



# Social Support As A Shield: Exploring Its Role In Shyness And Self-Worth Among Adolescent Girls

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## Abstract

Adolescence is a critical period characterized by physical, emotional, and social changes. During this period, some people experience heightened self-consciousness and shyness. These psychosocial changes can profoundly impact shyness and self-worth, particularly among adolescent girls. Research indicates that social support is vital in enhancing self-worth and mitigating the adverse effects of shyness (Monteiro et al., 2021).

The present study tries to explore the protective function of social support in the relationship between shyness and self-esteem among adolescent girls. The research aims to provide insights into fostering supportive environments that promote psychological well-being during this formative stage. In addition, the study tries to explore the mediating role of social support in the relationship between shyness and self-worth among adolescent girls. 100 female students, aged 18 to 25, from University College, participated and completed self-report scales measuring shyness, social support, and self-worth. Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between social support and self-worth ( $R = .272^*$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that higher social support is associated with greater self-worth. However, no significant correlation was found between shyness and social support, and between shyness and self-worth. Mediation analysis indicated that **social support significantly predicted self-worth** ( $B = 0.762$ ,  $SE = 0.278$ ,  $t = 2.739$ ,  $p = .0073$ ), highlighting its protective role in adolescent well-being. However, the direct effect of shyness on self-worth was non-significant, suggesting that being shy does not necessarily lower self-worth. Additionally, the indirect effect of shyness on self-worth through social support was also non-significant.

*Keywords: Shyness, Social Support, Self-Worth.*

## **Social Support as a Shield: Exploring Its Role in Shyness and Self-Worth Among Adolescent Girls**

Social support is like a comforting shield, providing emotional, informational, and practical resources when we face life's challenges. It helps us navigate stress, lessening feelings of isolation and nurturing our mental well-being. When we have strong connections with others, it not only boosts our resilience but also creates a warm sense of belonging and security. Ultimately, the support we receive from those around us helps protect us from negative health impacts and enhances our overall life satisfaction.

Shyness is a personality trait characterized by feelings of discomfort and inhibition during social interactions. It significantly affects an individual's well-being and often results in the avoidance of social situations, which can limit opportunities for meaningful connections. Social support—the perception or experience of being cared for and valued by others—plays a crucial role in alleviating the negative effects of shyness (Batool & Zubair, 2018). Additionally, self-worth, which refers to the intrinsic value individuals place on themselves, is closely related to these aspects and is a key factor in determining mental health and social functioning.

**Shyness** can lead to loneliness and a diminished sense of self-worth, as shown by Mousavi and Dehshiri (2021), who explored how parenting behaviors and friendship quality influence these outcomes. Tian et al. (2021) further elucidated the reciprocal relationships between shyness, self-esteem, and loneliness in adolescents, identifying significant pathways that contribute to Internet addiction. These findings align with Mandal's (2023) study, which examined how external approval conditions the relationship between shyness and self-esteem, especially in women. Similarly, Al Sabi et al. (2022) emphasized the negative association between shyness and self-esteem, underscoring the potential for social and individual variables to shape personal well-being.

**Self-worth**, particularly when contingent on external validation, is a critical factor in adolescent and young adult populations. Prieler et al. (2021) explored this in the context of social media, finding that comparisons on platforms like Facebook can influence body esteem and self-worth among adolescent girls. Additionally, Bakir et al. (2020) highlighted how self-worth and cultural variables shape adolescents' attitudes toward luxury brands, further demonstrating the multifaceted nature of self-worth.

**Social support** emerges as a vital buffer in these dynamics, as Sabik et al. (2020) noted the detrimental effects of self-worth contingent on social media feedback on psychological well-being. This underscores the protective role of supportive relationships in fostering resilience against the adverse effects of shyness and externally dependent self-worth.

This study builds upon these findings by examining the relationships among shyness, social support, and self-worth. Through quantitative analysis, it seeks to elucidate the mechanisms by which social

support mediates the effects of shyness on self-worth, contributing to the growing body of literature on psychosocial well-being.

## Rationale

The rationale behind studying "Social Support as a Shield: Exploring Its Role in Shyness and Self-Worth Among Adolescent Girls" stems from the important developmental phase of adolescence, especially for girls. During this time, many adolescents face challenges related to shyness and self-worth, which can affect their social interactions, emotional health, and growth. Social support from family, friends, and mentors can act as a protective factor. Exploring how social support reduces shyness and boosts self-worth is essential for creating interventions that improve mental well-being and promote positive self-esteem in this age group.

## Objectives

1. To study the relationship between shyness and self-worth among adolescent girls.
2. To study the relationship between social support and self-worth.
3. To explore the mediating role of social support in the relationship between shyness and self-worth.

## Hypotheses

1. Shyness is correlated with self-worth among adolescent girls.
2. Social support is correlated with self-worth among adolescent girls.
3. Social support mediates the relationship between shyness and self-worth.

## Method

### Participants

The study employed quantitative methods. 100 (N=100) participants completed validated scales measuring shyness, social support, and self-worth. Descriptive statistics, correlations, and mediation analyses were performed using SPSS. The study included 100 adolescent girls aged 18-25 from a university college. Participants were selected through convenience sampling, and informed consent was obtained from both participants.

### Tools

The **McCroskey Shyness Scale (SS)**, developed by James C. McCroskey and Virginia P. Richmond, measures self-reported shy behaviors distinct from communication apprehension. It consists of 14 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The scoring involves calculating the difference between positive and negative item responses using the formula: **Shyness Score = 42 + (Sum of positive items) - (Sum of negative items)**. Scores above 52 indicate

high shyness, 32–52 reflect moderate shyness, and below 32 signify low shyness. The scale has strong reliability ( $\alpha > .90$ ) and effectively assesses behavioral tendencies linked to reduced verbal communication, making it a robust tool for shyness research.

**The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by Gregory D. Zimet & associates**, scale measures perceived social support across three sources: family, friends, and significant others. It consists of 12 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "Very Strongly Disagree" to "Very Strongly Agree." Scores can be calculated for each subscale or as a total average, with higher scores indicating greater perceived social support.

**The Contingencies of Self-Worth Scale was developed by Jennifer Crocker & associates.** The scale identifies the sources of self-worth, including family support, competition, appearance, God's love, academic competence, virtue, and approval from others. It includes 35 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale, with several reverse-scored items. Subscale scores are derived by averaging the relevant items, offering insight into the specific contingencies most important to an individual's self-esteem

### Procedure

Data were collected through self-report questionnaires. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to assess the data's normality. Pearson's correlation analysis examined the relationships among variables, and mediation analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro in SPSS.

### Result

The descriptive statistics for each variable are displayed in Table 1, along with their correlations. Using Pearson's correlation analysis, a weak positive and non-significant correlation between shyness and social support ( $r = .048$ ,  $p > 0.01$ ) and between shyness and self-worth ( $r=.143$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) was found. However, between social support and self-worth ( $r =.272$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) there is a positive and significant correlation at a moderate level.

**Table 1**  
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Study Variables

		n	M	SD	1	2	3
1.	Shyness	100	41.72	6.70	—	—	—
2.	Social-support	100	34.94	6.53	.048	—	—
3.	Self-worth	100	162.81	18.76	.143	.272**	—

Note. \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Using SPSS, Hayes 'macro-PROCESS v4.2, Model 4, the mediation model of social support in the relationship between shyness and self-worth is presented in Table 2. Using 5000 bootstrap samples

with a 95% confidence interval, the indirect effect was assessed. shyness and social support (path a) were found to be statistically non-significant ( $Beta = 0.0466$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Path b demonstrated a statistically positive significant connection between social support and self-worth ( $B = 0.7621$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Path c indicated that shyness does not significantly predict self-worth ( $Beta = 0.3640$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The mediating role of social support between shyness and self-worth is not significant. Figure 1 ( $B = 0.0355$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 2**

*Mediation Analysis of Social support in the Relationship between shyness and Self- worth.*

Model		R	R <sup>2</sup>	B	$\beta$	SE	F	t	P	95% CI
1	Shy →Social Support	0.048	0.002				0.224			[-0.149, 0.242]
				0.047	0.048	0.098		0.474	.637	
2	Social Support→ Self Worth	0.301	0.091				4.839	2.739	.007	[0.210, 1.314]
				0.762	0.266	0.278				
	The total effect of shyness on self-worth									[-0.156, 0.955]
				0.399		.279		1.427	0.156	
	The direct effect of Shyness → Self Worth									[-.174, .902]
				0.364		0.271		1.342	.183	
	Indirect effect of Shyness → Social Support → Self Worth									
				.035		.088				[-0.126, 0.234]

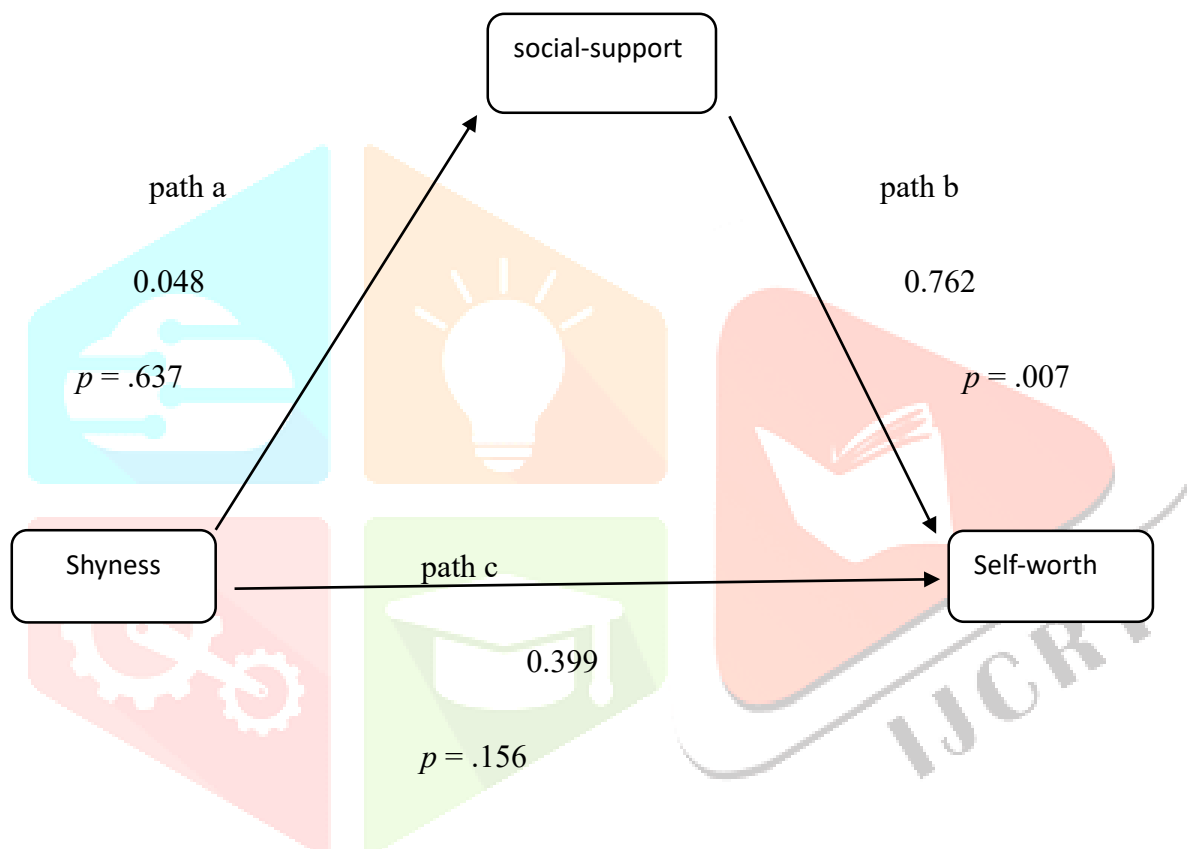
*Note.* CI = confidence interval; Shy→ SS = the effect of shyness on social support; SS → SW = the effect of social support on self-worth; Shy→ SW = direct effect of shyness on self-worth; Shy→ SS→ SW = Indirect effect of shyness on self-worth via social support.

The mediation model showed that social support significantly predicts self-worth. The mediation analysis revealed that the indirect effect of shyness on self-worth via social support was not significant ( $\beta=0.035$ , Boot LLCI = 0.128, Boot ULCI = 0.236). The direct effect of shyness on self-worth is not

significant. The mediation pathway ( $X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$ ) is also not significant, suggesting that social support does not mediate the relationship between shyness and self-worth ( $R^2 = 0.002$ ). However, social support's positive and significant effect on self-worth highlights its importance in enhancing self-worth, independent of shyness.

**Figure 1**

*Path diagram of the mediation analysis model in which Social Support (mediator) mediates the effect of Shyness (predictor variable) on Self-worth (outcome variable).*



## Discussion

The findings of the study reveal that social support significantly predicts self-worth, underscoring its importance as a protective factor for adolescent girls. However, shyness did not directly impact self-worth, highlighting the mediating role of social support. These results align with previous studies, such as those by Zhang et al. (2022) and Sabik et al. (2020), which emphasize the buffering effects of social support on psychological well-being. Future research should explore additional mediators and consider cultural factors that influence these relationships.

The table 1 presents descriptive statistics and correlations for Shyness, Social Support, and Self-Worth in a sample of 100 participants. The mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) values indicate the central tendency and variability for each variable: Shyness (M = 41.72, SD = 6.70), Social Support (M =

34.94, SD = 6.53), and Self-Worth (M = 162.81, SD = 18.76). The correlation between Shyness and Social Support is weak and not statistically significant ( $r = 0.048$ ), while the correlations between Shyness and Self-Worth ( $r = 0.143$ ) and Social Support and Self-Worth ( $r = 0.272$ ) are positive, with the latter being statistically significant ( $**p < 0.01$ ).

In the regression analysis presented in table 2, the relationship between Shyness, Social Support, and Self-Worth was examined. For the first path, Shyness  $\rightarrow$  Social Support, the results indicate a very weak relationship, with an  $R^2$  value of 0.002. The Beta value of 0.047 suggests a very slight positive relationship, but the p-value of .6368 indicates that this relationship is not statistically significant. The 95% Confidence Interval (CI) [-0.148, 0.241] includes zero, further confirming the lack of significance in this relationship.

In the second path, Social Support  $\rightarrow$  Self-Worth, Social Support explains 9.07% of the variance in Self-Worth, with an  $R^2$  of 0.090. The Beta value of 0.762 indicates a strong positive relationship, and the p-value of .0073 shows that this relationship is statistically significant. The 95% CI [0.2100, 1.3142] does not include zero, confirming the statistical significance of the effect. Research supports the positive role of social support in self-worth enhancement. For instance, studies show that adolescents with high social support report better self-esteem and self-worth (Lee & Lee, 2023). Similarly, Sabik et al. (2020) demonstrated that social networks buffer the effects of negative self-perceptions.

Contrastingly, cultural differences may influence the outcomes. For example, Mousavi and Dehshiri (2021) found that shy adolescents in collectivist societies may experience different dynamics due to stronger family ties. Additionally, the role of self-presentation strategies, as explored by other researchers, suggests that shy individuals who actively engage in positive self-presentation may mitigate adverse effects (Zhang et al., 2022).

For the direct effect of Shyness  $\rightarrow$  Self-Worth, the Beta value is .130, indicating a positive relationship. However, the p-value of .183 suggests that this direct effect is not statistically significant. The CI [-0.174, .902] includes zero, indicating no significant direct effect.

Lastly, the indirect effect of Shyness  $\rightarrow$  Social Support  $\rightarrow$  Self-Worth also shows no significant effect, as the 95% CI [-0.128, 0.236] includes zero. This indicates that the mediation through Social Support does not significantly influence the relationship between Shyness and Self-Worth. To summarize, while Social Support has a significant positive effect on Self-Worth, neither Shyness directly influences Self-Worth nor does it have a significant indirect effect through Social Support.

## Conclusion

The aim of the study was to explore the relationships between shyness, social support, and self-worth, with social support as a potential mediator. The findings revealed that shyness had no significant direct, indirect, or total effect on self-worth, indicating a weak and nonsignificant relationship overall. Additionally, social support did not mediate the relationship between shyness and self-worth in any

meaningful way. However, social support emerged as a significant positive predictor of self-worth, suggesting that individuals with higher perceived social support tend to have greater self-worth. These results highlight the importance of social support in enhancing self-esteem, while shyness appears to have minimal impact in this context.

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### **Limitations and Future suggestions**

This study has several limitations that should be considered. The sample size of 100 participants was small and consisted only of female students, which limits the generalizability of the findings to broader populations, including males or individuals outside academic settings. The use of a cross-sectional design restricts the ability to infer causality between shyness, social support, and self-worth. Additionally, reliance on self-reported measures may have introduced bias due to social desirability or inaccurate self-perceptions. The study also did not account for other potential factors, such as personality traits or cultural influences, which could affect social support and self-worth. Furthermore, the weak and nonsignificant effects of shyness suggest the need for a more comprehensive model, possibly including other mediators or moderators. These limitations highlight the need for future research with larger, more diverse samples, longitudinal designs, and additional variables to better understand these relationships.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors have no conflict of interest associated with this research paper.