

Can self-esteem mediate social support and self-adjustment in adolescents?

Dapatkah harga diri memediasi dukungan sosial dan penyesuaian diri pada remaja?

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ARTICLE INFO:	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: 2025-06-12 Revised: 2025-08-05 Accepted: 2025-09-01</p>	<p>Adolescents who pursue education in boarding schools face greater challenges in adjustment, as they must adapt to new environments, peers, and routines. This study aims to examine the effect of social support on adolescent adjustment, with self-esteem as a mediating variable. A quantitative approach was employed, using numerical measurements and statistical analysis. The study population consisted of 189 students, with a sample of 120 students from an Islamic boarding school in Ponorogo. The instruments used were the Social Provision Scale (SPS), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), and an adjustment scale developed by Anindita. Data were analyzed using path analysis with the JASP application version 0.19.3. The results revealed that social support had a significant direct effect on self-adjustment, as well as a significant indirect effect through self-esteem as a partial mediator. These findings highlight that social support plays a crucial role in adolescents' adjustment, both directly and by enhancing self-esteem. The study underscores the importance of fostering social support and self-esteem in facilitating adolescents' adaptation within boarding school environments.</p>
<p>Keywords: Adolescents, self-adjustment, self-esteem, social support</p>	<p>ABSTRACT</p> <p>Remaja yang melanjutkan pendidikan di pondok pesantren menghadapi tantangan yang lebih besar, terutama dalam hal penyesuaian diri, karena berada di lingkungan yang berbeda, dengan teman-teman baru, dan dalam kondisi yang tidak sama seperti sebelumnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh dukungan sosial terhadap penyesuaian diri pada remaja, dengan harga diri sebagai mediator. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif, yang melibatkan pengumpulan data melalui pengukuran numerik dan analisis statistik. Populasi dalam penelitian ini terdiri dari 189 siswa, sementara sampel berjumlah 120 siswa di sebuah pondok pesantren di Ponorogo. Skala yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah <i>Social Provision Scale (SPS)</i>, <i>Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)</i>, dan skala penyesuaian diri yang dikembangkan oleh Anindita. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan adalah <i>path analysis</i> dengan bantuan aplikasi JASP versi 0.19.3. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dukungan sosial berpengaruh langsung secara signifikan terhadap penyesuaian diri. Selain itu, ditemukan pula pengaruh tidak langsung yang signifikan melalui harga diri sebagai mediator parsial. Secara keseluruhan, hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa dukungan sosial memainkan peran penting dalam kemampuan remaja untuk menyesuaikan diri, baik secara langsung maupun melalui peningkatan harga diri. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya dukungan sosial dan harga diri dalam proses adaptasi remaja di lingkungan pondok pesantren.</p>
<p>Kata Kunci: Remaja, penyesuaian diri, harga diri, dukungan sosial</p>	

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1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical transitional period from childhood to adulthood, characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes (Erikson, 1968). One of the main challenges during this stage is the demand for adolescents to adapt to new environments, whether within the family, school, or broader social interactions (Noviandari & Mursidi, 2019). Difficulties in adaptation often arise because adolescents encounter developmental demands that differ from those of childhood, such as increased academic responsibilities, the process of identity formation, and the need for social acceptance among peers (Fitria & Zikra, 2021). Research shows that 40% of Indonesian students experience anxiety when adjusting to a new school environment (Suratmi et al., 2021).

Self-adjustment can be defined as an individual's ability to be accepted within a group or environment by demonstrating appropriate attitudes and behaviors (Kaliasy & Handayani, 2024). According to Hurlock (1997), indicators of successful self-adjustment include congruence between one's actual behavior and group expectations, positive social attitudes, and personal satisfaction in social interactions. In the context of adolescence, self-adjustment involves the ability to plan and coordinate responses that enable individuals to effectively cope with conflicts, challenges, and frustrations, while also fostering emotional maturity and self-control (Hidayati & Farid, 2016; Maula & Rusdiana, 2024).

The phenomenon of self-adjustment becomes increasingly complex among adolescents attending boarding schools (Afifah & Saloom, 2018). Adolescents encounter new people, move to unfamiliar environments, and face novel situations, which often makes it difficult for them to adapt to boarding school life (Sa'idah & Laksmiwati, 2017). Upon entering a boarding school, they are confronted with challenges such as homesickness, interpersonal conflicts, strict regulations, communication barriers, separation from family, and a highly structured lifestyle (Maimunah, 2020).

Interviews with one of the boarding school caregivers revealed that during the initial adaptation phase, approximately 68% of new students experienced difficulties in self-adjustment. These difficulties manifested in various forms, including withdrawal from social interactions, irregular participation in religious activities, and a desire to return home due to feelings of loneliness and sleep disturbances. The caregiver also noted that some students reported having no one to talk to, which contributed to emotional stress during the first few weeks after arrival. This situation highlights that the challenges of self-adjustment are real and significant for new students, requiring special attention to prevent them from developing into more serious problems.

Low self-adjustment abilities in boarding school adolescents can have an impact on social-emotional development, mental health, and academic success. Adolescents who fail to adapt are at risk of experiencing prolonged stress, social anxiety, and low engagement in the learning environment (Hadith, 2022). Therefore, it is important to identify factors that can strengthen adolescents' self-adjustment in boarding school environments so that the

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educational process and character development can proceed optimally. Self-adjustment is one of the keys to success in learning within the boarding school environment because if one is unable to adapt to the boarding school environment, it may lead to maladaptive behavior that disrupts the learning process of adolescents (Haiffahningrum, 2022).

Adolescent self-adjustment is influenced by internal factors such as personality, self-esteem, and emotional regulation abilities, as well as external factors such as social support, school climate, and family environment (Afifah & Saloom, 2018). Strong social support can provide a sense of security, boost self-confidence, and reduce feelings of isolation (Cahyono et al., 2022), while positive self-esteem enables adolescents to be more flexible in facing challenges and resilient in the face of failure in their lives (Orth, 2019).

Social support was selected as the independent variable in this study because adequate support can reduce stress levels, increase motivation, and provide adolescents with a sense of security, thereby strengthening their ability to adjust (Nurhasanah & Lessy, 2022). Cutrona and Russell (1987) define social support as an individual's perception that they are loved, valued, and receive both emotional and instrumental assistance from others. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, such support may come from peers, teachers, or family members, and has been shown to influence adolescents' self-adjustment (Sa'idah & Laksmiwati, 2017). Accordingly, social support is positioned as an independent variable because it is an external factor that can directly shape adolescents' adjustment abilities.

Self-esteem was chosen as the mediator variable because it theoretically serves as a bridge between social support and self-adjustment (Li et al., 2018). Poudel et al. (2020) found that self-esteem plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between social support and adolescents' psychological well-being. Their study showed that support received from parents and peers enhances self-esteem, which in turn improves mental health and adaptability to environmental demands. According to Rosenberg (1965), self-esteem refers to an individual's evaluation of themselves, reflecting positive or negative self-acceptance. High levels of social support foster feelings of being valued, accepted, and significant within a social group, thereby strengthening self-esteem (Yıldırım et al., 2024). Conversely, low social support is often linked to feelings of worthlessness and low self-esteem, which hinder the adjustment process (Amir & Witriani, 2019). Thus, the selection of self-esteem as a mediator in this study is grounded in a theoretical framework that positions self-esteem as a psychological pathway linking social support to successful adolescent self-adjustment.

Several studies have shown a positive relationship between social support, self-esteem, and self-adjustment. Research by Prasetio & Triwahyuni (2022) indicates that social support from family and friends contributes to reducing psychological distress among students through the mechanism of enhancing self-esteem, thereby functioning as a key pathway in strengthening the positive effects of social support on self-adjustment. Additionally, research conducted by Silain et al. (2024) in the context of Islamic boarding schools emphasizes that social support from teachers and peers facilitates the adaptation process of new students to the

boarding school environment. Support in the form of acceptance, guidance, and camaraderie within the dormitory environment has been proven to accelerate students' ability to adapt to the strict rules and lifestyle of the boarding school.

However, most of these studies were conducted in the context of university students, general students, or adolescents outside the pesantren environment, so they do not fully represent the unique dynamics of santri life. Another limitation found is the lack of research specifically examining the mediating role of self-esteem in the relationship between social support and self-adjustment among santri. Therefore, this study has novelty in testing this relationship model among boarding school students. The research subjects were chosen because boarding school students are in a unique adaptation situation: separated from their families, living in an environment with strict rules, and facing academic and religious demands simultaneously. These conditions make santri a relevant and strategic group for understanding the factors that influence the success of self-adjustment in adolescents.

This study aims to determine the influence of social support on the self-adjustment of adolescents in Islamic boarding schools with self-esteem as a mediator. The research hypotheses are: (1) social support has a positive effect on self-adjustment; (2) social support has a positive effect on self-esteem; (3) self-esteem has a positive effect on self-adjustment; and (4) self-esteem mediates the effect of social support on self-adjustment.

2. METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach to examine the influence of three variables: social support and self-adjustment, with self-esteem as a mediating factor. The research subjects were adolescent students (aged 13–18 years) enrolled at an Islamic boarding school in Ponorogo, with a total population of 189 and a sample size of 120. A larger sample size increases the representativeness of the findings. The sample consisted of 62 female participants (51.7%) and 58 male participants (48.3%), with a mean age of 15.7 years ($SD = \pm 1.3$) and a median age of 16 years. The age distribution was dominated by mid-adolescents (15–16 years), which represents a crucial stage in the self-adjustment process within the boarding school environment.

The boarding school in which this research was conducted is classified as a small institution, yet it remains relevant and significant to study because it reflects the broader phenomenon of adolescent self-adjustment discussed earlier. The school applies a full-residence system with strict regulations, while most students experience separation from their families for the first time. Such conditions can lead to self-adjustment challenges, including homesickness, difficulties in building social relationships, and pressure from adapting to new routines, which is phenomena that have been widely documented in previous studies on student adjustment in boarding schools.

The sampling technique used was simple random sampling, which is sampling conducted randomly without regard to the strata in the population (Sugiyono, 2017). Random sampling of students was conducted by drawing lots for the students' serial numbers.

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Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire with three scales that had been adapted into Indonesian, namely the self-adjustment scale, self-esteem scale, and social support scale, which were designed based on a 4-point Likert scale model, with answer options of 1 = Very Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Very Agree. This format was chosen to prevent participants from selecting the “neutral” option. The data collection procedure was conducted offline using paper-and-pencil questionnaires. The researcher distributed the questionnaires to each selected sample participant after obtaining approval from the boarding school administration.

The self-adjustment scale questionnaire used in this study uses an instrument developed by Anindita (2018) and has been approved with 14 items. The scale is in accordance with the four aspects of self-adjustment according to Hurlock, which include actual performance, namely the ability of individuals to adjust to group norms in order to be accepted as members; adjustment to various groups, which is the ability to adapt well in different social environments; social attitude, which is the ability to demonstrate pleasant behavior, participate, and perform social roles well; and personal satisfaction, which is characterized by feelings of happiness due to being able to play a role in the group and accept oneself in social situations (Hurlock, 1997).

The self-esteem questionnaire uses the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES) developed by Rosenberg (1965), this tool is designed to assess individual perceptions of global self-worth through 10 items (Mayordomo et al., 2020). The social support questionnaire uses The Social Provision Scale (SPS) scale developed by Cutrona & Russell (1987), this tool is designed to assess individual perceptions of the quality of social support in interpersonal relationships through 24 items divided into six dimensions, namely: emotional attachment, social integration, assurance of worth, reliable alliances, guidance, and opportunities to provide care. (Dwirifqi & Putra, 2015).

To ensure the accuracy of this study, content validity was used, which involved asking two raters to assess the suitability of the questionnaire items with the theory used and the language chosen after translation. On the other hand, to determine the consistency of the measuring instrument used, this study used Cronbach’s Alpha to measure the consistency of the scale used.

This study uses path analysis to analyze the data. Path analysis is a statistical technique used to test causal relationships between variables in a model, especially when the relationship patterns are complex and involve more than just direct effects. This analysis is an extension of multiple regression, enabling researchers to identify both direct and indirect effects of independent variables on dependent variables (Ghodang, 2020). Data processing was conducted using the JASP (Jeffreys’s Amazing Statistics Program) software version 0.19.3.

3. RESULTS

This study, through descriptive statistics presented in Table 1, provides a general overview of the data distribution for the variables of self-adjustment, self-esteem, and social

support. The descriptive analysis shows that the average self-adjustment score was 43.731 with a standard deviation of 4.860, indicating that most respondents had a relatively good level of self-adjustment. Similarly, the level of social support was generally high, as reflected by a mean score of 69.504 and a standard deviation of 7.408. Meanwhile, self-esteem had a mean score of 27.958 with a standard deviation of 4.020, suggesting that adolescents in this sample displayed varying levels of self-esteem.

Regarding data distribution, the skewness and kurtosis values for all three variables were within the range of -1 to 1, indicating that the distributions approximated normality (George & Mallery, 2019). This was further confirmed by the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, which yielded p-values greater than 0.05, demonstrating that the data for all three variables were normally distributed and suitable for further analysis (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965).

The reliability test results indicate that all three research scales have adequate internal consistency. The self-esteem scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.711 (95% CI = 0.622–0.800), while the social support scale had a value of 0.770 (95% CI = 0.704–0.836). Meanwhile, the self-adjustment scale showed a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.763 with an average inter-item correlation of 0.196. All Cronbach's alpha values were above 0.70, indicating that the three scales have good reliability and are suitable for use as research instruments.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Self-Adjustment	Social support	Self-esteem
Valid	119	119	119
Mean	43.731	69.504	27.958
Std. Deviation	4.860	7.408	4.020
Skewness	-0.112	0.149	-0.375
Std. Error of Skewness	0.222	0.222	0.222
Kurtosis	-0.665	0.520	0.782
Std. Error of Kurtosis	0.440	0.440	0.440
Shapiro-Wilk	0.978	0.990	0.978
P-value of Shapiro-Wilk	0.046	0.548	0.048
Range	23.000	45.000	23.000

Table 2. Direct effects

	Std. estimate	Std. error	z-value	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Social support → Self-Adjustment	0.399	0.076	5.253	< .001	0.250	0.548

Note. Estimator is ML.

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The table 2 shows that self-adjustment is significantly impacted directly by social support with a standardized coefficient of 0.399, z-value of 5.253, and p-value <0.001. This indicates that the higher the social support, the higher the self-adjustment.

Table 3. Indirect effects

	Std. estimate	Std. error	z-value	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Social support → Self-esteem → Self-Adjustment	0.171	0.045	3.784	< .001	0.082	0.260

Note. Estimator is ML.

The test results listed in the table 3, show that the association between self-adjustment and social support is partially mediated by self-esteem. The indirect effect obtained through self-esteem has a standardized coefficient of 0.171 with a z-value of 3.784 and a p-value of <0.001. This suggests that social support boosts self-esteem, which causes self-adjustment to increase.

Table 4. Total effects

	Std. estimate	Std. error	z-value	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Social support → Self-Adjustment	0.570	0.062	9.214	< .001	0.449	0.691

Note. Estimator is ML.

Based on the table 4, the total effect of social support on self-adjustment reached a standardized coefficient value of 0.570, z-value of 9.214, and p < 0.001. This indicates that the higher the social support received, the higher the individual's self-adjustment, either directly or through increased self-esteem.

Table 5. R-Squared

	R ²
Self-Adjustment	0.418
Self-esteem	0.239

Based on the aforementioned data, self-adjustment obtained an R2 value of 0.418, which means that 41.8% of self-adjustment variability can be explained by social support and self-

esteem variables. Meanwhile, the R2 value of self-esteem is 0.239 which means that 23.9% of self-esteem variability is explained by social support.

Table 6. Path coefficients

	Std. estimate	Std. error	z-value	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Self-esteem → Self-Adjustment	0.350	0.077	4.539	< .001	0.199	0.501
Social support → Self-Adjustment	0.399	0.076	5.253	< .001	0.250	0.548
Social support → Self-esteem	0.489	0.070	7.005	< .001	0.352	0.626

Note. Estimator is ML.

The path coefficient table above explains that all relationships between variables are statistically significant with a p-value <0.001. First, self-esteem has a significant effect on self-adjustment with a standardized estimate of 0.350. Second, social support has a direct effect on self-adjustment with a standardized estimate of 0.399. Finally, social support also significantly affects self-esteem with a standardized estimate of 0.489.

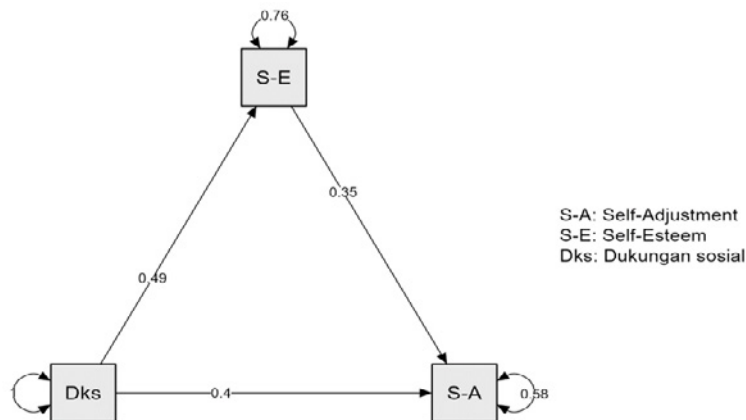


Figure 1. Path Diagram

The path diagram shown also supports the results of the path coefficient, which shows that social support has two paths of influence, namely directly on self-adjustment with a coefficient of 0.40, and indirectly through self-esteem with a self-esteem influence coefficient of 0.49 then continued from self-esteem to self-adjustment of 0.35. This means that the higher

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the social support a person receives, the higher the self-esteem he has, and ultimately has a positive impact on self-adjustment ability. Meanwhile, the path from self-esteem to self-adjustment reinforces that self-esteem also contributes directly to self-adjustment.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of the data analysis indicate that social support has a direct effect on the self-adjustment of santri. In addition, self-esteem significantly influences students' self-adjustment and serves as a mediating variable in the relationship between social support and self-adjustment. This finding suggests that self-esteem functions as a partial mediator, reflecting both direct and indirect effects. In other words, even if self-esteem is excluded from the model, social support still affects self-adjustment, although the strength of its influence decreases.

Social support in this context includes attention, empathy, real help, and involvement from close people such as friends, family, and teachers (Cutrona & Russell, 1987). These conditions can provide a sense of security and appreciation which is an important foundation for building healthy social interactions and adaptation to situational changes (Cahyono et al., 2022). The availability of social support strongly affects an individual's ability to adjust because humans are social beings who need connection and recognition from their environment. A supportive environment provides a sense of security, increases social motivation, and reduces feelings of alienation in a new culture, making it easier for individuals to improve social and emotional self-adjustment abilities (Nurhasanah & Lessy, 2022).

Similar research in the context of boarding school also shows consistent results. (Silain et al., 2024) Found that students who get social support from friends and teachers are better able to face self-adjustment challenges in the boarding school environment. They feel more accepted, find it easier to build new social relationships, and adapt more quickly to the routines and values that apply in boarding schools. Emotional social support, such as empathy, acceptance, and moral encouragement, can calm negative emotions that arise when facing change. Meanwhile, social support in the form of concrete assistance or advice directly provides adolescents with the resources needed to develop self-adjustment effectively (Rembulan & Hakiki, 2019).

In addition to playing a direct role in improving self-adjustment abilities, social support also has an important contribution in shaping adolescent self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to an individual's comprehensive evaluation of their worth (Rosenberg et al., 1995), and is an important factor in emotion regulation, social decision-making, and self-identity development (Orth, 2019). When adolescents feel cared for, heard, and supported by family, friends, or the surrounding environment, their perception of themselves becomes more positive, feeling more worthy, meaningful, and capable, resulting in increased self-esteem (Yıldırım et al., 2024).

The study by Azizah et al., (2023) confirmed that social support provides a sense of security and recognition of adolescents' existence, which strengthens the belief that they

can face changes and new challenges. It also shows that self-esteem develops from social attachments that reflect the value and appreciation of others towards adolescents and form positive perceptions of themselves (Ji et al., 2019).

Further analysis shows that self-esteem mediates the relationship between social support and self-adjustment. This means that some of the influence of social support on self-adjustment is channeled through self-esteem, while the rest works directly. In other words, adolescents who receive high social support from peers, family, and teachers tend to have more positive self-esteem. High self-esteem then helps them feel capable, valuable, and accepted in the boarding school environment, thereby facilitating their self-adjustment process (Poudel et al., 2020). Adolescents who receive greater social support generally exhibit higher levels of self-esteem, which in turn contributes to the improvement of adolescents' self-adjustment ability. High self-esteem contributes to the self-adjustment process because adolescents who have a high sense of self-esteem are typically more courageous when confronted with obstacles, more flexible in responding to changes, and have better emotion regulation abilities (Dietrich & Ferguson, 2020).

Overall, self-adjustment is significantly impacted by social support, both directly and indirectly through self-esteem, indicating that social support helps improve adolescents' ability to self-adjust to the social environment and the pressures they face, including in the context of boarding school life, where adolescents are faced with various new challenges, such as strict rules to separation from family. In other words, the combination of feeling supported by the social environment and positive self-appraisal is an important factor for the development of healthy self-adjustment in adolescence.

This study has several limitations, including a relatively small sample size, which limits the ability to generalize the findings to a broader population. Additionally, the study has limitations in capturing the phenomena observed, resulting in other variables that cannot be accommodated within the theoretical framework used. Based on these considerations, future researchers may consider increasing the sample size or analyzing other variables that are theoretically and empirically related to self-adjustment.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that social support has a direct effect on the self-adjustment of santri. In addition, self-esteem significantly influences self-adjustment and functions as a mediating variable in the relationship between social support and self-adjustment. This indicates that self-esteem serves as a partial mediator, producing both direct and indirect effects. Even without self-esteem in the model, social support continues to affect self-adjustment, though its impact is reduced. These findings imply the importance of strengthening social support through a supportive boarding school environment and implementing self-esteem development programs, enabling students to achieve more optimal emotional and social adjustment.

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