

**ABSTRACT**

**THESIS:** Social Support and Resilience in College Students with Disabilities: A Moderated Mediation Between Internalized Stigma and Self-Esteem

**STUDENT:** Malorie A. McLain

**DEGREE:** Master of Arts

**COLLEGE:** College of Health

**DATE:** December 2021

**PAGES:** 105

**Introduction:** People with disabilities have experienced a history of negative societal attitudes and subsequent consequences. Based on Molero et al. (2019), if someone with a disability perceives that they have been discriminated against and they then internalize the stigma from those experiences, their self-esteem will likely decrease. This may occur in college students with disabilities since they face similar challenges as well. Furthermore, there is evidence that social support and resilience often protect people from the negative effects of adverse experiences.

**Objective:** The present study sought to test for the indirect relationship between perceived personal discrimination (predictor variable) and self-esteem (criterion variable) through internalized stigma (mediator). Additionally, moderated mediation was used to identify whether levels of social support and resilience would serve as protective factors to moderate the negative effect on self-esteem. **Method:** The sample consisted of 542 college students with self-identified disabilities or impairments from three universities in the United States. They completed a survey with demographic information, disability-specific questions, and five measures: Multidimensional Perceived Discrimination Scale, Stigma Scale for Chronic Illness,

Interpersonal Support Evaluation List, Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. **Results:** Consistent with Molero et al. (2019), internalized stigma significantly mediated the relationship between perceived personal discrimination and self-esteem. Further, partial moderated mediation was found as resilience significantly moderated the mediation model, but social support did not. **Conclusion:** This study replicated the findings of Molero et al. (2019) in a different sample – college students with disabilities – that perceived personal discrimination and self-esteem were related through internalized stigma. In addition, although social support may not be sufficient, being more resilient may protect the self-esteem of college students with disabilities after they experienced discrimination and subsequent internalization of stigma.