

THE INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS, PERSONALITY TRAITS AND RELIGIOUS SUPPORT ON STUDENTS' SELF-ESTEEM

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Article history

Received date : 10-9-2026
Revised date : 10-9-2026
Accepted date : 17-10-2026
Published date : 25-10-2026

To cite this document:

Abdul Malik, M. A., Mohd Zamri, A. M., Ismail, N. A., Mohamad Sobri, N., Suhaimin, M. F., Che Yusof, S. N. H., Zulkfli, S. N., Ismail, I., & Abd Razak, N. F. (2026). The influence of psychosocial factors, personality traits and religious support on students' self-esteem. *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development (JISED)*, 11 (87), 1079-1089.

Abstract: *Self-esteem is an important psychological construct associated with students' confidence, emotional well-being and capacity to cope with academic and personal demands. This study examined whether psychosocial factors, personality traits and religious support were associated with, and predicted, self-esteem among undergraduate students at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kota Bharu. A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed using a structured questionnaire administered to full-time undergraduate students. A total of 130 valid responses were obtained. The data were analysed using an independent-samples t-test, Pearson's correlation and multiple linear regression. The results showed no statistically significant difference in self-esteem between male and female students ($t = -0.980$, $p = 0.329$). Psychosocial factors ($r = 0.672$, $p < 0.001$), personality traits ($r = 0.668$, $p < 0.001$) and religious support ($r = 0.403$, $p < 0.001$) were positively and significantly correlated with self-esteem. The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 47.273$, $p < 0.001$) and explained 53.0% of the variance in self-esteem ($R^2 = 0.530$). In the final stepwise model, psychosocial factors ($B = 0.436$, $p < 0.001$) and personality traits ($B = 0.537$, $p < 0.001$) remained significant predictors, whereas religious support did not make a unique significant contribution after the other predictors were controlled. The findings suggest that strengthening students' social support and positive personality-related resources may be particularly relevant to programmes designed to enhance self-esteem in the university context.*

Keywords: *Self-esteem; Psychosocial factors; Personality traits; Religious support; University students; UiTM Kota Bharu*

Introduction

Self-esteem refers to an individual's evaluation of personal worth and abilities and is closely connected with emotional regulation, psychological adjustment and everyday functioning. For university students, self-esteem is particularly relevant because the transition through higher education involves academic expectations, greater independence and changing social environments. Previous research has associated healthier self-esteem with better psychological well-being and greater confidence in managing challenging situations (Auttama et al., 2021; Li et al., 2023).

The development of self-esteem is multidimensional. Personality characteristics can shape how students interpret their abilities, achievements and interpersonal experiences. Research has reported meaningful associations between personality traits and self-esteem among university students, with more adaptive personality characteristics generally associated with more positive self-evaluations (Naim et al., 2022; Varanarasamma et al., 2019). Longitudinal evidence also suggests that self-esteem and academic self-efficacy can influence one another over time (Luo et al., 2022).

Psychosocial resources are another important influence. Perceived support from family, friends and the university environment may provide emotional reassurance, belonging and assistance during stressful academic and personal experiences. Social connectedness and supportive relationships have been linked with healthier self-esteem and psychological adjustment among young people and university students (Arslan, 2021; Anda et al., 2025a; Hao & Wilkinson, 2024).

Religious support may provide an additional emotional and spiritual resource. Among Malaysian college students, religiosity has been associated with well-being and mental health, while positive religious experiences may contribute to self-acceptance and psychological adjustment (Abdel-Khalek & Tekke, 2019; Guleryuz Erken et al., 2023a). Nevertheless, religious experiences are not uniformly positive; religious struggle may be associated with poorer psychological outcomes, indicating the importance of examining religious support alongside other psychosocial and individual factors (Szcześniak & Timoszyk-Tomczak, 2020).

Although previous studies have examined psychosocial support, personality, and religiosity separately, the present study considers these three domains simultaneously in a Malaysian university setting. This approach provides a more integrated assessment of the factors associated with students' self-esteem and identifies which factors retain a unique contribution when these predictors are considered together. To address these gaps in the literature, this study is guided by three primary objectives: to examine whether students' self-esteem differs significantly by gender, to examine the relationships between psychosocial factors, personality traits, religious support, and students' self-esteem and to determine the influence of psychosocial factors, personality traits, and religious support on students' self-esteem.

Method and Materials

Study Design and Conceptual Framework

A quantitative cross-sectional design was used to examine the relationships among psychosocial factors, personality traits, religious support and self-esteem. The framework in Figure 1 positions psychosocial factors, personality traits and religious support as independent variables and students' self-esteem as the dependent variable. The model reflects the study's expectation that stronger psychosocial resources, more adaptive personality characteristics and greater religious support would be associated with higher self-esteem.

Conceptual Framework

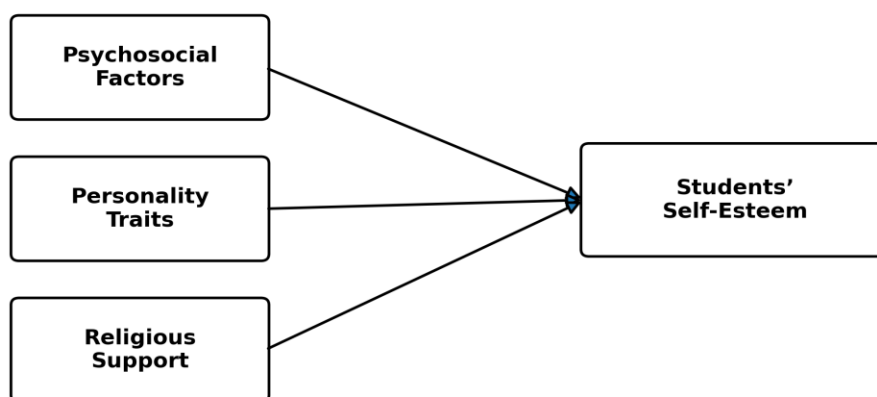


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of The Study.

Population and Sampling

A quantitative cross-sectional survey was administered to full-time undergraduate students at UiTM Campus Kota Bharu during the March 2026 to August 2026 session. The reported population was 1,202 students, comprising 352 males and 850 females. Utilizing stratified random sampling based on gender, the study aimed to achieve a representative sample. A sample size calculation (via Raosoft) using a 95% confidence interval, an 8% margin of error, and a 50% response distribution indicated a minimum threshold of 134 participants. To account for potential non-response, the target sample was expanded by 20% to 161 students. Ultimately, 130 fully completed responses were retained for statistical analysis, representing a robust 80.7% response rate of the targeted sample.

Instrument and Measures

A structured, online self-administered questionnaire was deployed to capture the target constructs, comprising a demographic profile and four specialized measurement scales. As outlined in Table 1, Psychosocial Factors were measured using six items about social and emotional support, including support from family and friends, feeling accepted and connected to others, and being comfortable sharing problems with lecturers. Personality Traits were measured using six items covering characteristics such as being sociable, kind, responsible, worried, curious, and careful. These represent the Big Five personality traits. Religious Support was measured using five items about the emotional and spiritual support gained from religion, such as feeling God's presence, gaining strength and comfort from faith, relying on God during

difficulties, and finding meaning in life. Self-Esteem was measured using six items about students' feelings towards themselves, including self-satisfaction, positive qualities, self-worth, confidence, ability to succeed, and self-acceptance.

Table 1: Measurement Constructs Used in The Study.

Construct	Items	Source
Psychosocial factors	6	Anda et al. (2025a)
Personality traits	6	Varanarasamma et al. (2019)
Religious support	5	Abdel-Khalek & Tekke (2019)
Self-esteem	6	Auttama et al. (2021)

Data Collection and Ethics

The questionnaire was administered to eligible undergraduate students using an online Google Form distributed through online platforms. Participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained. No personally identifiable information was collected, and responses were treated confidentially. The study was authorised for academic research purposes by UiTM Cawangan Kelantan, Campus Kota Bharu (Reference No. 600-CK (PJIM&A/RMU.5/1/1)).

Statistical Analysis

The analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 30) and consisted of a reliability assessment, data screening, descriptive analysis, an independent-samples T-test, Pearson's product-moment correlation, and multiple linear regression. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal consistency. Normality was evaluated using skewness and normal Q-Q plots. For regression, linearity, residual normality, homoscedasticity and multicollinearity were assessed. Tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) were used to evaluate multicollinearity. The overall model was evaluated using the F-test and coefficient of determination (R^2). A significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ was adopted.

The initial multiple linear regression used the Enter method with psychosocial factors, personality traits and religious support entered simultaneously. Because religious support was not statistically significant in the Enter model, a Stepwise Multiple Linear Regression procedure was subsequently used to obtain a final model containing the significant predictors.

Results and Discussion

Respondent Profile

The final sample consisted of 130 respondents. Table 2 illustrated that most respondents were aged 21–22 years (64.6%), followed by 23–24 years (31.5%) and 25–26 years (3.8%). The mean age is 22.28 years old and the standard deviation is 1.13 years. Females represented 66.2% of the sample and males 33.8%. The largest programme group was CS241/CDCS241 (52.3%), followed by BA240/BA270 (20.0%), BA242/BA272 (16.2%), BA249/BA279 (7.7%) and CS291/CDCS291 (3.8%). Semester 5 represented the largest group (30.0%), followed by Semester 6 (25.4%) and Semester 4 (23.8%).

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 130).

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Age	21–22 years	84	64.6
	23–24 years	41	31.5
	25–26 years	5	3.8
Gender	Female	86	66.2
	Male	44	33.8
Course	BA240/BA270	26	20.0
	BA242/BA272	21	16.2
	BA249/BA279	10	7.7
	CS241/CDCS241	68	52.3
	CS291/CDCS291	5	3.8
Semester	1	1	0.8
	2	15	11.5
	3	6	4.6
	4	31	23.8
	5	39	30.0
	6	33	25.4
	7	3	2.3
	8	2	1.5

Reliability and Data Screening

The pilot study involved 29 full-time undergraduate students. Cronbach's alpha values for psychosocial factors, personality traits, religious support and self-esteem were 0.839, 0.662, 0.949 and 0.889, respectively. In the actual study (n = 130), the corresponding alpha values were 0.875, 0.765, 0.959 and 0.925 (refer Table 3). Thus, the actual-study measures demonstrated acceptable to excellent internal consistency, while the personality-trait scale in the pilot phase showed a lower but usable value for preliminary instrument assessment.

Table 3: Internal Consistency Reliability.

Construct	Pilot α	Actual α	Assessment (actual)
Psychosocial factors	0.839	0.875	Good
Personality traits	0.662	0.765	Acceptable
Religious support	0.949	0.959	Excellent
Self-esteem	0.889	0.925	Excellent

Data screening found no missing values because all questionnaires were completed. Boxplot inspection did not identify extreme outliers that would materially affect the analyses, and all 130 responses were retained.

Gender Difference in Self-Esteem

An independent-samples t-test was performed to evaluate gender differences in self-esteem. Preliminary analyses verified that all parametric assumptions were met. As shown in Table 4, Self-esteem skewness was -0.360 for males and -1.020 for females, both within the reported acceptable range of -2 to $+2$ confirming normality. Additionally, Levene's test supported the assumption of homogeneous variances, ($F = 0.034$, $p = 0.854$). The independent-samples t-test showed no statistically significant difference in self-esteem between male and female students

($t = -0.980$, $p = 0.329$). Therefore, the hypothesis proposing a gender difference was not supported.

Table 4: Gender comparison of self-esteem.

Test	Statistic	p-value	Decision
Levene's test	$F = 0.034$	0.854	Equal variances assumed
Independent-samples t-test	$t = -0.980$	0.329	Not significant

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the independent variables and student self-esteem (see Table 5). The analysis revealed that all three predictors share positive and highly significant relationships with the dependent variable. Psychosocial factors had the strongest correlation ($r = 0.672$, $p < 0.001$), followed closely by personality traits ($r = 0.668$, $p < 0.001$). Religious support showed a positive but weaker association ($r = 0.403$, $p < 0.001$). These findings support the proposition that students who report stronger psychosocial resources, more positive personality characteristics and greater religious support also tend to report higher self-esteem.

Table 5: Pearson correlations with self-esteem.

Independent variable	r with self-esteem	p-value
Psychosocial factors	0.672	<0.001
Personality traits	0.668	<0.001
Religious support	0.403	<0.001

Multiple Linear Regression

To ensure the robustness of the regression analysis, standard parametric assumptions were evaluated prior to model interpretation. Linearity was supported by the result correlation in Table 5. The residual normal probability plot (refer Figure 2) indicated that the residuals were approximately normally distributed conforming closely to the diagonal line, while the residual-versus-predicted plot (refer Figure 3) showed a random scatter without an obvious systematic pattern, supporting homoscedasticity. Multicollinearity was not detected: tolerance values were 0.456, 0.470 and 0.796 (all $> .10$), while the corresponding VIF values were 2.193, 2.126 and 1.256 for psychosocial factors, personality traits and religious support, respectively fell well below the recommended threshold (as shown in Table 6).

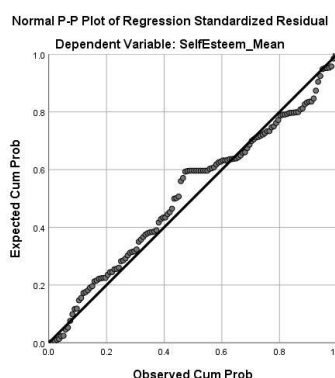


Figure 2: Normal Probability Plot for Self-Esteem

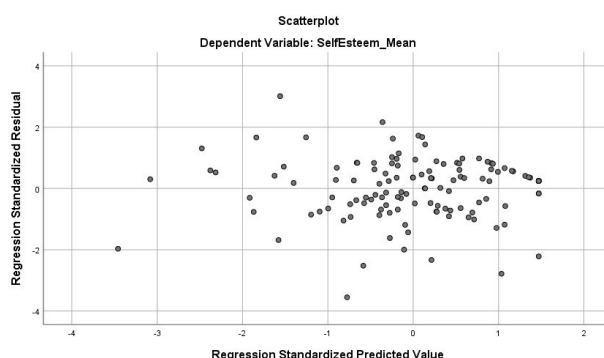


Figure 3: Residual by Predicted for Self-Esteem

Table 6: Multicollinearity Diagnostics.

Predictor	Tolerance	VIF	Finding
Psychosocial factors	0.456	2.193	No multicollinearity
Personality traits	0.470	2.126	
Religious support	0.796	1.256	

The overall regression model (refer Table 7) was statistically significant, $F(3, 126) = 47.273$, $p < 0.001$. The model explained 53.0% of the variance in self-esteem ($R^2 = 0.530$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.518. Thus, the three predictors jointly accounted for a substantial proportion of the observed variation in students' self-esteem, while 47.0% remained attributable to factors outside the model.

Table 7: ANOVA for the Multiple Linear Regression Model.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	93.652	3	31.217	47.273	<0.001
Residual	83.206	126	0.660	—	—
Total	176.858	129	—	—	—

Table 8: Goodness-of-Fit Statistics.

Model fit index	Value
R^2	0.530
Adjusted R^2	0.518

The Enter model indicated that religious support did not make a statistically significant unique contribution after the other predictors were controlled. A Stepwise Multiple Linear Regression (in Table 9) was therefore conducted. The final model retained psychosocial factors and personality traits. Both predictors were statistically significant: psychosocial factors ($B = 0.436$, $t = 4.494$, $p < 0.001$) and personality traits ($B = 0.537$, $t = 4.300$, $p < 0.001$). The estimated final model was:

$$\text{Self-esteem} = 0.001 + 0.436(\text{Psychosocial}) + 0.537(\text{Personality Traits})$$

This final model demonstrates that stronger psychosocial resources and more adaptive personality characteristics are robust, direct predictors of elevated self-esteem in undergraduate students.

Table 9: Regression Coefficients in The Final Stepwise Model.

Predictor	B	t	p-value	Decision
Intercept	0.001	0.002	0.998	
Psychosocial factors	0.436	4.494	<0.001	Significant
Personality traits	0.537	4.300	<0.001	Significant

Discussion and Conclusion

Psychosocial factors and personality traits were strongly associated with self-esteem among UiTM Kota Bharu students, with correlations of $r = 0.672$ and $r = 0.668$, respectively. Personality traits were the strongest predictor in the final regression model ($B = 0.537$). These findings are consistent with previous studies linking social support, social connectedness and personality characteristics with self-esteem (Arslan, 2021; Anda et al., 2025a; Hao & Wilkinson, 2024; Naim et al., 2022; Varanarasamma et al., 2019). Pearson's correlation showed a positive and significant relationship between Religious Support and Self-Esteem ($r = 0.403$, $p < 0.001$). This means that students who received more religious support generally had higher self-esteem. However, Religious Support was not a significant predictor of Self-Esteem when Psychosocial Factors and Personality Traits were included in the regression analysis. This is because correlation looks at the relationship between two variables, while regression looks at the unique effect of each variable when the other variables are considered. Although multicollinearity was not a problem, some benefits of Religious Support may overlap with Psychosocial Factors and Personality Traits. Therefore, Religious Support was related to Self-Esteem, but it did not have a strong enough unique effect to become a significant predictor. These findings apply to undergraduate students at UiTM Kota Bharu.

No significant difference in self-esteem was found between male and female students. This finding is consistent with Zarrett et al. (2021), although it differs from Bleidorn et al. (2016), who reported slightly higher self-esteem among males in some cultural contexts. The findings suggest that self-esteem among university students is more closely related to psychosocial and personality factors than gender. Therefore, university interventions should focus on strengthening social support, belonging, interpersonal relationships and positive personal development, while recognising that religious support may also provide additional emotional and spiritual benefits.

Overall, the regression model was significant and explained 53.0% of the variance in self-esteem. Psychosocial factors and personality traits were significant predictors, whereas religious support was not a significant unique predictor. Future studies should use larger and more diverse samples across multiple universities and longitudinal designs to improve generalisability and examine the relationships among psychosocial factors, personality traits, religious support and self-esteem over time.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered. First, the cross-sectional design captures the variables at one point in time and therefore does not establish causal relationships. Second, the study relied on self-administered responses, which may be affected by response bias or social desirability. Third, the achieved sample of 130 was smaller than the planned target of 161 respondents, which may have reduced statistical power. Finally, the study was conducted only

among undergraduate students at UiTM Kota Bharu, limiting the generalisability of the findings to other universities and populations.

Acknowledgement

The author gratefully acknowledges the undergraduate students who participated in the study and the UiTM Cawangan Kelantan, Campus Kota Bharu, for supporting the data collection process.

Funding

No specific external funding information was reported in the source study.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest was reported in the source study.

Data Availability

The underlying dataset was collected through a confidential student questionnaire. Data-sharing arrangements should be confirmed by the author and relevant institutional requirements before submission.

Ethics Statement

Participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained. No personally identifiable information was collected. The source study reports an official UiTM confirmation letter authorising the research for academic purposes (Reference No. 600-CK (PJIM&A/RMU.5/1/1)).

Declaration of Generative AI

This journal manuscript was prepared with AI-assisted language editing based on the supplied final-year project. The author should review, verify and take responsibility for all content, analyses, interpretations and references before submission.

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