has been criticized for not considering cultural differences and the unique needs of marginalized groups like people with disabilities.

Moreover, Zemishlany and Weizman's research shows that people with mental illness often have problems with their sexuality. Still, it does not link with positive psychology as the theory of well-being clarifies (that mental health and determination are essential for being positive in life). Even though pro-violence beliefs are linked to higher rates of aggression in general, Anderson and Bushman find that opinions supporting violence against certain groups (like women) are a better predictor of aggressive behavior toward members of that group (i.e., a close companion). Empirical studies have shown that how people feel about sexual assault is also a significant factor in how often they use violence (Spring, 2022). Based on the above literature, it can be concluded that

**H1:** There is a significant relationship between positive psychology and hostile Discrimination

## 2.7. Mediating Role of Self Advocacy

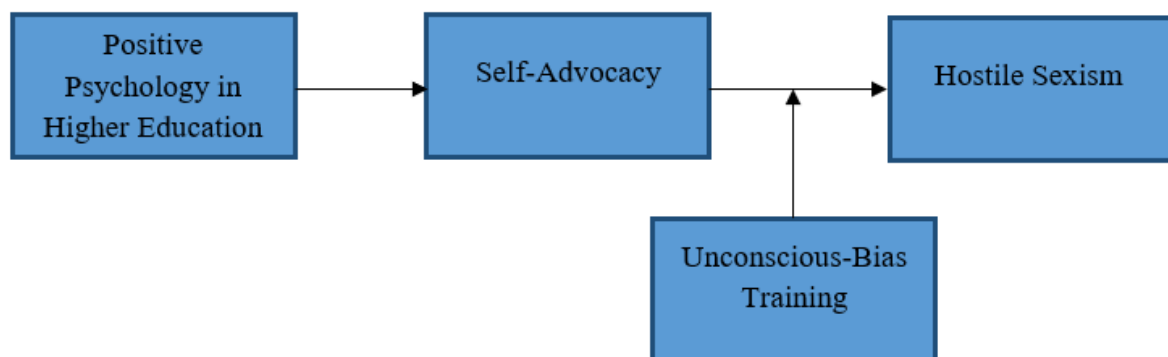
Advocating for oneself means being able to say what one wants and needs and choosing the best way to get those things. Studies have shown that students who speak up for themselves have an easier time in school and find it easier to go to college (Wolsiefer & Stone, 2019). Even less research has been done on how young people can learn to speak up for themselves, and even less has been done on when or how college students use these skills. Self-compassion is a possible idea that hasn't been looked into much regarding Discrimination. Also, studies have found a good link between how women feel about themselves and how kind they are to themselves (Cherry & Wilcox, 2021). This research supports the idea that self-compassion could bridge Discrimination and emotional well-being since Discrimination makes women less able to decide for themselves. Self-compassion and PTSD symptoms were most strongly linked to each other in women who had experienced interpersonal trauma. These women had been sexually or physically abused somehow (Davis & Chick, 2022). Additionally, research has shown that women's personal experiences of self-compassion and psychology are highly associated (Stevenson & Allen, 2017).

**H2:** Self-advocacy significantly mediates the relationship between positive psychology and hostile Discrimination

## 2.8. Moderating the Role of Unconscious Bias Training

The goal of efforts to make people more aware of unconscious bias training (UBT) is to give people the tools they need to recognize their own biases and re-evaluate and change harmful behaviors toward women, people of color, and other marginalized groups. Coaching helps people grow by using a goal-oriented, self-regulatory planning and action process that requires self-awareness and introspection (Jones, 2019). Self-efficacy or faith in one's skills is integral to self-regulation. According to studies on diversity training, it is easier to change behavior than attitudes, and the relationship between the coach and the coachee is essential to coaching success, while hostile Discrimination moderates their relationship (Sonesh et al., 2015). Meta-analyses show that coaching works and also show that it helps people learn and change their attitude, but hostile treatment impact negatively on a person's attitude. In the study, the researcher found that coaching, which is a multifaceted intervention, can help people reach two goals of UBT that don't have much evidence now: a change in behavior and better self-regulation (Mahase, 2019). However, one possible drawback of UBT is that it may require active participation from the person being coached. Also, although coaching research is growing, its scope is limited by method, theory, and sample size issues.

**H3:** Unconscious bias training significantly moderates the relationship between self-advocacy and hostile Discrimination.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

## 3. Methodology

The investigation was carried out in accordance with established methodology, which involved considering both descriptive and relational aspects. This study is based on the philosophy of positivism as it is a quantitative method-based study. This philosophy has

been used because the biases of the researcher towards a specific relation can cause distorted results. As our study moved from general to specific, so researcher employed a deductive logic approach. This research has employed the quantitative research method. The quantitative method is the process of collecting and analyzing data in numerical form and it makes use of numbers and accuracy (Park & Park, 2016). The researcher used a questionnaire survey to get the outcomes. The study's sector is the higher education sector in China and the target sample is higher education students in Chinese universities. The purposive sampling technique has been used here. The data was collected from 345 respondents. For measuring the respective variables like hostile Discrimination, positive psychology, unconscious bias training, and self-advocacy, this study used different measuring scales adapted from literature, and respondents were asked to fill the questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale. SPSS was utilized for the central analysis, whereas AMOS v.24 was adopted for structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the hypothesis.

### 3.1. Questionnaire Design

As this is a quantitative method-based study, so the questionnaire survey technique was used to collect responses from the participants. The questionnaire collects data from participants by asking questions in a statistical study. It is also convenient for the researcher. For this study, the questionnaire was intended on a Likert scale. This research used variables for extracting the results of the study. Different items for each variable were used and the respondents showed their responses against these items on a measuring scale. The scales were adapted from previous studies and items have been formulated in the context of our study. This was successfully completed following the thorough process of examining numerous relevant research publications. Additionally, when examining the face validity of the items used as a scale in surveys, the expert opinions were consulted and taken into consideration. The well-crafted scales from the most referenced article were merged into the questionnaire in order to appropriately gather data from our target population, thanks to the experts' helpful feedback and constructive comments. Linear relationships among variables as well as mediating and moderating role of variables have been analyzed in this study. The independent variable in this research is positive psychology, hostile Discrimination is the dependent variable self-advocacy is the mediating variable and unconscious bias training is the moderator variable of the study. The following lists the measurement scales for each variable.

To measure the hostile Discrimination in Chinese higher education universities students, the Ambivalent Discrimination Inventory (ASI) (Glick & Fiske, 2018), which is primarily a 22 items inventory and it has 11 items each for hostile Discrimination and benevolent Discrimination has been utilized. This study contextualized and incorporated five items from the measure, with respondents indicating their opinions on a 5-point Likert scale. To measure positive psychology among Chinese higher education university students, PCQ was adapted from (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). Its items have been formulated under our study. This PCQ's construct credibility and validity have been established (Luthans et al., 2007) and it has also been adapted and used in the Chinese setting (Luthans, Avey, Clapp-Smith, & Li, 2008). This measuring scale consisted of five items and respondents showed their responses on a five-point Likert scale. For measuring self-advocacy among Chinese higher education university students, Self-Advocacy-Skills Assessment (SASA) has been adapted from (Kolar et al.) and formulated in our study's context. It has five items and respondents showed their responses on five points Likert scale.

**Table 1**  
**Measurement Items**

Variables	No. of items	Measurement scale	Reference
Hostile Discrimination	five	1-5	(Glick & Fiske, 2018)
Positive psychology	five	1-5	(Luthans et al., 2007)
Self-Advocacy	five	1-5	(Kolar et al.)
Unconscious bias training	five	1-5	(Greenwald et al., 1998)

This Self-Advocacy-Skills Assessment (SASA) scale was formulated for a university internal report. Unconscious bias training was measured among Chinese higher education university students with the help of an implicit association test adapted from (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998), which had 5 items, and the students were asked to show their responses on 5 points Likert scale.

### **3.2. Data Collection Process**

The total population of people from which a sample could be taken is known as the target population. The people that participate in the inquiry make up the sample. The term "participants" refers to those who participate (Ackerman et al., 2019). The target population in this study is higher education students from Chinese universities. The target country of the study is China. A total of 345 questionnaires have been distributed among graduate students in Chinese universities. Out of 345 questionnaires, 320 were found to be useful in this study as they were completely responded to by the respondents. The students were informed that these surveys were completely for research purposes and that their participation is voluntary. The questionnaire consisted of two components. The demographic characteristics of the participants in this study were obtained in the introductory portion of the questionnaire. The second section focused on the variables that were included in our study. The students showed responses on five points Likert scale. Universities' management was contacted before approaching the students. After collecting the distributed questionnaires filled by the students, the students were regarded for their participation in the survey. The research purpose was to examine the relationship between positive psychology and hostile Discrimination in higher education students in Chinese universities. It also analyzed the mediating role of self-advocacy and moderating role of unconscious bias training in the relationship between positive psychology and hostile Discrimination.

Every research procedure faces some challenges throughout the study. Besides the needs for the research, there are several obstacles that the researcher has encountered and overcame via the use of various strategies. The size of the sample was the first problem encountered. The majority of researchers are ignorant of sample size, which skews the results. The sample size has been set at 345, and a margin for blank questionnaires has also been established. There were 320 fully completed questionnaires submitted, by the respondents which helped with the analysis and production of the results. This study has chosen a conventional sample size, which aided in getting reliable data. In addition, a cross-sectional time horizon has been employed to tackle the issue relating to time. In order to overcome potential difficulties in data collecting, a cross-sectional time range was employed in this analysis instead of a longitudinal study. In addition, the questionnaire formulation involved the use of scales that had a specific and accurate amount of items. In order to establish the variables and their interconnections, thorough examination of the literature and previous research is conducted. Consequently, every measure is considered. The investigation is conducted employing all possible precautionary measures. The research's outcomes have been ensured to be accurate.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

The research involved participants from high education students in Chinese universities. Respondents were distributed with 345 questionnaires and 320 were received back with appropriate answers. The analysis was made with these 320 questionnaires. It was found that there were 174 female students and 146 male students. The students in the age group of 20-22 years were 25%, 23-25 years were 35% and the students in the age group category of 26-28 years were 60%. So, it was observed that most students were seniors. This was a positive sign for our research as we targeted high education students. The response from senior students made the research authentic and increased its chances of integrity. The response regarding coping with hostile Discrimination through self-advocacy, and positive psychology while unconscious bias training's impact was also observed. The questions were designed in such a way as to access the experience of students regarding the particular phenomenon.

### **4.2. Rotated Component Matrix**



The rotated component matrix analysis is usually run to assess the accuracy of questionnaire items and their results. For this purpose, the item's appearance in their respective columns can be determined using this matrix. This matrix is also referred to sometimes as loadings. It contains the main output of the analysis regarding principal mechanisms. It entails the estimates regarding correlations among each of the variables and the estimated components.

The Table 2 demonstrates various values regarding the concerned hypothesis, such as the positive psychology in higher education has its relevant values appearing in its column, and the variable of self-advocacy has values in its column. Similarly, the values of hostile Discrimination and unconscious-bias training have their value. The most observed value figures in the results of rotating components were values greater than 0.7. It illustrates that there is no cross-loading or error of double loading present in the data.

**Table 2**  
**Rotated component Matrix**

	Component		
PSHE1	.847		
PSHE2	.834		
PSHE3	.812		
PSHE4	.824		
PSHE5	.813		
HS1		.823	
HS2		.826	
HS3		.804	
HS4		.781	
HS5		.804	
UBT1			.680
UBT2			.770
UBT3			.730
UBT4			.801
UBT5			.761
SA1	.759		
SA2	.940		
SA3	.927		
SA4	.931		
SA5	.940		

PSHE= Positive psychology in higher education, SA= Self-advocacy, UBT= Unconscious-bias training, HS=Hostile Discrimination

### 4.3. Descriptive of Variables

Descriptive statistics explain the main characteristics of the data in research. They provide a simple briefing regarding the sample and the measures. Although sometimes, descriptive statistics can also be illustrated through graphical representation. In this research, the tabular representation explains the characteristics of the study.

**Table 3**  
**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
PSHE	320	1.00	5.00	3.1435	1.23683	-.141	.105
HS	320	1.00	5.00	3.1993	.72433	-.331	.105
UBT	320	1.20	5.00	3.0985	.55921	-.069	.105
SA	320	1.00	5.00	3.2299	1.15654	-.252	.105
Valid N (listwise)	320						

PSHE= Positive psychology in higher education, SA= Self-advocacy, UBT= Unconscious-bias training, HS=Hostile Discrimination

The above table explains various features of our variables, such as hostile Discrimination, self-advocacy, unconscious-bias training, and positive psychology in higher education. The mean values to be acceptable must be near to 3 or a bit more than 3 and a perfect "3". Table 2 explains that the mean values for various variables of this study, such as PSHE, H.S., UBT, and S.A. are 3.1, 3.1, 3.0, and 3.2, respectively. The values of

standard deviation and skewness are also elaborated in the above table, which shows that there is no outlier in the data that can cause disruption.

#### 4.4. Validity Results

The validity tests are performed to judge the authenticity and reliability of research variables. There are predominantly two ways for determining the validity results. These are the convergent validity and the discriminant validity. The convergent validity can be measured through composite reliability and average variance extracted. These two collectively refer to how closely the new scale is linked to the other variables and other measures of the similar construct. It provokes and enlightens the confirmation that not only should the variable correlate with linked variables, but it should not correlate with the distinct or unrelated ones. The discriminant validity, however, explains that variables or measures of constructs that theoretically should not be linked to each other are, in actuality, not found to be greatly linked to one another. The measure of discriminant validity also explains that all the variables of this research are distinct from each other or even themselves depicted in bold. As the value of PSHE is 0.847 distinct from H.S., UBT and S.A. Similarly, the other variable's relation is also stronger with themselves as compared to the other constructs, the values are also different, which indicates that the variables which are not theoretically related are not found to be correlated too.

**Table 4**  
**Convergent and Discriminant Results**

	CR	AVE	MSV	PSHE	HS	UBT	SA
<b>PSHE</b>	0.999	0.704	0.445	<b>0.847</b>			
<b>HS</b>	0.951	0.820	0.365	0.399	<b>0.867</b>		
<b>UBT</b>	0.988	0.711	0.398	0.465	0.699	<b>0.810</b>	
<b>SA</b>	0.909	0.765	0.318	0.409	0.537	0.431	<b>0.817</b>

PSHE= Positive psychology in higher education, SA= Self-advocacy, UBT= Unconscious-bias training, HS=Hostile Discrimination

The above table explains that the variables in our study, such as PSHE, H.S., UBT, and S.A., fit with the constraints of composite reliability and average variance extract as both have threshold values greater than 0.05, which that illustrates these variables to be fit with the standards of convergent validity. The important criterion is to examine the composite reliability (CR). While testing the composite reliability, it should be noted that the CR values for each variable should not be less than 0.7. The CR values of our dataset were again meeting this requirement. As the values for PSHE, HS, UBT, and SA are 0.999, 0.951, 0.988, and 0.909 indicating the composite reliability of the dataset. Another criterion for assessing convergent validity is to evaluate the average variance extracted (AVE), with a minimum cutoff value of 0.5. There were no items released and no problems with AVE in the dataset. The output obtained from the whole convergent validity test, as presented in Table 4, demonstrates that the measurement model of our dataset satisfies all the criteria for convergent validity. Convergent validity was definitively proven for this investigation, therefore allowing for the subsequent tests of structural equation modeling (SEM) to be conducted.

#### 4.5. Model Fitness

The model fitness is done to assess the accuracy of our formulated model. This is mainly done by incorporating and relating the variables, whether they are dependent, independent, moderators, or mediators. We seek to identify their association level or fitness extent. The model fitness diagram below represents the model to be fit and accurate, which hints at the allowance of the structural equation model to perform.

**Table 5**  
**Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

CFA Indicators	CMIN/DF	GFI	IF	CFI	RMS
Threshold Value	≤ 3	≥ 0.80	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	≤ 0.08
Observed Value	2.698	0.800	0.932	0.932	0.073

The confirmatory factor analysis in the above table illustrates the results through the values of IFI, GFI, CFI, and RMSEA. The threshold figures globally accepted in the field of

research for these measures are for GFI. The threshold value must be  $\geq 0.80$ . In this research, the results of the GFI value are 0.800; for IFI, the value is 0.932; for CFI, the value is 0.932; for RMSEA, the value is 0.073. All the values fall in the range of threshold standard or acceptable values indicating the model fit and accuracy.

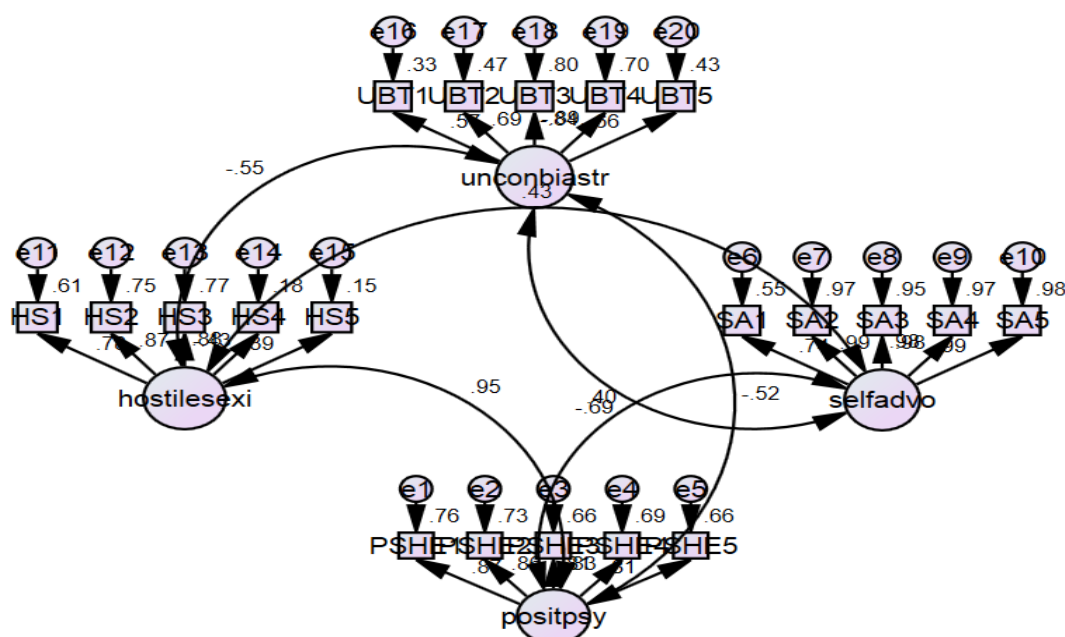


Figure 2: CFA

### 4.6. Structural Equation Modelling

The most important test that leads toward the results of structural equation modeling is a set of statistical procedures used to measure and analyze the linkage of observed and latent variables. The linear and indirect effects, i.e., mediation or moderation, can be explained through the results of structural equation modeling. In these tests, the results of probability value are the most important. The p-values less than 0.05 for any relationship determine the acceptance of the hypothesis formulated through reviewing the literature, whereas the indirect effect illustrates the role of mediation and moderation, taking into account to finalization of the results of the status of the hypothesis.

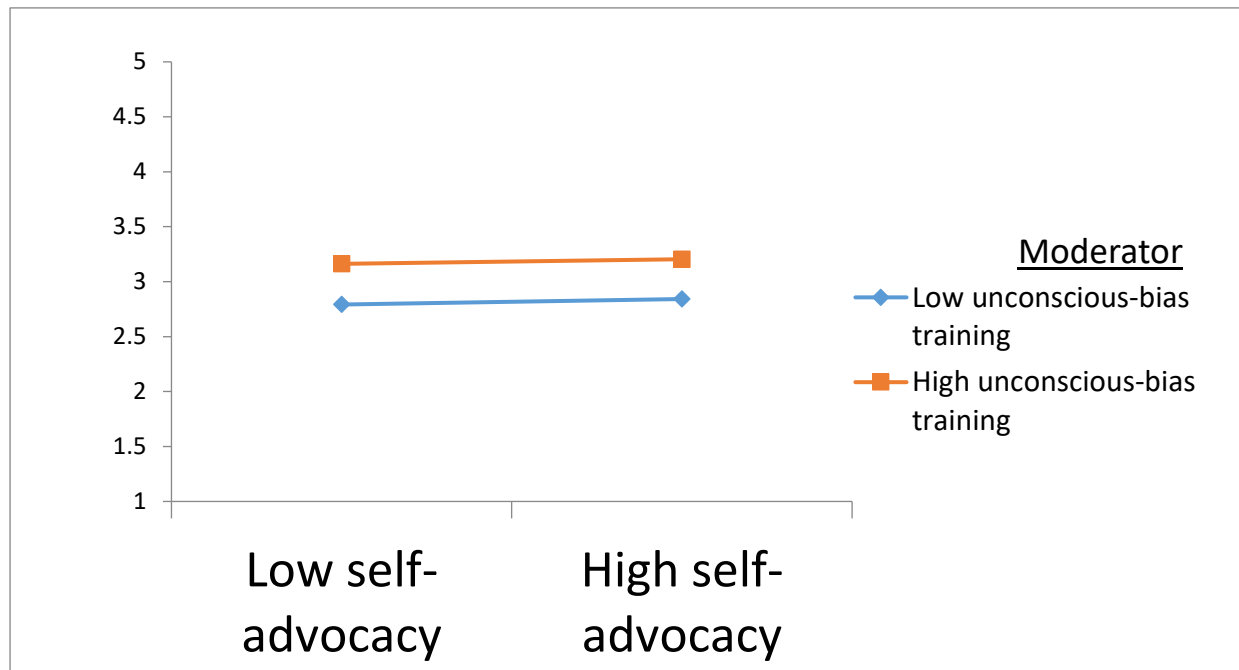
Table 6  
SEM Results

Relation impacts	Hypothesized Path	B	S.E.	P value	Conclusion
Direct Effects					
Hypothesis 1	PHSE→ HS	.162	.052	0.00	Accepted
Restraint Effects					
Hypothesis 2	SA*UBT→ HS	.003	.092	0.98	Rejected
Mediation Effects					
Hypothesis 3	PHSE→SA→HS	.176	.089	0.00	Accepted

PSHE= Positive psychology in higher education, SA= Self-advocacy, UBT= Unconscious-bias training, HS=Hostile Discrimination

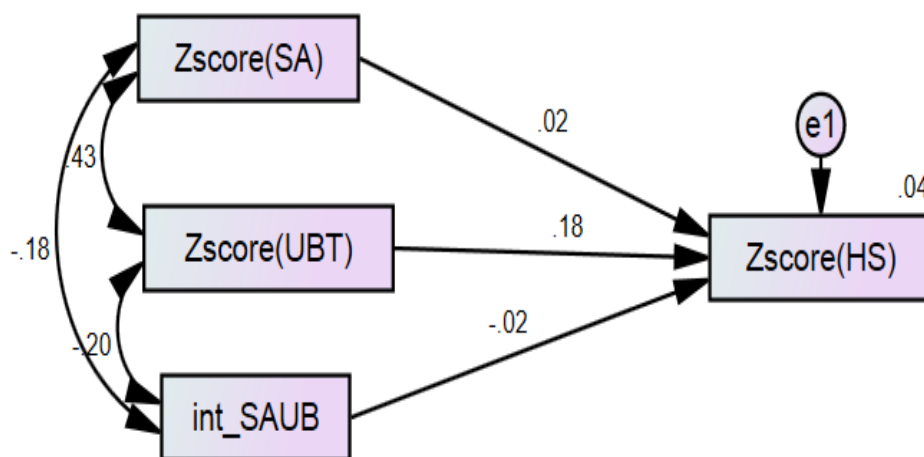
The first hypothesis, "positive psychology in higher education significantly impacts hostile Discrimination," is accepted because its probability value indicates that these two have a strong connection, such as a change in one variable causing another variable. After reviewing the literature review, the studies supported the concept of direct relation among these two constructs. The beta value for the first hypothesis is .142, which indicates the p-value to be less than 0.05, i.e., 0.00, indicating a significant relationship between positive psychology in higher education and hostile Discrimination. The third hypothesis is "Self-advocacy significantly mediates the relationship between positive psychology in higher education and hostile Discrimination" This hypothesis has also been significant. The self-advocacy significantly mediates the linkage of the two dependent and independent variables. The p-value for this impact is again 0.00, which illustrates the strong mediation of self-Advocacy. Moreover, the studies also supported the strengthening mediation of self-

advocacy while considering the impact of PHSE and H.S. The second hypothesis based on moderation is "Unconscious bias training moderates the relationship between positive psychology in higher education and hostile Discrimination. This hypothesis has been rejected because the results indicated its p-value of 0.98, which caused the rejection of this hypothesis.



**Figure 3: Moderation of Unconscious Bias Training**

The above graphical representation illustrates the moderating impact of unconscious bias training between self-advocacy and hostile Discrimination. The moderator's result is insignificant as the figure shows that the two lines are parallel and are not about to intersect, which dictates the insignificant hypothesis. The moderator's impact is thus not strong, and the hypothesis is rejected. It means that the presence of this moderator, i.e., unconscious bias training, does not make any difference between self-advocacy and hostile Discrimination.



**Figure 4: SEM Moderation of Unconscious Bias Training**

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Main Findings

In China, the higher education system is considered to be one of the largest education systems in the world. It is an essential pillar for the progressing economic performance of the country. This has encouraged the Chinese government and other

private organizations to encourage innovative reforms to develop a better system for higher education in China. However, the public and private sectors face many issues in achieving this goal. Hostile Discrimination in higher education institutes is one of the main issues faced in this context. Even though various universities in China are taking many important measures to improve the current situation, for this purpose, positive psychology in higher education is being promoted. Chinese universities are also encouraging many programs to offer equal learning opportunities for all students, irrespective of any bias. To contribute to the significance of higher education, the current quantitative study was conducted to focus on the impact of positive psychology in the context of hostile Discrimination in Chinese universities. The mediating role of self-advocacy was also discussed in this context, and novelty was added by considering the moderating role of unconscious bias training. Three hypotheses were developed and analyzed for the current study to determine the relationships between the constructs.

The first formulated hypothesis (H1) for the present study was accepted as per the findings, and the relationship between positive psychology in higher education and hostile Discrimination was found to be significant in the context of higher education students in Chinese universities. The results of past studies have also supported this result (Ucar & Özdemir, 2021). Scholars believe that positive psychology positively influences individuals' health by promoting well-being, happiness, and satisfaction (Fisher, Burgess, & Hammond, 2021). These factors help improve the individual's overall behavior toward the claims of society. However, women exposed to hostile Discrimination are more likely to express their feelings in the form of anger or frustration. Studies have emphasized the significance of positive psychology for improving an individual's overall performance (Chawla, Wong, & Gabriel, 2019). This is considered beneficial in improving social gatherings' outcomes by discouraging the promotion of gender-based discrimination. Positive psychology has also shown positive influences in an educational setting as it has helped the students keep track of their schedules without messing up. Such discussions have led to a better understanding of the significance of positive psychology in higher education for discouraging unethical behavior in the context of both management and students.

The results of the current study were in favor of the second formulated hypothesis (H2), and it was determined that self-advocacy has a significant mediating role in the relationship between positive psychology in higher education and hostile Discrimination in higher education students of Chinese universities. Broadly, self-advocacy is stated as self-determination. Studies have stated that the self-advocacy of an individual encourages one to present one's interests and desires (Guizzo & Cadinu, 2021). A high level of motivation improves the self-advocacy of an individual, which positively influences the performance of the individual as well. Scholars have stated that both external factors, as well as internal factors, influence attitude as well as the behavior of individuals (Wolsiefer & Stone, 2019). Students with effective self-advocacy are likely to perform well in their studies. However, positive psychology significantly influences the self-advocacy of the students. This positively impacts the structure of the educational system. Previous studies have aligned with the results of the present study and have also supported a linkage between emotional well-being and self-advocacy (Strand, 2019). This linkage is beneficial in determining the outcomes of the overall educational performance of the students.

The present study's findings did not support the third formulated hypothesis (H3), and it was concluded that unconscious bias training has an insignificant moderating role in the relationship between self-advocacy and hostile Discrimination in higher education students in Chinese universities. Gender biases have been a point of discussion for ages. This has increased the concern of society (Warren, Zanhour, Washburn, & Odom, 2020). Cultural norms, as well as values, play an essential role in this regard. Various conservations of society have encouraged hostile Discrimination. However, the unconscious bias of the public has still become a hindrance in promoting equal opportunities for men and women in various aspects of work as well as educational settings. The results from previous studies have stated that discrimination between men and women has been commonly observed in various aspects of life (Glick, 2019). This has impacted the performance of individuals greatly. Important decisions are needed to be taken to improve the overall performance of society in decreasing gender biases. The unconscious bias training has been infecting society, and essential measures must be taken. Gender-based disparities often

lead to lower self-esteem impacting the self-advocacy of an individual. Thus, the present study has also helped in increasing the knowledge related to unconscious bias training in positive psychology in higher education, self-advocacy, and hostile Discrimination.

## **6. Conclusion**

The increasing contribution of the higher education system to the development and progress of the nations has made it an important point of discussion for many scholars. Various research has contributed to determining the significance of higher education in improving the overall economic structure of a country. At present, China is found to be one of the continuously developing countries in the world with an effective as well as developed higher education system. This has emphasized the promotion of various innovative ideas and strategies to ensure the progress of the higher education system in China. However, like other important institutes, higher education institutes face many challenges (Campbell, 2021). One of the most common issues in this regard is gender disparity. It has been observed that Chinese culture often promotes male dominancy rather than focusing on equal rights for everyone. Even though the world has changed a lot and such discriminations are not highly practiced globally, they still are not completely vanished from various sectors. This has encouraged various public and private sectors in China to hold training sessions to discourage biases based on gender. However, unconscious bias always kicks in during important decision-making processes.

Positive psychology is being encouraged in higher education to promote students' self-advocacy. Thus, the present study has been conducted to determine the impact of positive psychology in higher education on hostile Discrimination in Chinese universities. The mediating impact of self-advocacy and moderating impact of unconscious bias training were also considered in this context. The quantitative analysis was conducted to obtain the required results. Thus, the present study's findings showed that positive psychology in higher education positively influences hostile Discrimination. At the same time, self-advocacy also has a significant mediating role in this context, but the moderating impact of unconscious bias training was found to be insignificant. It was concluded from the present research that unconscious bias promotes hostile Discrimination preventing women from contributing to the development of the country. Positive psychology is needed to be promoted for higher self-advocacy in controlling hostile Discrimination.

### **6.1. Implications**

#### **6.1.1.Theoretical Implications**

The present research is effective in contributing to the literature review of the relationships between unconscious bias training, positive psychology, and hostile Discrimination. The empirical evidence from the current study is crucial in this context. The theoretical structure of the variables under study was presented in the context of well-being theory, which helped broaden the areas of focus under this theory. The novelty added to the present study by considering the moderating role of unconscious bias training has also helped promote its innovativeness. This helps in discouraging gender bias by encouraging more equal opportunities for both men and women in various fields of work. This is effective in providing a base for future studies as well. As very little literature was available on the relationship between positive psychology in higher education and hostile Discrimination, the present study has helped overcome this limitation, observed in past studies.

The literature of current study has helped in determining significance of positive psychology in promoting self-advocacy which could influence the management of various sectors to take initiatives in this regard. the literature emphasized on understanding the needs and requirements of the target audience as this could be effective in discouraging hostile Discrimination in higher education institutes. As a result of this policies could be developed for ensuring the implementation of positive psychology in higher education leading to positive outcomes.

#### **6.1.2.Practical Implications**

Apart from increasing the knowledge of the constructs under study, the present research has also been effective in practical implications. The present study has encouraged

the management of various universities to take important measures to promote positive psychology in higher education. Various programs, as well as training sessions, have been proposed to prevent gender biases. Equal learning opportunities are being promoted for everyone to obtain skillful professionals. Both governments and private sectors are developing policies to promote equal opportunities and discourage business. Various student exchange programs are also being initiated in this context to emphasize equal chances of selection for male and female students irrespective of gender-based disparities.

## 6.2. Limitations and Future Research

Various shortcomings are observed in the present study due to different uncertainties. First, it was observed that the quantitative approach of the study resulted in selecting a small sample size for carrying out the required analysis. This has limited the present research to numeric data, and no in-depth discussions with the respondents were favored due to the limited approach. This could be a favorable point for future studies to focus on more qualitative studies or mixed-method studies in this context to fulfill the observed gap of the current study. However, the current study needed to be completed in a short time, which resulted in its cross-sectional nature; however, for future research, studies of longitudinal nature could be beneficial for attaining more effective and reliable data. Another limitation of the current study was that it only focused on the higher education institutes in China due to easy accessibility.

In contrast, hostile Discrimination is common in workplaces and other private organizations, so focusing on these sectors could be a plus point for future research. However, fewer resources have forced the present study to only focus on Chinese universities. Future researchers could overcome this by integrating the universities from developed countries in the context of the present study. Racial bias has also influenced the target audience of the present study, and only Chinese students were taken into account. Therefore, for future studies, students from different nationalities could be selected.

### Authors Contribution

Tabish Nawab: Conceptualized the study, conducted the research, and wrote the manuscript.

### Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest w.r.t the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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