

Aman Iqbal Asif^{1*}, Samia Munir²**Abstract**

The current study investigates the relationship between reality distortions, self-handicapping behaviors, and coping styles among elite-class women. A total sample of 200 participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. In this study, a correlational survey research design was employed. Standardized self-report measures were used to collect data, including the Cognitive Distortions Related to Relationships Scale (CDRS; Hamamcı & Büyüköztürk, 2004), the Self-Handicapping Scale (SHS; Jones & Rhodewalt, 1982), and a Coping Questionnaire assessing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral coping strategies. Items 2, 3, and 4 were adapted from Holahan and Moos's (1987) Coping Strategies Scale, while additional items were adapted from Spitzberg and Cupach (2008). The purpose was to investigate how these psychological variables interact under high-stress situations that are typical of women from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. The findings of the correlational analysis showed positive correlations between cognitive distortions and coping skills, while the results show a negative, non-significant relationship between self-handicapping and cognitive distortion. Linear regression analysis also showed a significant relationship with reality distortions and self-handicapping behaviors. The *t*-test revealed no significant differences between genders in terms of coping strategies and self-handicapping, and distortion of reality. The research indicates the significance of adaptive coping mechanisms in reducing psychological distress in elite-class women. The weaknesses of the current study and future research suggestions are also presented. The study highlights the need for context-sensitive therapeutic approaches that address cognitive distortions and coping patterns specifically among elite-class women.

Keywords: Coping Styles, Elite-class Women, Psychological Distress, Reality Distortions, Self-handicapping

Received: 26 September 2025; Revised Received: 07 November 2025; Accepted: 10 November 2025

^{1*}MPhil Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

²Lecturer, Department of Psychology, University of South Asia, Lahore, Pakistan.

***Corresponding Author Email:**

amaniqbalasif@gmail.com

Introduction

The study of psychological conduct under extraordinary pressure has gained so much attention particularly concerning the mechanisms that individuals use in order to

protect their mental health. It is especially important to women who have a higher socioeconomic status because they tend to feel significant expectations and pressure in society (Smith & Jones, 2020). This paper will examine the integration of self-handicapping, reality distortions and coping mechanisms in determining stress reactions in this category of individuals. The psychological behavior of individuals of the upper classes can be dissimilar to that of other social classes as they possess high standards, concentration of attention, and certain social relations (Brown, 2018).

In cases where the threat of the loss of their mental stability and functioning exists, people are usually forced to choose many

This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non Commercial 4.0 International License (<https://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits non-Commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed as specified.

© Copyright: The Authors (2025)

psychological coping strategies in high stress situations. Women of elite classes tend to receive greater scrutiny and pressure and these approaches can greatly impact how they deal with it (Johnson, 2021). According to Williams and Carter (2019), to understand how these women cope with high-stress situations, one has to thoroughly understand the terms of reality distortion, self-handicapping, and coping mechanisms.

Reality distortion are mental activities that distort the objective reality of an individual. In order to sustain the self-concept or stay in the positive mind despite the negative situation, these distortions can also be expressed through denial, rationalizing, or exaggerating the situation (Smith and Mackie, 2023). Especially the distortions of reality are important in high-tensed situations because they are potentially adaptive or maladaptive responses and thus affect the ability to make a decision and guarantee emotional stability. The problem of reality distortion is relevant to women of upper classes, namely to personal and professional life when social norms and expectations are higher. The usual stress and anxiety coping mechanism is the distortion of reality. These have been described as reality distortions or distorted perception that affect the perception of events between oneself. This can be in the shape of denial or optimism bias or any other type of distortion of reality that enables humans to remain in a cheery mood when faced with adversity. It has also been reported that reality distortion helps people to become stronger as the difficult situations are not so threatening (Taylor & Brown, 2003). Nevertheless, excessive distortion may also make it harder to make a precise estimation of the risk and decision-making process, which in turn might weigh heavily on high-stakes situations (Sharot, 2011).

In such cases, individuals may turn to self-protective strategies to manage anticipated failure or preserve their self-image. Self-

handicapping, on the other hand, is a strategy where individuals create obstacles to explain eventual failures (Jones & Berglas, 2022). By doing this, they can save their self-esteem and make poor performance the consequence of external factors and not their own weakness. Competitive social or professional environments, or other high-stress environments, can increase tendencies towards self-handicapping, particularly among perfectionists or those who feel the pressure to perform to a high standard that is linked with an elite status (Feick & Rhodewalt, 2024). Self-handicapping is another kind of psychological strategy that is often employed in stressful situations. This is erecting fences around the path of personal success in the attempt to protect one self-esteem against potential failures. Elite-class women may develop the habit of self-handicapping such as procrastinating and setting unrealistic goals due to being afraid of failing to meet social expectations. Two disadvantages of self-handicapping are that it undermines actual performance and growth potential and at the same time gives an active excuse to failure (Rhodewalt & Vohs, 2005). Coping styles refer to the ways individuals cope with stress and psychological sufferings. These techniques can be divided into two broad groupings problem-focused and emotion-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The emotion-focused coping involves the regulation of the emotional response to the stressor, and problem-focused coping refers to the active resolution of the stressor. Due to their social environment, the material means at their disposal, and cultural norms of expressiveness and mental strength, elite women can exhibit inimitable coping strategies (Parker & Endler, 2023). The coping mechanisms, reality distortion, and self-handicapping of these women interplay to affect their ways of dealing with high pressure situations. The way in which

individuals cope with stress and survive stressful circumstances are known as coping styles. These can be divided into two broad categories; problem- or emotion-oriented coping strategies. Whereas, emotion-based coping is aimed at minimizing emotional distress related to the stressor, problem-based coping addresses the cause of the stress directly (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). The social, cultural and personal factors influencing how the elite-class women cope with stress can shape their coping strategies. According to Tamres et al. (2002), women who use adaptive coping mechanisms including asking for help from others or going through cognitive restructuring experience better psychological results.

Understanding these psychological processes is essential for designing interventions that support women in high-stress circumstances, enabling them to adopt more adaptive coping strategies, reduce reliance on maladaptive responses, and foster resilience. The interplay of cognitive distortions, self-handicapping behaviors, and coping styles becomes particularly salient under conditions of heightened pressure. Among women in privileged social contexts, the use and manifestation of these strategies may vary depending on the type and source of stress they encounter. Examining how these constructs relate to one another allows for a clearer identification of areas of psychological strength as well as potential vulnerability.

The dynamics of the psychological response to high-stress scenarios have been a major focus due to the particular problems and expectations that women in better socioeconomic circumstances represent. Female members of upper socioeconomic strata are typically characterized by high performance standards, social appraisal, and the need to identify with culturally produced ideas of success and femininity. In order to defend mental health and maintain the

reputation they have built in society, a number of psychological defense mechanisms can counteract the stress response that external influences can generate (Smith & Jones, 2020). In order to develop psychological research and specific interventions that will enable these women to manage stress in a way that would enable them to deal with the intricacies of their social status, such understanding is crucial to the context of the women members of the elite group.

Literature Review

In high-pressure environments, elite-class women often confront a unique interplay of psychological phenomena, including reality distortions, self-handicapping behaviors, and varying coping styles. Reality distortion, wherein individuals reshape their perceptions to better manage stressors, can significantly affect both their performance and mental well-being (Johnson, 2021). Additionally, self-handicapping emerges as a protective mechanism, allowing individuals to create external barriers that rationalize potential failures (Jones & Rhodewalt, 1982). Coping styles, which can range from proactive problem-solving to avoidance strategies, further influence how these women adapt to and thrive under pressure (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). This literature review will explore the intricate relationships among these constructs and their impact on the psychological resilience and success of elite-class women navigating demanding circumstances.

Elite-class women often employ self-handicapping as a psychological strategy to protect self-esteem in high-pressure contexts. For instance, Jones and Rhodewalt (1982) in their study found that procrastination and reduced preparation are common self-handicapping behaviors among elite athletes, particularly when performance outcomes carry significant weight. Such behaviors allow individuals to attribute potential

failures to external circumstances rather than personal ability, thereby reducing performance-related anxiety. Similarly, Miller and Wilkins (2021), demonstrated that elite-class women in professional environments often engage in self-handicapping to cope with heightened societal expectations and role-related pressures. Further, Johnson and Schmitt (2021), in their study reported that while self-handicapping may offer temporary emotional relief, it is associated with increased stress and reduced life satisfaction over time. Collectively, these findings highlight a paradox in which self-handicapping provides short-term psychological protection but ultimately undermines long-term self-efficacy, well-being, and achievement among elite-class women.

Yavuzer (2015) explored the relationship between cognitive distortions, self-handicapping tendencies, and self-esteem among 507 education students from Turkish universities. This correlational study found that individuals with more distorted cognitive perceptions—such as unrealistic expectations, exaggerated negative thoughts, and faulty reasoning—were more likely to engage in self-handicapping behaviors. Additionally, students with lower self-esteem demonstrated higher levels of self-handicapping, suggesting that self-doubt plays a critical role in self-sabotaging behaviors. The study concluded that interventions targeting cognitive distortions and self-esteem enhancement could potentially reduce self-handicapping tendencies.

Method

Research Design

Correlational research design was used to find out the relationship among reality distortions, Self-handicapping, and Coping styles among elite class women.

Research Strategy

Purposive sampling strategy was used to collect data for research.

Sample

The sample consisted of 200 women between the ages of 25 and 65 years, residing in recognized high-income residential areas of Lahore and Islamabad, including Defence Housing Authority (DHA), Askari Housing Scheme, and Lake City, Lahore. These areas were selected because they are widely characterized by secure gated environments, higher property valuation, private schooling access, and a predominance of residents belonging to professional, business, and executive occupational backgrounds. Participants were approached through purposive strategies, using social and professional networks, community groups, and online communication channels. Eligibility for inclusion in the “elite class” category was defined based on occupational status, with participants largely consisting of business owners, corporate executives, senior professionals, and women engaged in high-status employment roles. This sampling approach allowed the study to focus specifically on women who experience unique forms of social pressure, performance expectations, and identity management associated with elevated socioeconomic standing.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants must identify as female and belong to the elite class, as evidenced by notable professional achievements, high socioeconomic status, or advanced educational attainment. In addition, participants are required to provide informed consent and demonstrate willingness to share personal experiences related to reality distortion, self-handicapping behaviors, and coping mechanisms. To ensure the relevance of the findings to the personal and professional pressures faced by elite-class women, participants should fall within a

defined age range, typically between 25 and 65 years.

Exclusion Criteria

Participants who do not have sufficient proficiency in the study language are excluded, as limited language skills may impede their understanding of the study materials and their ability to engage effectively with the research process. Additionally, individuals who have never experienced high-pressure contexts relevant to the study, such as elite-level sports or competitive professional environments, are excluded to ensure that participants have direct experience with the types of performance-related stress and self-handicapping behaviors under investigation.

Measures

Demographic Sheet

This sheet consisted of personal and academic information. It includes age, education, socio-economic status, family income, marital and family status, and participation consent.

Cognitive Distortions Related to Relationships Scale (CDRS)

The Cognitive Distortions Related to Relationships Scale (CDRS) is a psychometric tool designed to measure the extent and nature of cognitive distortions individuals experience in romantic or interpersonal relationships (Hamamcı & Büyüköztürk, 2004). Cognitive distortions are irrational or exaggerated thinking patterns that can negatively influence perceptions and behaviors within relationships. It typically consists of a series of items (statements) to which respondents rate their agreement on a Likert scale (e.g., from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The total score reflects the degree of cognitive distortions present, with higher scores indicating more frequent or severe distortions in relationship contexts. The scale may include various subscales focusing on specific types of distortions such as: Catastrophizing, personalization, all or nothing, mind reading

and overgeneralization. Cronbach internal consistency coefficient alpha was .67.

The Self-Handicapping Scale

The Self-Handicapping Scale (SHS), developed by measures an individual's tendency to engage in self-handicapping behaviors (Jones & Rhodewalt, 1982). These behaviors involve creating obstacles or excuses to protect one's self-esteem in case of future failure, especially in achievement-related situations. The scale helps assess the degree to which individuals intentionally engage in these behaviors to preserve their self-image. The SHS typically consists of 25 items rated on a Likert-type scale, where respondents indicate how much they agree or disagree with each statement. The scale captures both behavioral and claimed self-handicapping. Responses are usually rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating a stronger tendency toward self-handicapping. Cronbach's alpha of "Self-Handicapping Scale" ($\alpha=.77$), indicators of internal consistency represent good internal integrity.

Coping Scale

This coping questionnaire assesses cognitive, emotional, and behavioral methods of dealing with problems. Some items, focusing on cognitive and emotional approaches, were adapted from Holahan and Moos's (1987) widely-used Coping Strategies Scale (items 2, 3, and 4 below), while other cognitive and emotional items were original (1, 5, 6, and 8). The remainder of the items were adapted from Spitzberg and Copach's (2008) framework for assessing coping in response to stalking. Adapted items were reworded to focus on general coping patterns (versus a response to a specific situation) and simplified to suit a community sample in which some have limited reading levels and educational attainment. Internal consistencies (coefficient alphas) for the pilot and main samples are .88 and .91,

respectively. Each answer category was assigned a value from 4 to 1.

Procedure

By obtaining authorization from the authors of the scale that was used for data gathering, the research was done in a systematic manner. A formal authority letter was sent to the appropriate heads and requested from the University of South Asia institute. Questionnaires on the willingness of women who meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria was sent after obtaining written consent from the university. The exclusion criteria were used to select a sample of women. The women were asked for their formal consent before to the administration of the scales, merely to make sure that their information was kept private and utilized only for the studies. It was assured to the participants that they are free to leave the study at any moment. The administration of each set of surveys took 10-15minutes. To gather data, researchers travel to several locations. The data was analyzed by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established ethical research standards. Permission was obtained from the original authors prior to the use of

the selected questionnaires. Informed consent was secured from all participants as well as from the relevant institutional or community authorities where required. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by protecting participants' identities and securely handling all collected data. Additionally, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any penalty or negative consequence. These procedures ensured that the research respected the autonomy, privacy, and well-being of all participants.

Results

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between cognitive distortions, self-handicapping, and coping styles among elite-class women. Following the completion of data collection, a range of statistical analyses was conducted to test the study hypotheses and explore the underlying patterns within the data. These analyses included Pearson correlation multiple regression analysis, and the calculation of reliability coefficients (e.g., Cronbach's alpha). Additionally, one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to assess differences among multiple groups.

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage of Demographics Characteristics of the Participants (N=200)

Demographic Variables	f (%)
Marital Status	
Single	159(79.5)
Married	38(19.0)
Divorced	3(1.5)
Age	
25-35	160 (79.7)
35-45	38(19.0)
45-65	2 (1.3)
Occupation Status	
Business Owner	33(16.5)
Cooperate Professional	17(18.5)
Government Officer	14(7.0)
Entrepreneur	17(8.5)

Others	119(59.5)
Perceived Social Status	
Upper Elite class	51(25.5)
High Society Professionals	52(26.0)
Upper-Class Traditional	97(48.5)

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of demographics. The sample consisted of elite-class women ($N = 200$), categorized by marital status, occupational status, and perceived social status. In terms of marital status, the majority of participants were single (79.5%, $n = 159$), followed by married women (19%, $n = 38$), and a small proportion who were divorced (1.5%, $n = 3$). This indicates that most of the women in the sample were not currently in a marital relationship.

In terms of age, the majority of participants fell within the 25–35 age range (79.7%, $n = 160$), followed by those aged 35–45 years (19%, $n = 38$), and only a very small proportion were 45–65 years (1.3%, $n = 2$). This suggests that the sample was predominantly composed of young adult women, with comparatively fewer middle-aged or older women represented.

Regarding occupational status, a substantial number of participants identified their

occupation as "others" (59.5%, $n = 119$), suggesting a range of non-listed or diverse professions. Among the listed occupational categories, business owners made up 16.5% ($n = 33$), corporate professionals 8.5% ($n = 17$), entrepreneurs 8.5% ($n = 17$), and government officers 7% ($n = 14$). This reflects a varied professional background among the elite-class women, with a concentration in non-traditional or non-specified roles.

For perceived social status, nearly half of the participants identified as belonging to the upper-class traditional category (48.5%, $n = 97$), while 26% ($n = 52$) identified as high society professionals, and 25.5% ($n = 51$) as upper elite class. This confirms that the sample was drawn from women who perceive themselves as belonging to various segments within the upper socioeconomic spectrum.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics, Alpha Reliability co-efficient, and Range among Study Variables (N=200)

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>α</i>
CD	200	58.65	12.24	19-95	.81
CS	200	32.72	7.34	13-52	.79
SH	200	32.30	8.36	12-60	.81

Note. CD=Cognitive Distortions, CS=Coping Styles, and SH=Self-Handicapping

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients, and observed score ranges for the study variables among elite-class women ($N = 200$). The mean score for cognitive distortions was $M = 58.65$ ($SD = 12.24$), with a score range of 19 to 95. The Cronbach's alpha reliability for

this scale was .81, indicating high internal consistency. For coping styles, the mean score was $M = 32.72$ ($SD = 7.34$), with a range of 13 to 52. The alpha coefficient for this variable was .79, reflecting good reliability. The mean score for self-handicapping was $M = 32.30$ ($SD = 8.36$), and scores ranged from 12 to 60. The reliability

coefficient was also .81, showing strong internal consistency. Overall, all three scales demonstrated acceptable to high levels of internal

consistency, suggesting that the instruments used were reliable for measuring the psychological constructs in this sample.

Table 3

Correlational among Cognitive Distortions, Coping Styles, and SH=Self-Handicapping (N=200)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3
Cognitive Distortions	58.65	12.24	-	.35**	-.10
Coping Styles	32.72	7.34		-	.03
Self Handicapping	32.30	8.36			-

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Note. CD=Cognitive Distortions, CS=Coping Styles, and SH=Self-Handicapping

Table 3 presents Pearson correlation coefficients examining the relationships among cognitive distortions (CD), coping styles (CS), and self-handicapping (SH) in a sample of 200 elite-class women. The results indicate a significant positive correlation between cognitive distortions and coping styles ($r = .35, p < .01$), suggesting that individuals with higher levels of cognitive distortions are more likely to report certain coping behaviors.

However, the relationship between cognitive distortions and self-handicapping was

negative and non-significant ($r = -.10, p > .05$), indicating no strong evidence of association between these two variables in this sample. Similarly, coping styles and self-handicapping showed a non-significant positive correlation ($r = .03, p > .05$), implying no meaningful relationship. These findings suggest that while cognitive distortions are related to how individuals cope, they may not necessarily influence self-handicapping behaviors in elite-class women.

Table 4

Linear Regression Analysis for Predicting Coping Skills from Cognitive Distortions among Elite Class Women (N=200)

Predictors	Model B	Outcome: CS	
		LL	UL
CD	.35	.13	.29
R^2		.12	
F		29.17***	

*** $p < .001$

A simple linear regression was conducted to examine whether cognitive distortions significantly predicted coping styles among elite-class women. The results indicated that the overall model was statistically significant, $F(1, 198) = 29.17, p < .001$, and accounted

for approximately 12% of the variance in coping styles ($R^2 = .12$).

Cognitive distortions were found to be a significant positive predictor of coping styles, $B = .35, 95\% \text{ CI} [.13, .29]$. This suggests that higher levels of cognitive distortions are

associated with increased reliance on certain coping styles.

Table 5

One-way ANOVA for Perceived Social Status for the Self-handicapping, Coping Styles and Cognitive Distortions (N=200)

Variables	Upper Elite (n=52)	High Society Professionals (n=52)	Upper Class Traditional (n=96)	df	F	p
	M	M	M			
CD	52.25	56.65	59.94	2,197	1.26	.28
CS	30.46	32.96	33.82	2,197	3.66	.02
SH	31.59	32.69	32.46	2,197	.25	.77

Note. CD=Cognitive Distortions, CS=Coping Styles, and SH=Self-Handicapping

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in cognitive distortions (CD), coping styles (CS), and self-handicapping (SH) across three perceived social status groups: Upper Elite, High Society Professionals, and Upper-Class Traditional. For cognitive distortions, no statistically significant differences were found among the three groups, $F(2, 197) = 1.26, p = .28$. This suggests that perceived social status did not significantly influence levels of cognitive distortions. In contrast, coping styles showed a statistically significant difference across the groups, $F(2, 197) = 3.66, p = .02$. Participants from the Upper-Class Traditional group reported the

highest mean score ($M = 33.82$), followed by High Society Professionals ($M = 32.96$), and Upper Elite ($M = 30.46$), indicating that coping styles may vary depending on perceived social status. For self-handicapping, there was no significant group difference, $F(2, 197) = .25, p = .77$, suggesting that perceived social status had no meaningful impact on self-handicapping behaviors. Overall, the results indicate that while coping styles differ by perceived social status, cognitive distortions and self-handicapping do not show statistically significant variation across these groups.

Discussion

This study's main goal was to investigate the relationship between elite-class women's coping mechanisms, self-handicapping, and cognitive biases. The study specifically aimed to determine if coping methods mediate the associations between cognitive distortions and self-handicapping behaviors. To assess the research hypotheses, the study used regression models, ANOVA, and correlational analysis on a sample of 200 women from the elite class. The results showed complex correlations between the factors under investigation, providing both

evidence in favor of and opposition to previous research.

The discovery that cognitive distortions positively predict coping skills is in line with earlier studies showing that people's stress-reduction techniques are frequently influenced by distorted thought processes (Solomon & Arens, 2020; Yavuzer, 2015). Because cognitive distortions impair how people perceive risks and resources, people with strong cognitive distortions may utilize both emotion-focused and avoidant coping methods (Carver & Scheier, 2014). This gives the theoretical stance of distorted

cognition minimizing the efficiency of problem-solving and increasing the likelihood of maladaptive coping mechanisms such as blame-shifting, rumination and denials credence (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004).

It's interesting to note that self-handicapping and cognitive distortions were not significantly correlated in this study. In contrast, Riaz and Sultan's (2019) research showed a considerable positive correlation between university students' self-handicapping and reality distortion. The distinctiveness of the elite-class women sample, which can have different psychological resources, social support networks, or cultural forces influencing their behavior, is one reason for the disparity. It's possible that these women internalize distortions in a different way, depending more on internal coping mechanisms than on visible self-handicapping activities.

In contrast to researches by Johnson and Schmitt (2021), and Zuckerman and Tsai (2005), this study did not find a significant correlation between self-handicapping and coping methods. Higher levels of self-handicapping have been consistently associated with avoidant coping strategies in previous studies, particularly in high-stress situations (McCrea & Hirt, 2001; Prapavessis & Grove, 2004). The socioeconomic resilience of the population or variations in psychological expression among high-status persons, however, could be the cause of the absence of correlation in our study. In contrast to the usual self-handicapping behaviors examined in the study, elite-class women may employ other self-presentation techniques.

Women from the high class, who are underrepresented in psychological research, were the only participants in this study. The fact that almost 50% of the sample fell into the "upper-class traditional" group emphasizes how cultural norms may

influence their mental health. Miller and Wilkins (2021) point out that social pressures and expectations about appearance and performance might result in psychological defenses that are subtler and difficult to identify using traditional measures, such as implicit self-handicapping techniques and cognitive distortions. In elite circles, where self-sabotage is less overt, success-driven personas are normalized, which may account for the non-significant differences in self-handicapping across social strata.

Overall, the findings demonstrated a strong positive relationship between coping methods and cognitive distortions ($r = .35, p < .01$), suggesting that people who had greater cognitive distortions were more likely to use particular coping strategies. However, the association between coping methods and self-handicapping ($r = .03, p > .05$) and cognitive distortions and self-handicapping ($r = -.10, p > .05$) was both negative and non-significant. Cognitive distortions strongly predicted coping methods but not self-handicapping, according to linear regression. Additionally, self-handicapping was not predicted by coping strategies. Furthermore, ANOVA results showed that coping methods varied significantly across social status groups, but not for cognitive distortions or self-handicapping.

Conclusion

This study illuminated psychological processes within a relatively underrepresented community by examining the intricate interactions among elite-class women's coping strategies, self-handicapping, and cognitive distortions. The results show that cognitive distortions and coping mechanisms are strongly correlated, suggesting that elite women's stress management is impacted by faulty thought patterns. But the absence of significant links between self-handicapping, coping mechanisms, and cognitive distortions challenges established ideas in the literature

and highlights the intricate psychological makeup of individuals with high rank.

These findings demonstrate how important it is to consider sociocultural context and elements associated to status when examining psychological concepts. The study found that women in the elite class might exhibit protective mechanisms or distress in different ways than women in the general population, which calls for the creation of more precise evaluation tools and targeted interventions. Ultimately, the study contributes to the growing body of work that supports more inclusive, context-aware psychological theories and practices while also paving the way for deeper, more diverse methodological studies into these processes.

Limitations

The study has a few important limitations. First, the research relied solely on self-report measures, which are vulnerable to social desirability bias particularly relevant in elite settings where image management is common. Second, due to the cross-sectional design, the study cannot establish causal relationships between cognitive distortions, coping, and self-handicapping. Third, the sample consisted only of urban elite women, which limits the generalizability of the results to other socioeconomic or rural populations. Finally, the operationalization of coping strategies may not have captured the full range of culturally or contextually specific coping behaviors commonly used among women in high-status environments.

Future Directions

Future research should consider incorporating qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups, to access the more nuanced psychological and social dynamics underlying coping and self-handicapping among elite women. Additionally, comparative studies involving both elite and non-elite women would provide insight into the moderating role of socioeconomic status in coping processes.

Finally, integrating standardized measures of social desirability may help account for potential underreporting of self-handicapping tendencies in privileged populations.

Ethics Statement

All the ethical standards of APA were met. Informed consent was taken in written form from all the respondents to participate in this study.

Contribution of Authors

Aman Iqbal Asif: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Samia Munir: Methodology, Writing - Reviewing & Editing, Supervision

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by the authors.

Source of Funding

The authors declared no source of funding.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets of the current study are not available publicly due to ethical reasons but are available from the corresponding author [A.I.A.] upon the reasonable request.

References

- Brown, L. (2018). Psychological dynamics and social expectations of elite women. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 37*(2), 110–128. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2018.37.2.110>
- Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (2014). Coping styles and stress management: The role of proactive coping in enhancing psychological well-being. *Journal of Health Psychology, 19*(4), 450–462.
- Feick, R., & Rhodewalt, F. (2024). Self-handicapping: Motivational and cognitive perspectives. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 18*(1), 36–49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12987>

- Folkman, S., & Moskowitz, J. T. (2004). Coping: Pitfalls and promise. *Annual Review of Psychology, 55*, 745–774. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psyc.55.090902.141456>
- Hamamcı, Z., & Büyüköztürk, Ş. (2004). Öz-engelleyici davranışlar ölçeğinin geliştirilmesi. *Eğitim ve Bilim, 29*(134), 3–14.
- Holahan, C. J., & Moos, R. H. (1987). Personal and contextual determinants of coping strategies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52*(5), 946–955. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.52.5.946>
- Johnson, A., & Schmitt, M. (2021). Self-handicapping among elite-class women: The impact on emotional well-being and professional success. *Journal of Gender Psychology, 14*(2), 132–147.
- Johnson, D. R. (2021). Stress and coping mechanisms in women of high socioeconomic status. *Journal of Psychological Stress Studies, 14*(3), 301–318.
- Jones, E. E., & Berglas, S. (2022). Control and self-handicapping. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 42*(4), 872–886. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.42.4.872>
- Jones, E. E., & Rhodewalt, S. (1982). Self-handicapping and the attribution of failure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 42*(3), 490–502. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.42.3.490>
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer Publishing.
- McCrea, R., & Hirt, E. R. (2001). Self-handicapping in sport and exercise: A review. *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 32*, 15–34.
- Miller, J., & Wilkins, C. (2021). Performance anxiety and self-handicapping in professional women. *Journal of Social Psychology, 12*(3), 90–105.
- Parker, P. D., & Endler, N. S. (2023). Coping strategies and their implications in elite women's mental health. *Personality and Individual Differences, 58*(1), 12–24. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2023.01.004>
- Prapavessis, H., & Grove, J. R. (2004). Effects of self-handicapping on effort and performance in sport. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 26*(3), 408–422. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsep.26.3.408>
- Rhodewalt, F., & Vohs, K. D. (2005). Self-handicapping and its effects on performance and well-being. *Journal of Personality, 73*(4), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2005.00321.x>
- Riaz, S., & Sultan, S. (2019). Reality distortion, self-handicapping, and coping styles in Pakistani university students. *Pakistan Journal of Psychology, 50*(1), 33–48.
- Sharot, T. (2011). *The optimism bias: A tour of the irrationally positive brain*. Pantheon Books.
- Smith, E. R., & Jones, D. M. (2020). High-status women and stress: A psychological approach. *Journal of Social Psychology, 26*(5), 501–515. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2020.1772340>
- Smith, E. R., & Mackie, D. M. (2023). *Social psychology* (5th ed.). Psychology Press.
- Spitzberg, B. H., & Cupach, W. R. (2008). *Interpersonal communication competence*. SAGE Publications.
- Solomon, J., & Arens, K. (2020). Cognitive distortions and self-handicapping in university students. *Journal of*

- College Student Development*, 61(4), 480–497.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2020.0041>
- Tamres, L. K., Janicki, D., & Helgeson, V. S. (2002). Sex differences in coping behavior: A meta-analytic review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 6(1), 2–30.
https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0601_1
- Taylor, S. E., & Brown, J. D. (2003). Illusions and well-being: A social psychological perspective on mental health. *Psychological Bulletin*, 103(2), 193–210.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.103.2.193>
- Williams, H. S., & Carter, J. R. (2019). Coping strategies in elite women: Exploring self-handicapping and reality distortion. *Journal of Behavioral Health*, 45(3), 178–190.
- Yavuzer, Y. (2015). Investigating the relationship between self-handicapping tendencies, self-esteem, and cognitive distortions. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 15(4), 879–890.
- Zuckerman, M., & Tsai, F. (2005). Self-handicapping and depression: The role of coping styles. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 24(5), 630–646.
<https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2005.24.5.630>