

Running Head: Social Support as Mediator of Traits and Self-Esteem.

The Mediating Role of Social Support on Personality Traits and Self-Esteem

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the mediating affect social support has on personality traits and self-esteem. Previous research has provided a relationship among these variables, yet a lack of attention has been given to the possible mediating role. This study consists of cross-sectional design measuring quantitative data. Participants (n = 95) (Females: n = 70; Males: n = 25) were recruited using a convenience and snowball sampling method through social media ranging from ages 18-70. Participants partook in the study by completing three online self-report questionnaires inputted to Google Forms, including *The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale*, *The Big Five Personality Trait Scale*, *The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support*. Data analysis was conducted using Baron and Kenny (1986) mediation analysis. The study investigates three hypotheses: (1) Individuals with higher levels of extroversion, agreeableness, openness, and lower levels of neuroticism will predict greater levels of self-esteem. (2) The relationships between traits and self-esteem is mediated by perceived social support. (3) Females will report greater levels of social support compared to males, and therefore greater levels of self-esteem. The results of the study can be elucidated, and the implications of the study will be further discussed.

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1 Introduction

Self-esteem was first introduced by Abraham Maslow (1943) as a subjective evaluation of one's self-worth. This concept was introduced as a step in Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. His theory states that behavior is motivated by the need to achieve self-actualization, which is "to become everything one is capable of becoming" (Maslow, 1987, p.64). Arranged in a hierarchy, self-actualization is achieved by precedent steps including physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. The third step is defined by the need of social relationship involvement, and belongingness. Maslow also classified self-esteem into two categories: esteem for oneself, and the desire for reputation and respect from other. As Maslow puts it, social needs are a critical step in achieving esteem needs.

Lewis Goldberg identified personality traits in five primary factors of personality: extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. Each trait underlies several correlated and more specific primary factors that describe the tendency each individual's character to lean towards. Extroversion is described by people who are outgoing and energetic. Popularized by Carl Jung, Extroverted individuals are known to be sociable and have a natural tendency to seek excitement in the company of other. Agreeableness is described by tendency to be friendly and compassionate towards others. It measures one's helpful and trusting nature (Toegel and Barsoux 2012). Conscientiousness identifies efficiency and organization in individuals. These individuals are well disciplined and dependable and prefer things to be well planned and thought-out rather than spontaneous. Individuals with neurotic tendencies experience more unpleasant emotions, like anxiety, depression and anger. Neuroticism is defined by the degree of emotional stability one has. Openness characterizes one's curiosity and inventiveness. These individuals prefer variety over routine and seek

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fulfilment in intense and exciting experiences. They also tend to be creative and therefore spending more time in artistic hobbies and intellectual pursuits (Friedman and Schustack, 2016).

Certain personality traits, such as extroversion, agreeableness, and perhaps Openness depict more capacity for appropriate social mindedness. On the other hand, the continuum description of neuroticism as a trait suggest individuals who have lower neurotic tendencies may benefit from greater social capacity. These pro-social personality types are of interest to the current study. Based on these descriptions, the literature review will explore if social support and self-esteem can be predicted by the present traits.

1.1 Personality Traits and Self-Esteem

Research indicate that personality traits have an influence on an individual's self-esteem. Niazi & Mehmood (2017) depicted high level of self-esteem in individuals with traits such as extroversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness. People with high levels of openness are typically more open to new and unconventional experiences which lead to an exciting lifestyle, and as a result, these types of individuals hold positive self-evaluation and attitudes toward themselves (Niazi & Mehmood, 2017).

These findings are also supported on several fronts; according to McCrae and Terracciano (2005), student behaviour involves an interaction between person's underlying personality traits and situational factors. This behavior can be the outcome of interaction of more than one personality trait of students. They suggested that personality characters can occur together in many students. For example, sociable students tend to be exploring, straight forward and achievement oriented. This suggest that personality traits may also have an effect on a person or group of people's social behaviour as well. People who share similar traits may attract each other

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socially. Previous study results depicted openness to experience as moderator between neuroticism and self-esteem. These results are in line with study supported by Sheldon, Elliot, Kim, and Kasser (2001), they claimed that self-esteem is a key ingredient of most satisfying life events and there are different sources in life that effect self-esteem especially personality traits.

1.2 Personality Traits and Social Support

The relationship between personality traits and social support can be identified in a few of the Big five personality traits. Previous research has identified traits that can influence social support, as understanding personality traits' relation to successful relationships may help to increase social support (Costa et al., 1985; Cutrona & Russell, 1987). Past research suggests that certain traits aid the effectiveness and availability of social support (Dolan, van Ameringen, & Arsenault, 1992; Kraus, Davis, Bazzini, Church, & Kirchman, 1993). These findings allow individuals to draw on these associations in building social support network. As such, Cukrowicz et al., (2008) investigated social support and personality traits longitudinally and found personality traits such as extroversion, and conscientiousness to change perceived social support significantly. Particularly, conscientiousness was associated with benefits in perceived social support, and those among their sample with greater levels of extroversion reported greater perceived social support. Findings are in line with McCrea & Costa, (1996) description of the natural tendency that conscientious and extroverted individuals have for character adaptation associated with relationships. Kitamura et al., (2002) suggests that trait-like constructs from personality and early life event can be factors that sum perceived social support. Drawing from these conclusions, their study later found the availability of social support linked to personality among women, while social support satisfaction was associated with perceived parenting in men.

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These findings suggest that women may receive more support from others if they are high in extroversion and low in neuroticism. In accordance, Dumitrache, Rubio, and Rubio-Herrera (2017) found extroverted adults in their sample to receive more affectionate emotional, and overall social support compared to introverted older adults. Their study also finds emotional and affective social support to mediate the relationship between extroversion and life satisfaction. Similarly, Tkach and Lyubomirsky (2006) states that extroverted students seek social support from peers to maintain a certain level of life satisfaction.

Based on the previous findings, it may be suggested that the affect personality traits have on self-esteem and on life satisfaction, may be explained by social support factors. As for most of the findings suggest, extroversion seems to hold the strongest association with social support and self-esteem. Nevertheless, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism are also known to have their influence, while openness showed little affect and no correlation to social support (Cukrowicz et al., 2008). The following indicates that attention should be brought to personality traits and the patterns they may inform in social relationships and perceived social support.

1.3 Social Support and Self-Esteem

To outline the importance of self-esteem, a few studies suggest self-esteem to be positively associated with greater general happiness. The formation of high self-esteem leads individuals to live a happy and healthy life by promoting feelings of confidence when dealing with challenging life situations (Zimmerman, 2000). Bum and Jeon, (2016) found self-esteem to reduce depression, and the positive effects of social support on one's esteem played a role in stabilizing emotions which promote happiness.

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Previous studies suggest there to be a relationship between social support and self-esteem. Bum & Jeon (2016) finds social support from parents, professors, and peers to be associated with higher levels of self-esteem and lower emotional instability among college student population. Similar findings outline the association in social support on viewing oneself positively and of high value and importance (Caplan, 1974). In light of general, and relationship-based perception of social support, Sarason et al., (1991) finds that the development of positive ego is influenced by satisfactory support received by people important to them. Longitudinal studies on young adults conducted by Lehnart, Neyer, & Eccles, 2010; Neyer & Asendorpf, 2001; Wagner, Becker, Lüdtkke, & Trautwein, (2015) illustrates the importance of establishing intimate relationships within a certain time frame and the association it has with an increase in self-esteem. Wagner et al., (2015) found there to be a correlation between having a life partner and high levels of self-esteem. In addition, cohabiting partnership also predicted favourable changes in self-esteem, and relationship status of particular importance for self-esteem.

Furthermore, Cakar and Karatas (2012) identifies a causal relationship between self-esteem, perceived social support, and hopelessness, suggesting that adolescents who have high self-esteem perceive more social support, and therefore experience less hopelessness. Concurrent with the previous findings, Tahir, Inam, and Raana (2015) also finds a strong relationship between social support and self-esteem. Alike, Greenberg, Siegel & Leitch (1983) investigated the importance of attachment to parents and peers and found their hypothesis to be supported by results indicating that relationship to parents and peers related to perceived self-esteem. More studies on attachment and self esteem suggest that secure attachments to parents promote adequate communication strategies with peers, these individuals with effective peer group formation develop healthy esteem habits (Sadovnikova, 2016). Therefore, according to present

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findings, we can assume that as social support levels rise, so does self-esteem levels (Ikiz and Cakar, 2010).

1.4 Rationale

Substantial research has found social support to mainly influence levels of depression, stress and general happiness. Many have focused on college students and adolescents and haven't provided enough findings for different age groups. The current study includes a wider range of age groups in the sample, ranging from 18-70 with a mean age of 35 years. While we might assume from most studies that extroverts' higher levels of self-esteem come from the result of having a wider network, Further insight by Tan et al. (2016) suggests that extroverts high self-esteem enhances their network support instead of their network support enhancing their self-esteem. The direction of this relationship requires further insight, the current study hopes to identify a causal relationship between these variables by conducting a mediation analysis. Furthermore, literature provides significant relations between traits, social support and self-esteem. This suggests a definite association, and a likely mediation of social support on traits and self-esteem not yet explored. In addition, the present research will control for gender differences based on previous findings (Ikiz and Cakar, 2010; Kitamura et al., 2002).

1.5 Aims and Hypothesis

The aim of the current research is to explore the affect that personality traits and social support have on predicting self-esteem. It is of interest to know how these variables influence self-esteem and what demographic factors play a role. It aims to enlighten individuals on how

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their personality traits predict self-esteem, as to provide others with empirical information on how to improve their esteem according to trait tendency.

In consideration of previous literature, it is hypothesized that individuals who report higher levels of extroversion, agreeableness, openness, and lower levels of neuroticism will predict greater levels of self-esteem (hypothesis 1). As for the second hypothesis (hypothesis 2), The relationships between traits and self-esteem is mediated by perceived social support. Females will report greater levels of social support compared to males, and therefore greater levels of self-esteem (hypothesis 3).

2 Methodology

2.1 Participants

The sample for the current study consisted of 95 (Females: $n = 70$; Males: $n = 25$) individuals in total. All participants were over the age of 18, ($M = 35.36$). The sample did not focus on any specific age group and did not include individuals from a vulnerable population. Participants were recruited mainly through social media sites, such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook on a convenience sampling method, though a snowball sampling effect unveiled as the first few assessable participants were encouraged to share the survey within their social group.

2.2 Materials

The present study employs three separate measures: *The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965)*, *The Big Five Personality Trait Scale (Goldberg, 1992)*, *Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988)* These measures were inserted into Google Forms, where questionnaires were created as an online

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survey for the present study. The online survey also assessed participants age and gender and included information sheet, consent form, and debriefing information.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

This is a 10-item Likert scale with 5 positively and 5 negatively worded statements. It assesses individual's self-worth and self-respect on a scale of 0-30 where a score less than 15 may indicate a problematic low self-esteem. Items are answered on a four-point response scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). This scale has produced high reliability ratings; internal consistency: 0.77, minimum Coefficient of Reproducibility was 0.09 (M. Rosenberg, 1965) Independent studies with varied samples have presented fairly high alpha coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.87. Silber & Tippett, (1965), Shorkey & Whiteman, (1978) calculated test-retest reliability for a 2-week interval at .85, and a 7-month interval at .63. The current study produced high internal reliability with cronbach's alpha of 0.91.

The Big Five Personality Trait Scale

Personality traits were measured using The Big Five Personality Trait Scale (Goldberg, 1992). The test assesses individuals on how they measure up in the five factors of personality: Extroversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Openness, and Neuroticism. This test includes 50 items where participants self-report on how true each statement is about themselves. Items are answered on a five-point scale from 1 (Disagree) to 5 (Agree). Reliability coefficients for all extracted factors were above 0.7 (Hee, 2014), suggesting the Big Five Inventory to be a valid measure, deemed consistent and reliable throughout the study.

The reliability coefficients for all the extracted factors were above 0.7. Thus, the validated measures of the Big Five Inventory were deemed consistent and reliable throughout the study.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

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Social Support will be measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988). This test assessed individuals to the extent to which they feel they have support of their family, friends and a significant other. In the interest of the current study, social support was calculated as a total score, instead of separate subscales. This is a 12 item, with a seven-point response scale, ranging from “very strongly disagree” to “very strongly agree”. Scores were calculated by adding all 12 items, then dividing them by 12. Mean total scores from this scale ranging from 1-2.9 is considered low support, scores from 3-5 are considered moderate support, and scores from 5.1-7 are considered high support. The MSPSS has proven to be psychometrically sound in diverse samples. Wongpakaran et al., (2011) conducted factor analysis which produced a good internal consistency with Cronbach’s alpha of 0.91 for a student group sample, and 0.87 using a psychiatric patient sample. A 4- week retest reliability found correlation coefficient to be 0.84. They also found the Thai-MSPSS to be positively correlated with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The current study produced good internal reliability statistics on this scale with Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.85.

2.3 Design

The present study incorporated a quantitative, cross-sectional design. Self-report measures were used to determine personality traits, self-esteem, and perceived social support. Data analysis was conducted using the Baron & Kenny (1986) mediation analysis. This mediation analysis consisted of running three separate multiple regression analysis for each personality trait. The first step investigated if each personality trait (IV) could predict levels of self-esteem (CV). If the first step produced a significant relationship, then step two could be conducted to investigate

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whether each personality could predict social support (MV). If step two produced a significant relationship, then step three ran a multiple regression analysis with personality traits (IV) and social support (MV) as predicting variables on self-esteem (CV). Each multiple regression analysis also controlled for age and gender.

2.4 Procedure

The three scales were inserted into google forms as three separate questionnaires in one online survey. The survey included an information page, where participants were informed of their rights as participants, aims and purpose of the study, as well as what it will assess. Post survey debriefing sheet was also included which provided the researcher and supervisor's information, and helpline services. Participants were only able to begin the questionnaire by consenting to voluntarily participate. Before continuing to the questionnaires, participants were to provide their gender and age as the only demographic questions in the survey. The link to google forms were distributed throughout social media and email between January and February 2019. The questionnaires took approximately 15 minutes to complete, with no time limit. Participants were encouraged to answer the questions as best describes them. Upon completing the survey, participants were to press a submit button, which provided the research with their anonymous data.

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3 Results*3.1 Descriptive Statistics**Table 1. Frequencies for the current sample on each categorical variable (n = 95)*

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Gender		
Male	25	26.3
Female	70	73.7

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of all continuous variables.

	Mean (95% Confidence Intervals)	Std. Error Mean	Median	SD	Range
Extroversion	20.05 (18.07-22.03)	1.00	21.00	9.73	1-38
Agreeableness	31.23 (29.90-32.57)	.67	33.00	6.55	13-40
Conscientiousness	26.18 (24.67-27.69)	.76	26.00	7.42	9-40
Neuroticism	18.54 (16.59-20.48)	.98	20.00	9.55	1-38
Openness	28.17 (26.98-29.35)	.60	28.00	5.81	8-39
Social Support	5.35 (5.13-5.56)	.11	5.50	1.05	3-7

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Self-Esteem	29.13 (27.89-30.36)	.622	29.00	6.06	14-40
Age	35.36 (32.60-38.12)	1.39	31.00	13.54	18-70

3.2 Inferential Statistics

Baron and Kenny (1986) approach was used to carry out mediation analysis. Multiple regression analysis assessed each personality trait on its relationship with self-esteem, controlling for gender and age. Three separate regression analysis were conducted for each personality trait. First, each personality trait (IV) on self-esteem (CV), Second, Personality trait on social support (MV). Third, personality traits (IV) and social support (MV) on self-esteem, in accordance with Baron & Kenny (1986) model. Preliminary analyses were performed for each regression to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity (graphs provided in appendices).

3.3 Extroversion

Step 1

The relationship between extroversion and self-esteem was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a small, positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .28$, $n = 95$, $p < .01$). This indicates that the two variables share approximately 7% of variance in common. Results indicate that higher levels of extroversion are associated with higher levels of self-esteem.

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Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine how well levels of self-esteem could be explained by three variable including extroversion, age, and gender. The three predicting variables explained 39.7% of the variance in self-esteem levels ($F(3, 91) = 7.43, p < .001$). Extroversion and age were found to uniquely predict self-esteem levels to a statistically significant level (*Table 3*). Statistically significant prediction of self-esteem in levels of extroversion allows further Baron & Kenny (1986) mediation analysis to be conducted.

Step 2

The relationship between extroversion and social support was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a small, positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .21, n = 95, p < .04$). This indicates that the two variables share approximately 4% of variance in common. Results indicate that higher levels of extroversion are associated with higher levels of perceived social support.

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine how well extroversion, gender, and age could predict levels of perceived social support. The model as a whole explained 11.1% of the variance in social support ($F(3, 91) = 3.77, p = .01$). Extroversion was found to uniquely predict perceived social support to a statistically significant level (*Table 3*). Statistically significant prediction of social support in levels of extroversion allows for step 3 of Baron & Kenny (1986) mediation analysis to be conducted.

Step 3

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine how well extroversion, social support, gender, and age could predict levels of perceived self-esteem. The model as a whole

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explained 20.5% of the variance in social in self-esteem ($F(4, 90) = 5.80, p < .001$). Extroversion and age were found to be a statistically significant predictor of self-esteem, while social support (MV) did not (*Table 3*). The significant value of extroversion and the insignificance value of social support on self-esteem in step 3 suggests that the relationship between extroversion and self-esteem is not mediated by social support.

(*Table 3*)

	<i>R</i> ²	<i>β</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Step 1	.20			
Extroversion		.23	.06	<i>p</i> = .02*
Age		.34	.04	<i>p</i> < .001**
Gender		-.06	1.29	<i>p</i> = .51
Step 2	11.1			
Extroversion		.23	.01	<i>p</i> = .02*
Age		-.18	.01	<i>p</i> = .08
Gender		.19	.23	<i>p</i> = .06
Step 3	20.5			
Extroversion		.21	.06	<i>p</i> = .04*
Social Support		.10	.58	<i>p</i> = .32
Age		.36	.04	<i>p</i> < .001***
Gender		-.08	1.31	<i>p</i> = .40

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*Note. Statistical significance: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$*

3.4 Agreeableness

Step 1

The relationship between agreeableness and self-esteem was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a moderate, positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .30$, $n = 95$, $p < .01$). This indicates that the two variables share approximately 9% of variance in common. Results indicate that higher levels of agreeableness are associated with higher levels of self-esteem.

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine how well levels of self-esteem could be explained by three variable including agreeableness, age, and gender. The model as a whole explained 19.4% of variance in levels of self-esteem ($F(3,91) = 7.30$, $p < .001$).

Agreeableness and age were found to be statistically significant predictors of self-esteem (Table 4). The significant prediction of self-esteem in levels of agreeableness allowed for step 2 of Baron & Kenny (1986) mediation analysis to be conducted.

Step 2

The relationship between agreeableness and social support was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a moderate, positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .41$, $n = 95$, $p < .001$). This indicates that the two variables share approximately 16% of variance in common. Results

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indicate that higher levels of agreeableness are associated with higher levels of perceived social support.

As the second step in mediation, multiple regression analysis was performed to determine how well agreeableness, gender, and age could predict our mediating variable: perceived social support. The overall model explained 25.3% of variance in perceived social support ($F(3,91) = 10.30, p < .001$) Results showed agreeableness to be a strong predictor of social support, while age also uniquely predicted social support to a statistically significant level (see *Table 4*). These results allowed for step 3 of the mediation analysis to be conducted.

Step 3

Further multiple regression analysis was performed to determine how well agreeableness, social support, age, and gender could predict levels of self-esteem. The model explained 19.6% of variance ($F(4,90) = 5.49, p = .001$). Apart from age, none of the independent variable significantly predicted self-esteem (*Table 4*). Although the agreeableness was not significant, social support also did not produce a significant value, indicating that social support does not mediate the relationship between agreeableness and levels of self-esteem.

(*Table 4*)

	<i>R</i> ²	<i>β</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Step 1	19.4			
Agreeableness		.23	.09	<i>p</i> = .02*
Age		.32	.04	<i>p</i> < .001**
Gender		-.08	1.30	<i>p</i> = .42
Step 2	25.3			

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Agreeableness	.46	.05	$p < .001^{**}$
Age	-.26	.007	$p = .01^{**}$
Gender	.16	.22	$p = .09$
Step 3	19.6		
Agreeableness	.20	.10	$p = .07$
Social Support	.06	.63	$p = .61$
Age	.34	.05	$p < .001^{***}$
Gender	-.08	1.32	$p = .37$

*Note. Statistical significance: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$*

3.5 Conscientiousness

Step 1

The relationship between conscientiousness and self-esteem was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a moderate, positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .31$, $n = 95$, $p < .01$). This indicates that the two variables share approximately 9% of variance in common. Results indicate that higher levels of conscientiousness are associated with higher levels of self-esteem.

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine how well levels of self-esteem could be explained by conscientious, age and gender. While age ($\beta = .05$, $p = .01$) significantly

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predicted self-esteem, the main variable of interest; conscientiousness was not a significant predictor ($\beta = .17, p = .11$). The insignificant results indicate that mediation analysis is not supported under the current independent variable, making further steps unnecessary.

3.6 Neuroticism

Step 1

The relationship between Neuroticism and self-esteem was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a large, positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .65, n = 95, p < .001$). This indicates that the two variables share approximately 42% of variance in common. Results indicate that higher levels of neuroticism are associated with lower levels of self-esteem.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and neuroticism, controlling for age and gender. Results found neuroticism to be a statistically significant predictor of levels of self-esteem, along with age (see *Table 5*). The model as a whole explained 45.3% of variance in levels of self-esteem ($F(3,91) = 25.12, p < .001$).

Step 2

The relationship between neuroticism and social support was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a non-statistically significant correlation between the two variables. ($r = -.14, n = 95, p < .19$).

Multiple regression analysis investigated the relationship between neuroticism, age and gender and perceived social support. (*Table 5*) There was no significant relationship found in

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either variables and social support. As step 2 was insignificant, mediation analysis is not supported for these variables, eliminating step 3.

3.7 Openness

Step 1

The relationship between openness and self-esteem was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a small, positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .27$, $n = 95$, $p < .01$). This indicates that the two variables share approximately 7% of variance in common. Results indicate that higher levels of openness are associated with higher levels of self-esteem.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine how well openness, age, and gender could predict levels of self-esteem. The overall model explained 21% of the variance in self-esteem levels ($F(3,91) = 8.07$, $p < .001$). Openness and age were found to uniquely predict self-esteem levels to a statistically significant level (see *Table 5*). The significance of openness to predict levels of self-esteem allowed step two of mediation analysis to be conducted.

Step 2

The relationship between openness and perceived social support was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was no statistically significant correlation between the two variables ($r = .05$, $n = 95$, $p = .64$).

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine how well openness, age, and gender could predict the mediating variable; social support. Openness, age, and gender were

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insignificant predictors of self-esteem (*Table 5*), therefore suggesting that social support does not mediate the relationship between openness and self-esteem.

Table 5

	<i>R</i> ²	<i>β</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Step 1	.21			
Openness		2.74	.10	<i>p</i> = .01**
Age		.37	.04	<i>p</i> < .001***
Gender		-.04	1.28	<i>p</i> = .65
Step 2	.06			
Openness		.07	.02	<i>p</i> = .51
Age		-.15	.01	<i>p</i> = .15
Gender		.20	.24	<i>p</i> = .05*

*Note. Statistical significance: * p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001*

4 Discussion

4.1 *General Findings and Conclusion*

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between personality traits, social support, and self-esteem. Particularly, its aim was to determine whether social support mediates the relationship between personality traits and self-esteem. The present findings were established by means of cross sectional and observational research. Baron and Kenny (1986) mediation analysis method provided results in concern of the aims and hypotheses. All five personality traits were positively correlated with self-esteem. Of the five traits, only extroversion, agreeableness was significantly correlated with perceived social support.

Results from the present study showed personality traits such as extroversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness to significantly predict self-esteem. As first hypothesized, these traits predicted self-esteem, supporting the first hypothesis. Among those traits, extroversion, agreeableness was also found to predict levels of perceived social support, while neuroticism and conscientiousness were insignificant. Age was found to be the biggest significant predictor of both self-esteem and social support in this model, while gender showed no significance in relation to either variables. Results failed to support the third hypothesis which states that females would report greater levels of social support compared to males, and therefore greater levels of self-esteem. Though there was a relationship between personality traits and both mediating and criterion variables, the present results suggest that social support does not mediate

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the relationship between personality trait and self-esteem. The previous findings are also unsupportive of the second hypothesis.

Drawn from the current results, conclusions from the present study indicate that individuals who score higher on levels of extroversion, agreeableness, and openness report higher levels of self-esteem. Existing results are in line with previous findings (Niazi & Mehmood, 2017). Among those traits, extroversion was found to be the biggest predictor compared to the other Big Five traits. This suggests that being more outgoing energetic, and sociable is shown to be beneficial for an individual's self-esteem and may expand the quality of ones perceived social support. There were no differences in gender across all variable, this finding is unsupportive of Kitamura et al., (2002), who reported that women receive more support from others according to their level of extroversion and neuroticism.

4.2 *Limitations and Future Implications*

It is important to consider some limitations before making any meaningful assumption. This research was conducted using only self-report measures. This leaves data vulnerable of social-desirability bias associated with self-assessment. Despite this limitation, participants were able to partake in the study as anonymous participants, in a relaxed environment, where external influences were not present, which may contribute to illuminating some of this bias. Sample size may have also been a limitation in the current research. Future research should consider obtaining a bigger sample. There was also an unproportionate gender gap within the sample (73% Female). Mediation is favourably analyzed longitudinally to produce a significant causal relationship. As for the present study, data was analyzed cross-sectionally, which may have been another possible limitation. Analysis of the *Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support* was calculated using a total score rather than by their subcategories; friends, family, and

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significant other. The study did not focus on each subcategory as it was not the its focus.

However, subcategories may have provided more meaningful results that future studies may like to consider.

Despite these limitations, although the study did not focus on this aspect, the study was strengthened by a representation of a cross-cultural sample. The availability of the questionnaire to be conducted online, allowed participants from several different countries to partake, making results more generalizable.

Reflecting from the strengths and limitations from the current study, future studies may consider using a greater sample size, and conduct research longitudinally, using non-self-report measures. This may provide more meaningful results and may produce significant mediation analysis. Future studies should also expand on cross-cultural interpretation of results. Since the focus of the study did not include cultural differences, it would be interesting to gain insight as to whether results would change. Future studies may also put greater focus on analyzing sample in specific age groups. The significance of age in the present study indicates that further insight is needed on the impact that age has on self-esteem, and perceived social support. Additionally, future studies may also consider analyzing social support in subcategories such as friendships, family, and significant other. Finally, it may be of interest to future researchers to consider the insignificance of the results in the present study. Conscientiousness and introversion depicted similar indications and may have certain associations with neuroticism. Assessing the similarities and differences of these traits in terms of social support may provide important findings in the field of psychology.

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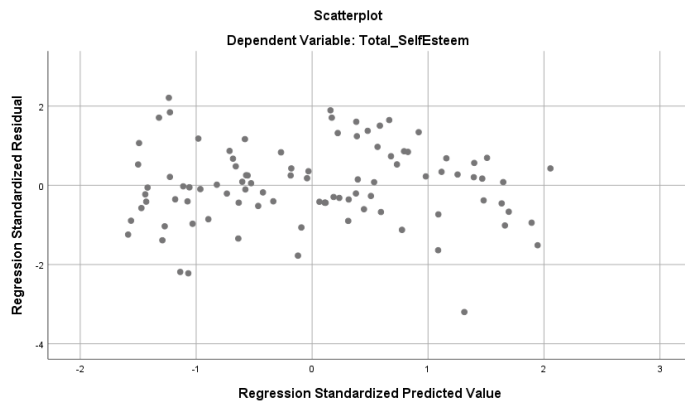
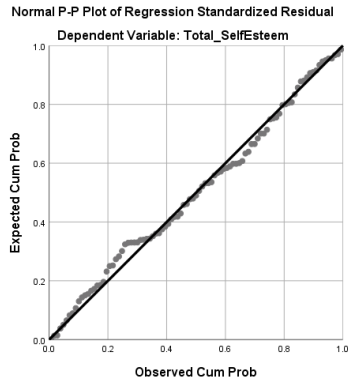
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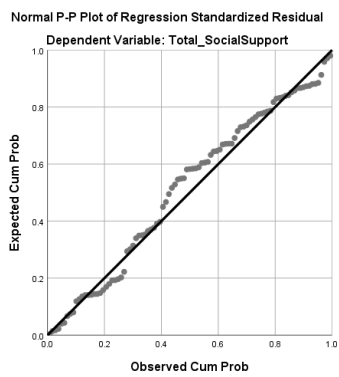
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Appendices

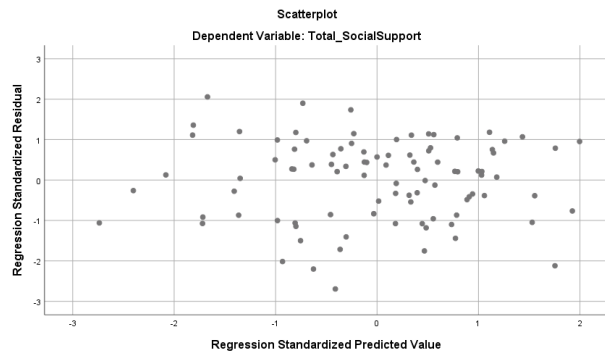
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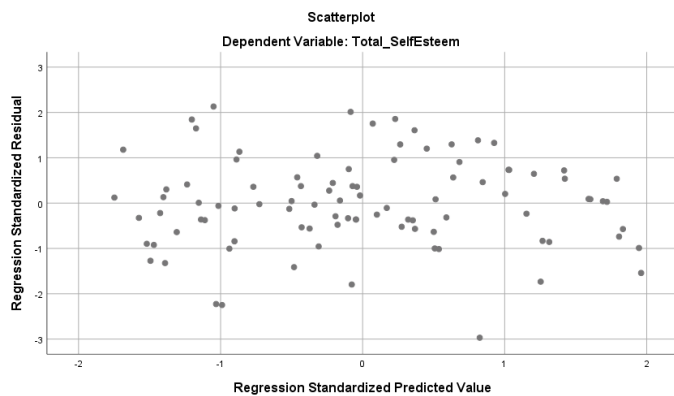
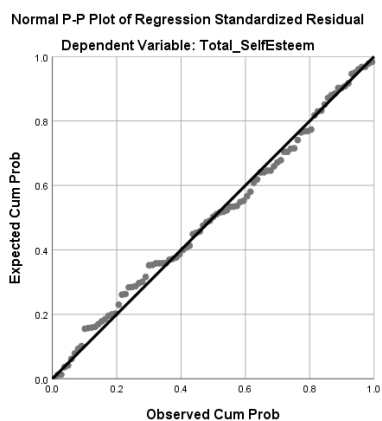
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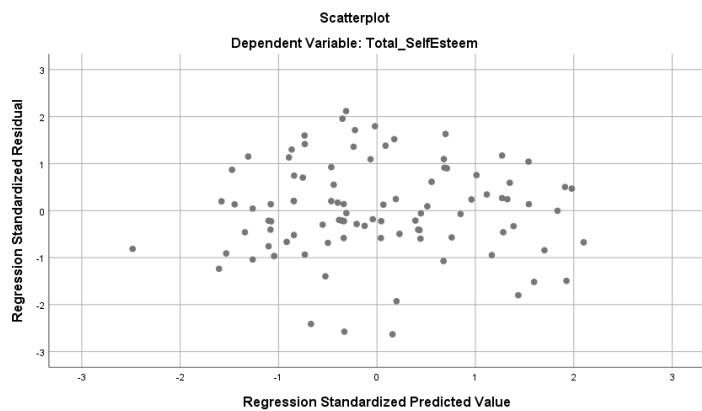
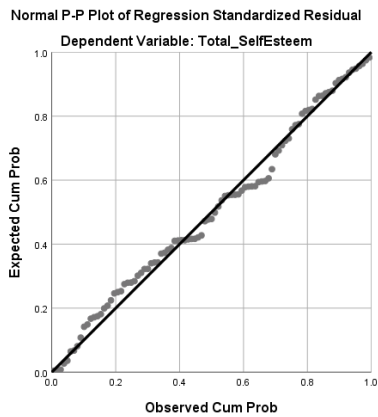


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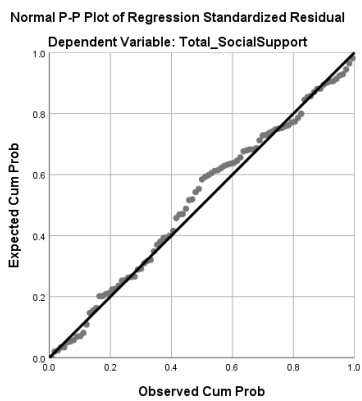


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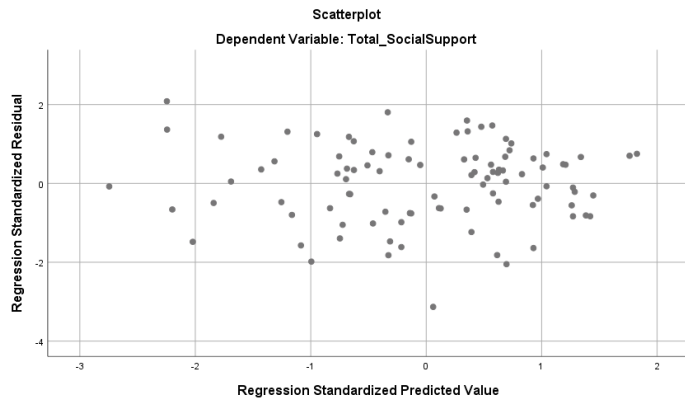
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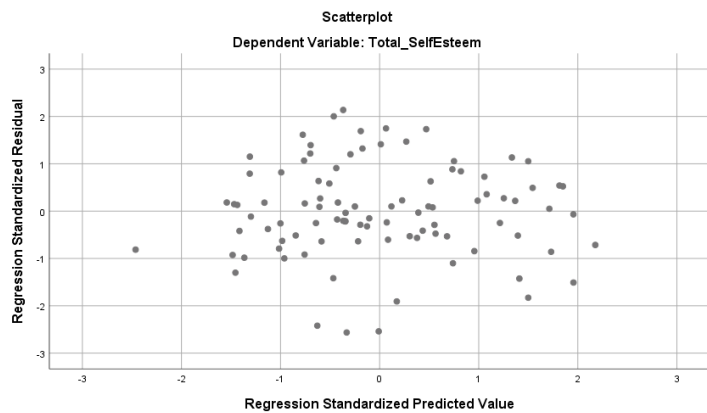
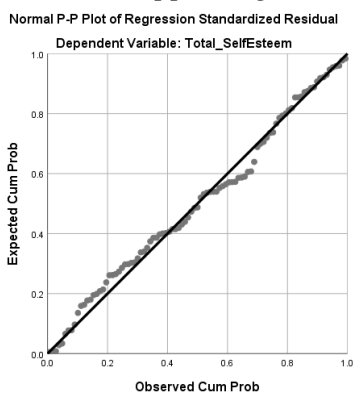
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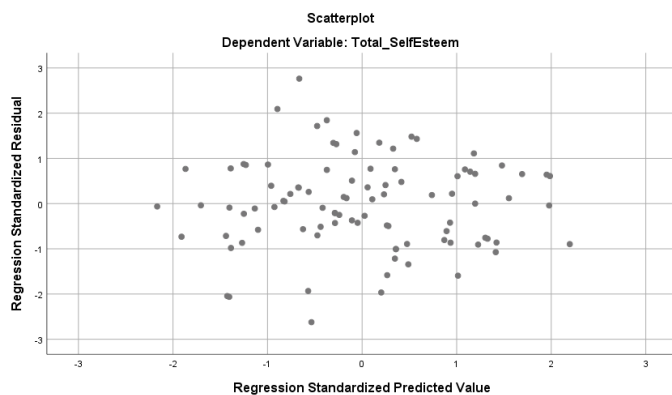
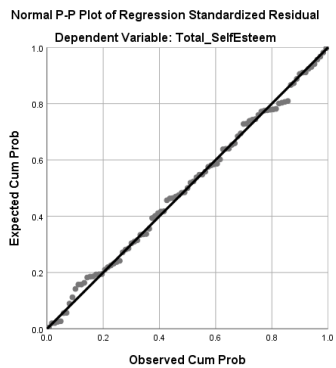


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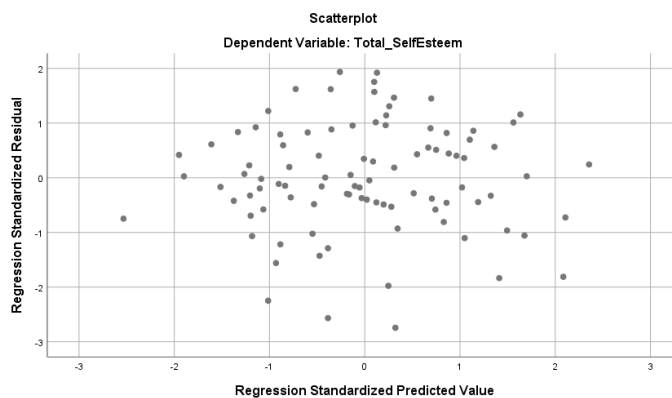
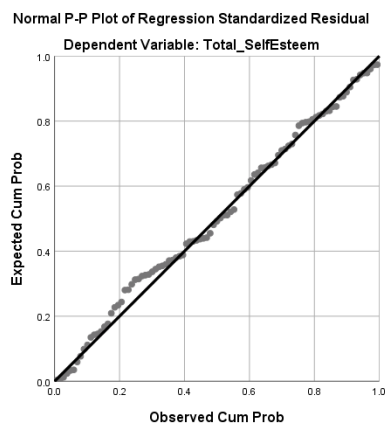


(Neuroticism/Age/Gender)

PREDICTORS OF SELF_ESTEEM



(Openness/Age/Gender)



PREDICTORS OF SELF_ESTEEM