

Research Article

Just Try Harder?: Examining the Relationship Between Attribution Habit, Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy, and Academic Performance of Asian American Female College Students by Using Semi-Structured Interview and Vignette Experiment

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Abstract

Existing studies have begun to explore Asian-American students' paradoxes of high-achievement and low self-esteem using the framework of attribution theory. Interested in the gap in research pertaining to the intersection between gender, race, and self-esteem, the current study attempted to explore the relationship between self-esteem, self-efficacy, academic performance, and attributional habits within Asian-American female college students. For this, academic achievement, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and attributions for both academic successes and failures were examined through an online survey sampling a population of Asian-American female college students, as well as a focus group interview focused on a homogenous sample of Asian-American second-generation college students. Survey results showed a significant negative correlation between GPA and participants' attribution biases towards effort, as opposed to ability, for positive academic outcomes. On the other hand, students who reported higher self-efficacy tended to attribute effort more than external attribution factors for positive academic outcomes. Semi-structured focus group interviews highlighted not only underlying inferences the attribution and academic performance relationships found in the survey but also suggested possible explanations for the causal attribution in negative outcome situations. This study shed light on multifaceted psychological bias in attribution of Asian-American female students to complex educational contexts.

Keywords: Attribution Theory, Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy, Academic Performance.

1. Introduction

Asian-American students in the educational context are a unique demographic in that they are largely molded by a series of cross-cultural influences. Across the board, Asian-American students broadly demonstrate higher levels of academic performance in comparison to other ethnicities/races (Min, 2005). For example, when grade point averages of 5991 Asian, White, Black, and Latino students were compared across 26 middle schools, Asian students consistently indicated significantly higher GPAs than their counterparts (Hsin and Xie, 2016). However, in contrast to their high-level academic achievements, Asian-American students report relatively low levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem, which are known to be closely related to academic performance (Chen and Graham, 2004). It has been suggested that the main reason for this discrepancy is that the attribution habits of Asian American students may be different from those of students of other races (Hamman *et al.*, 2022).

In the educational context, attribution theory refers to the process of cognitive inference in which students establish a rationale as to why certain results were obtained regarding the results of their academic performance, such as positive or negative academic performances (Weiner, 1986). Attribution, or the explanations and rationales of outcomes, can be divided into internal or external attribution, each varying in the degree to which they reflect the power of personal agency. Internal attribution refers to the enduring traits of the individual (abilities, self-efficacy, and personality traits) or variable states (exerted effort) that caused an outcome (Mkumbo, 2012; Hamman *et al.*, 2022). External attributions are situational, circumstantial causes that refer to the agents in the context the outcome was displayed such as instructors' biases, luck, or help/lack of help from family and friends. As both internal and external attributions are

causal attributions linked to varying degrees of personal responsibility, causal attributions are highly significant and consequential in students' successes in their academic careers (Allen *et al.*, 2020). In the educational context, either rejecting personal responsibility (external attribution) for poor academic performance or attributing it to low self-ability or incompetence (internal attribution) crystallizes the results of perceived events as largely out of the student's reach, thereby depriving them of the opportunity to create remedial actions and build resilience for the future.

Considerable studies have adapted attribution habit to understand the differentiation of academic achievement depending on ethnic, gender, individual difference, personality and cultural difference (McClure *et al.*, 2011; D'Lima *et al.*, 2014; Chen and Graham, 2018; Tilley *et al.*, 2020; Hamman *et al.*, 2022). Importantly, Chen and Graham's research explores the paradox of lower self-esteem reported by Asian American students despite their higher academic achievement. The research investigates this phenomenon from an attributional perspective, examining academic achievement, self-esteem, and attributions for academic failures in a diverse sample of 8th-grade students in California. The attribution theory, used as a framework, suggests that individuals facing academic failure attribute the failure to factors such as ability or effort-hence the terms "Low ability attribution" and "Low effort attribution". Low ability attributions, perceived as stable and uncontrollable, are linked to lower self-esteem, while low effort attributions are considered to be more adaptive and controllable. Asian students, influenced by cultural values emphasizing hard work, are shaped to attribute academic outcomes to effort. The research's results showed that low ability attribution significantly predicted lower self-esteem. Also, as observed previously, Asians reported the highest grade point average but the lowest self-esteem among the different racial groups studied. Asians also reported more low-ability attribution than White and Black students, which gave potential explanation to the self-esteem gap. The "model minority" stereotype and cultural expectations might contribute to this phenomenon. The limitations of the study include the non-applicability of the sample size-middle school students. The attribution habits measured of young adolescents may be unreliable in that there can be other developmental cognitions that affect their reasoning, deduction, and causal attributions.

Hamman *et al.*'s research (2022) aims to understand the differences in self-efficacy beliefs and causal attributions for both desirable and undesirable academic outcomes between students from the United States (USA) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Previous research links self-efficacy beliefs to causal attribution preferences, particularly in explanations of unpleasant outcomes. The two causal attributions are distinguished by internal causes, which refer to attributions of a person or variable states (exerted effort), or external causes. Causal attributions that are linked to self-efficacy are crucial in college student's successes, as other studies find that student's beliefs in their ability to exert control over their life events are positively related to good performance. When observing cross-cultural orientations and their relationship to causal attribution habits, Westerners exhibit preferences for internal attributions (general/abstract personality traits to explain behavior). The study involved 1265 students, with 280 pairs of participants from the two countries. The participants completed questionnaires related to general self-efficacy, causal attributions for academic outcomes, and cultural orientation. The results indicated significant differences between the two cultural groups in their explanations for academic outcomes. U.S. students tended to attribute both desirable and undesirable outcomes to internal causes such as personal abilities and effort, while KSA students were more likely to attribute these outcomes to external causes such as family, friends, and instructors. The study also highlights the importance of understanding cognitive variables in shaping students' self-efficacy beliefs and their relationship with academic success. The study's methodology and findings contribute to the existing research on self-efficacy and academic success, providing a methodological blueprint for educators to recognize the impact of specific cognitive variables on students' self-efficacy beliefs. The study was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines and received approval from the relevant institutional review boards. In summary, the research sheds light on the differences in self-efficacy beliefs and causal attributions for academic outcomes between students from the USA and KSA, emphasizing the need to better understand teaching and learning in higher education. The study's findings have implications for educators and institutions seeking to support students' academic success and well-being.

The current study hones in on the relationship between self-esteem, self-efficacy, academic achievement and attribution habits of Asian-American female students. Previous research has focused on the relationship between personality and academic achievement in Asian Americans (D'Lima *et al.*, 2014; Chen and Graham, 2018; Hamman *et al.*, 2022). In the current study, I postulate that self-efficacy is equally as significant in predicting the attribution habit related to academic achievement in Asian-American students. In the current study, both a vignette study and a focus group interview were conducted to measure academic attributions. An online vignette study was also conducted as a measurement of attribution. The vignette study consists of

measuring participant's attribution tendencies in a series of objective, constant, and controlled hypothetical situations. Due to the highly subjective, diverse, and personal nature of memory recollection required during focus group interviews, a secondary measurement of attribution was necessary. In order to retrieve attribution habits from participants, it is necessary to ask participants to recall certain memories that they deem positive and negative, and to analyze their attributions to those events. However, when asking participants to recall specific memories, memories can be weak or distorted, which requires a proctored guidance as well as an environment where participants can expand and dig deeper. A focus group interview was conducted to nurture this dialogue. In this way, the nuance and rationale that can be lost within an objective measurement is not only acknowledged, but discussed and analyzed at a high level of specificity.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

2.1.1. Survey

Survey participants were recruited using the recruiting system of SurveyMonkey, an online survey site. The target sample population were Asian female students currently enrolled in college or graduate schools in all regions of the United States. This recruiting system uses a random sampling method, and survey participants are given a pre-set compensation (\$9) for completing the survey. As a result, a total of 46 surveys were collected, and among these, data from people whose answers were fully or largely (more than 50%) omitted or missing (N=12, proportion: 26%) were excluded from the analysis, resulting in 34 as the number of viable participants including analysis. All respondents were female and currently enrolled in college or graduate school. In addition, they identify themselves as Asian-American. The mean of age of the group was 22.53 with a standard deviation of 3.30.

2.1.2. Focus Group Interview

Participants for the focus group interview were recruited using a purposive sampling method, on account of their background (generation, purported level of academic investment, race, and age). 4 participants of the same age (M=19), race (i.e., Asian-American), current academic level (i.e., 2nd-year college students), gender (i.e., female), generation (i.e., 2nd-generation immigrants), and purported levels of academic investment (i.e., M=4.0) were selected by the author. Apart from satisfying the required focus population criteria, participants were chosen on the basis of the author's discretion that they would provide the best information, and also on grounds that all participants were familiar faces. Thus the organization of an open dialogue, was intentionally curated through the selection of a homogeneous, shared-perspective, and previously-acquainted group of participants.

2.2. Measure

2.2.1. Attribution Habit: Vignette Stories in Survey

To measure attribution habit of survey participants, 6 different vignette stories were constructed based on previous studies using this method (Demol *et al.*, 2021). To increase participants' engagement, vignette stories were oriented as hypothetical situations pertaining to each participant, and the first sentence of every story began with a background to the story. As shown in Table 1, the background information consisted of "Your" grade and academic challenge. In the second sentence, the first attribution habit-related element was presented. For example, when the aspect of ability was added into the vignette, the setting "You are a fast learner (or slow learner)" was included, and this was later set to one of two depending on the outcome of the story (e.g. positive or negative outcome). Third, an additional supportive context was presented, describing and enhancing either a positive or negative trajectory leading to the ultimate hypothetical academic outcome. The last sentence of each story presented either a positive result ("At the end of the semester, you finish the class with an A+ on the final exam"), or a negative result ("At the end of the semester, you finish the class with a C-on the final exam"). After reading each story, participants were asked to evaluate to what extent they believed the two attribution habits contributed to the academic result on a slider scale (Figure 1).

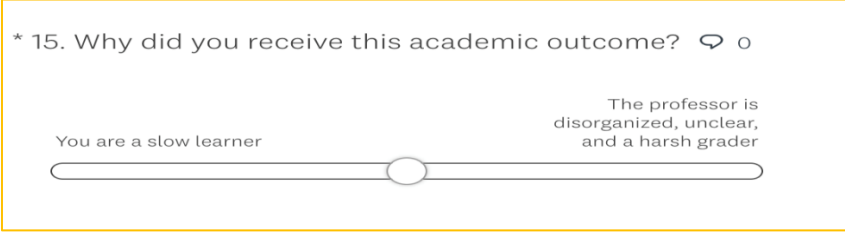


Figure 1. An example of slider used in vignette stories to measure the attribution habit bias.

Table 1. Vignette stories based on the combination of attribution habits and outcome type applied to the survey.

| Number | Type | Vignette |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Ability vs. Effort | Positive outcome | <i>You are a freshman enrolled in a very challenging general studies course that is a major requirement. <u>You are a fast learner, and are quick to understand concepts that others may struggle to understand.</u> You like this course because it makes you think. You really enjoy everything about this class. <u>Everyday, you devote two hours to reviewing and reading over the material of the class.</u> At the end of the semester, you finish the class with an A+ on your final exam.</i> |
| | Negative outcome | <i>You are a senior enrolled in a major course that is a requirement for graduation. <u>You are nervous about starting the class because by nature, you are not good at learning new things.</u> As the class progresses, you start to become discouraged at the difficulty of the material. <u>You then start to devote less and less time to the course and give up trying to study for this class.</u> At the end of the semester, you finish the class with a C-on your final exam.</i> |
| Ability vs. External (teacher & luck) | Positive outcome | <i>You are a junior. In one class, you should present class-related research as a major requirement of the course. <u>You are confident that you will be successful because you are an excellent public speaker.</u> Luckily for you, it doesn't seem like <u>the material of your presentation doesn't seem like it will be too difficult.</u> Moreover, <u>the professor is a kind, caring, and very competent person.</u> At the end of the semester, you found your presentation got an A+.</i> |
| | Negative outcome | <i>You are a senior who decided to take a major but difficult course that is a requirement for graduation. You are anxious about the course because you realized that <u>the professor of the course is disorganized, unclear, and harsh with grading.</u> To make matters worse, you are not familiar with the material, and <u>by nature are a slow learner.</u> At the end of the semester, you finish the class with a D+ on your final exam.</i> |
| Effort vs. External (teacher & luck) | Positive outcome | <i>You are a freshman and took the first major class. Luckily for you, <u>the professor makes complex material understandable.</u> Although difficult, <u>you are disciplined about your studying and devote two hours a day to studying for this class.</u> At the end of the semester, you finish the class with an A on your final exam.</i> |
| | Negative outcome | <i>You are a first-year graduate student and started a new research project. Unexpectedly, however, <u>the supervisor is disorganized, unclear, and harsh with consulting.</u> In addition, <u>the difficulty of the research methodology discourages you.</u> <u>You lost your interest to the research project and always put off the data collecting.</u> Eventually, at the end of the semester, you got very negative feedback from the department.</i> |

2.2.2. Attribution Habit: FGI.

Attribution habits were collected during a focus group interview. Participants were first asked to recall a situation in which they experienced a positive academic outcome (i.e., earning an excellent mark on an exam, performing relatively better than expected), either in the recent past or sometime in their academic career. Participants were then asked to reflect on their attitudes towards receiving this positive result (e.g., "How did you feel receiving this outcome?", "What emotions did you feel?"). Subsequently, participants were asked to provide a postulation/reason for that specific instance of positive academic outcome (e.g., "Why do you think you achieved this result?", "Was it your ability, effort, academic support, or sheer luck?"). Depending on participants' responses, further line of questioning challenging their attribution followed (e.g. "Is it possible you could have simply been lucky? Were you competitively advantaged by any means?" etc.). Parallel to measurement of participants' attribution habits to positive academic outcomes, measurement of participants' attribution habits regarding negative academic outcomes were measured. Participants were first asked to recall a negative academic outcome (i.e., failing an exam, receiving an unexpectedly low grade),

either in the recent past or sometime throughout their academic career. Participants were asked to describe how they felt receiving this outcome, and were then asked to provide rationale for their outcome (e.g., "Was this outcome due to your ability, effort, academic support, or sheer luck?", "Was this outcome inevitable?", "Was this outcome in or out of your control?"). Participants' reasonings for both positive and negative academic outcomes are then interpreted and identified as a certain attribution type.

2.2.3. Self-Esteem

Self-esteem was measured using the 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE), (Rosenberg, 1965). Participants were asked to make their responses on a 4 point scale about whether they strongly agree (1) or strongly disagree with the 10 items of the RSE (e.g., "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself", "I feel that I have a number of good qualities", "All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure"). Scoring participants' ratings involves a method of combined ratings. Low self-esteem responses are if participants answer disagree or strongly disagree on items 1, 3, 4, 7, 10, and strongly agree or agree on items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9.

2.2.4. Self-Efficacy

Participants were told that (a) general self-efficacy relates to "one's estimate of one's overall ability to perform successfully in a wide variety of achievement situations, or how confident one is that he/she can perform effectively across different tasks and situations," and (b) self-esteem relates to "the overall affective evaluation of one's own worth, value, or importance, or to how one feels about oneself as a person" (Chen *et al.*, 2001). Self-efficacy was estimated with 8 statements from the New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE), of which participants then scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The 8 statements of the NGSE included, (1) "I will be able to achieve most of the goals I have set for myself", (2) "When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them", (3) "In general, I think that I can obtain outcomes that are important to me", (4) "I believe I can succeed at any endeavor to which I set my mind", (5) "I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges, (6) "I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks, (7) "Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well", (8) "Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well".

2.3. Procedure

2.3.1. Survey

The survey was conducted on the SurveyMonkey web-based platform. The first page showed a brief introduction of the current study (e.g., goal), the number of questions, expected duration, confidentiality, and consent of participation. When participants checked the consent form, the first page would be open, whereupon they were asked to answer questions about demographic information: age, gender, grade, immigration generation, and major. Importantly, participants were asked to answer questions for current semester GPA, cumulative GPA (i.e., average GPA), highest letter grade received, the worst letter grade received, and current academic stress levels (e.g., 0 to 100). The next page started to ask vignette stories. Although the survey randomizes the order of the vignettes, the vignettes are written and structured in identical formats in which two attributions are compared (internal vs external or external vs external). After the vignette questions measuring attribution, participants were asked a series of questions from the New General Self-Efficacy Scale (NGSE) in order to measure their self-efficacy. Lastly, a series of questions from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) was administered in order to measure participants' self-esteem.

2.3.2. Focus Group Interview

A focus group interview of 4 participants selected by the author was conducted in order to measure attribution habits. Participants identified themselves as Asian American female students. I conducted a focus-group interview by using an online video call platform (Zoom) in Feb 2024. I was the moderator of this interview. The auditory and video files of the interview were recorded and used to transcribe the interview for revisiting and analysis. The duration of the interview lasted approximately one and a half hours, and each participant was rewarded a gift card for their participation and contribution.

3. Result

3.1. Survey Result

Table 2. Descriptive analysis results.

| | Age | Average GPA | Self-efficacy | Self-esteem | Academic stress |
|----------|------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Mean | 22.53 | 3.69 | 3.96 | 193 | 53.85 |
| Std. | 3.30 | .396 | .557 | .233 | 28.06 |
| Min, Max | 16, 32 | 3.0, 4.5 | 2.87, 5.00 | 1.5, 2.3 | 0, 100 |

Table 3. Descriptive analysis results about vignette stories.

| | Vignette 01 | Vignette 02 | Vignette 03 | Vignette 04 | Vignette 05 | Vignette 06 |
|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Mean | 63.12 | 54.15 | 53.41 | 65.35 | 33.26 | 28.76 |
| Std. | 31.26 | 27.99 | 31.13 | 28.11 | 27.87 | 22.06 |

3.2. Correlation Analysis

3.2.1. Vignette 1 x Cumulative GPA

Participant's attribution habit scorings from Vignette 1 and their reported cumulative GPAs revealed a significant negative correlation.

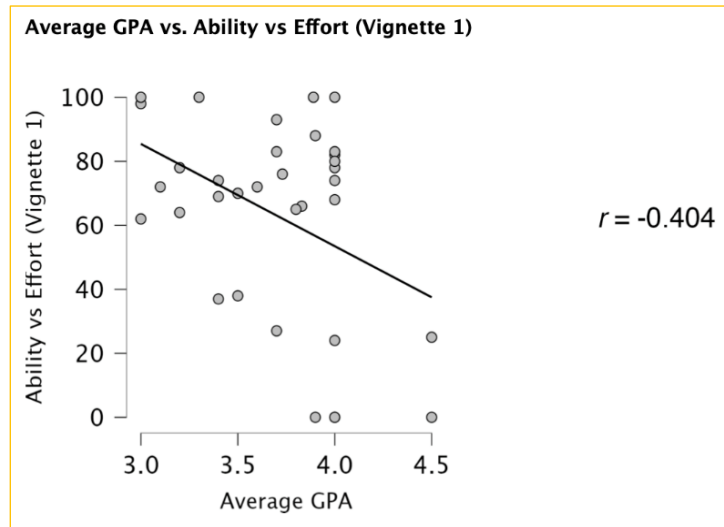


Figure 2. The result of correlation analysis about the average GPA and response for vignette story 1.

A negative correlation between the response of vignette story 1 and cumulative GPA, $r(32) = -0.404$, $p = .018$. This indicates that higher GPA students tend to report the reason for a positive outcome is more likely to attribute to ability rather than effort.

3.2.2. Vignette 5 x Self-Efficacy

Participants' attribution scores for Vignette 5, measuring attribution to effort and external factors, scored negatively with self-efficacy scores.

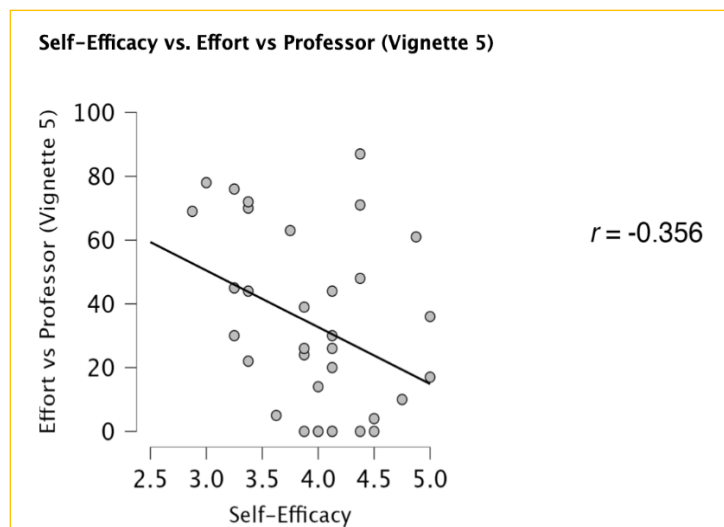


Figure 3. The result of correlation analysis about the self-efficacy and response for vignette story 5.

The correlation analysis yields $r(32) = 0.039$, $p = -0.35$, in which responses of Vignette story 5 are negatively correlated with the level of self-efficacy. The negative correlation suggests that Asian American female students who report higher self-efficacy tend to attribute to their effort more than external factors (e.g., professor biases, luck, help/lack of help from family friends etc.) when they obtain positive academic results.

3.2.3. Vignette 5 x Academic Stress

Participants' attribution scores for Vignette 5, measuring attribution to effort vs. external factors, scored positively with academic stress.

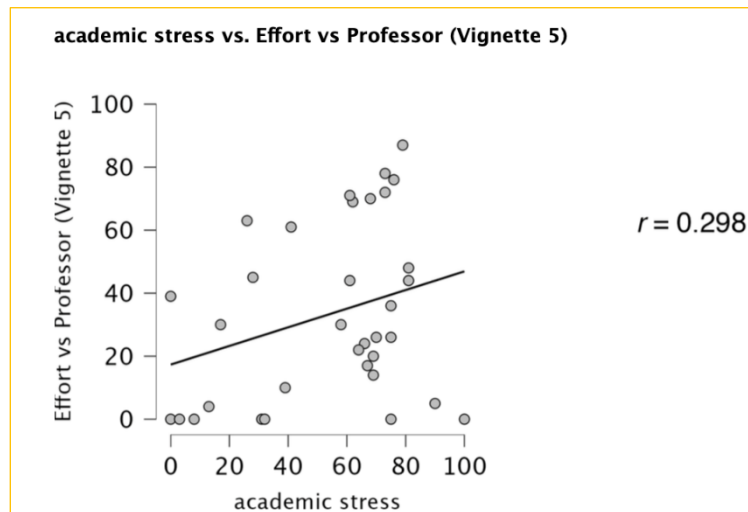


Figure 4. The result of correlation analysis about the academic stress and response for vignette story 5.

The correlation analysis yields $r(32) = -0.404$, $p = .018$, in which responses to Vignette story 5 are positively correlated with levels of academic stress. This indicates that female Asian American college and graduate students tend to report higher levels of academic stress.

3.3. Focus Group Interview

3.3.1. Theme 1: Effort-Oriented Attributions in Negative Academic Outcomes

When participants were asked to recall moments of negative academic outcomes/academic failure (e.g. poor performance on exam, quiz, presentation etc.), participants expressed strong effort-oriented attributions. Even in consideration of the difficult contextual situation participants experienced, participants continued to attribute their effort to their negative academic outcomes. One participant described: "I used to think that it was the content or the professor [that made the course difficult]. But I can't really change those things, and those things are out of my control, and I can't blame them. But I definitely know what I could have controlled. And those things were what I take responsibility for, which was my lack of doing things, basically". Likewise, another participant showed strong agreeable response to her response: "Yes, the content of the class was hard, but everybody else is taking it too. And a lot of the other students are doing just fine. So I realized that I had to work just as hard if not harder to do better." All participants shared an underestimation of either the difficulty/time investment of a task which led the task to fall behind in priorities and neglect. For example, one participant described the moment of realization that their preparation was inadequate: "I thought this general education class was going to be easy, because I read the professor and course reviews online and all the reviews said the course was an 'easy A'. So, I studied the night before and felt that was enough. But when I looked at the questions on the day of the test, I realized that I should have studied even harder. I definitely wasn't expecting that". And as a result, a negative academic performance would result.

3.3.2. Theme 2: Effort-Oriented Attributions and External Attribution in Positive Academic Outcomes

When participants were asked to recall positive academic outcomes (e.g. exceptional performance on exam, quiz, presentation etc.), strong effort-oriented attributions were expressed, but coupled with strong external attributions as well. Within these responses, two causal themes were identified:

Result-1: The Dismissal/Rejection of Ability in Positive Outcomes, and Total Accreditation to Effort and External Factors

Participants shared various means of effort that they believe contributed to their academic success. One participant shared that part of her effort was diversifying her study strategy: "I don't know it was working 'harder' was what helped me. I think just reaching out and surrounding myself with others really helped. You know, I think, sometimes with 'effort' people think it's just spending 10 more hours on things, but I think it's just changing up your strategy." For this participant, taking action to cooperate with others, and finding inspiration and collaboration with other students impacted her academic success. For another participant, it was the additional time invested in studying for a difficult course that led to a positive outcome. A simple

experimentation of new studying methods proved to work well for them. Another participant attributes the support of the professor and teaching assistants to their academic success. They stated, "I had a really great TA (teaching assistant) and professor, fortunately. They helped me a lot after class. And also, I think making friends in the class is the smartest thing to do because you can study with them, and ask them questions". For this participant, it was the external support of their professors, teaching assistants, and colleagues that helped them to succeed.

However, when further questioned about the individual effects of effort and external factors, all participants expressed that effort was the dominating player in their successful academic performance. One participant argued that the action of seeking external support was a means of their own effort: "Even me reaching out to [tutors and teaching assistants] in the first place takes my own effort. So in that respect, I would say my effort to external help ratio would be like 60/40". When challenged about whether participants' possession of an innate ability was the key to their respective successful academic circumstances, participants rejected the suggestion. One participant responded: "I see academics as less about innate ability, but more about discipline, or like sitting down with yourself and asking yourself, 'Okay, how can I get through this?'. I think that's why even with subjects like Latin, which isn't really my thing, I can still pass that. And actually, as you know, I don't like science, but an evolution course I took last semester was my best grade. And so I don't see academics as an innate ability. You just have to show up, and do the work to make things happen." In sharing their academic successes in subjects they are less "able" or "innately-talented" in, this participant made the point that it was their effort, not ability, that was the strongest factor in their academic success.

Result-2: External Factors: Motivation, Interest, and Competitive Advantage

In discussing academic successes, participants did acknowledge that without their interest in the content of their classes, success would have been much more difficult to achieve. One participant expounded on this idea, describing: "I think it's definitely easier for me mentally to do the work for English because this is a subject matter that I am comfortable and interested in. I definitely have a natural tendency towards the humanities, and less so towards the sciences. This made studying for science harder because I didn't possess a natural interest. But with humanities, I ended up doing things on my own time, and even going out of the minimum requirements and taking my own time to explore and learn literary topics for fun". Another participant shared: "I think when I have to study for an exam in a course I'm interested in, it makes studying less strenuous. I don't feel like I have to force myself to understand the material, it feels more like learning with leisure". In this way, participants shared that possessing an interest in course material cultivates a motivation to perform well in the course, if not simply create a smoother learning experience for them. Because interest is subjective and individual to each student, it can be observed as a competitive advantage, an external factor that affects the successes of certain students.

4. Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine the relationship between Asian American female college students' academic attributions in an educational context using integrated methodology. Main findings of the study could be categorized into comparison within internal attributions, ability and effort, and between internal and external attribution habits, and effort vs. professor in the survey. To be specific, students reporting higher GPAs tended to attribute their positive academic successes more to ability-biases. In addition, higher self-efficacy students are more likely to attribute their positive academic successes to effort. FGI results revealed strong effort-oriented attitudes regarding attribution habits in both academic outcomes. Participants were hesitant to attribute ability to their positive attributions, and strongly rejected ability attributions in negative outcomes. External attributions were accredited for both positive and negative academic outcomes.

Between the survey and the focus group interviews, participants indicate effort as significant in both negative and positive academic outcomes. In the survey, a negative correlation between a higher self-efficacy score and Vignette 5 suggested the tendency for Asian American female students with high self-efficacy scores to attribute their positive academic successes to their effort rather than external factors. Similarly, participants in the focus group collectively shared high effort-attributions when receiving positive academic outcomes. However, despite the shared high effort-orientation of participants in the survey and focus group interview, there are some discrepancies between the two. When effort was compared with ability for positive academic outcomes, participants in the survey aligned more strongly with ability attributions. In focus group interviews, when asked to compare the extent to which their ability and effort contributed to their academic successes, strong effort-attribution was shared with participants. In the many previous studies (Allen *et al.*, 2020; Chen and Graham, 2018; Hamann *et al.*, 2022), ability attribution was identified

when participants were asked to recall academic outcomes. In this way, both studies support that Asian American students attribute their academic successes strongly to their internal abilities. However, the current research differs in that their study asked participants to report attributions to negative academic outcomes. In the current research, participants were asked to report attributions on both negative and positive academic outcomes. Their study also retrieved attribution data from a participant pool of middle school students varying in race, whereas the current research retrieved responses from a monoracial, homogenous group-Asian American female college and postgraduate students. Chen and Graham's study reveals that in comparison to students of other races, Asian American students report significant correlations between ability attribution and academic achievement.

The strengths of the current study lie in its integrated methods—both a quantitative method and a qualitative method. The online survey presents a series of objective, standardized vignette case scenarios as well as self-efficacy and self-esteem measurements. On the other hand, the focus group interviews provide multifaceted evidence as to the psychological and sociocultural properties of Asian-American female college students in the academic context.

Declarations

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Author Contribution: The author confirms sole responsibility for the following: study conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Consent to Publish: The author agrees to publish the paper in International Journal of Recent Innovations in Academic Research.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: This study does not include any access to identifiable private information.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in this study.

Research Content: The research content of manuscript is original and has not been published elsewhere.

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