

## Navigating Loneliness: Exploring the Impact of Self-Esteem, Social Support, and Personality Traits on Transient University Students

### Pengaruh *Self-Esteem*, Dukungan Sosial, dan Kepribadian terhadap Kesenian pada Mahasiswa yang Merantau

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**Abstract:** Transient university students who experience loneliness might be exposed to decreased mental well-being threats, such as decreased happiness, depression symptoms, stress, and anxiety. Therefore, this study aims to examine whether there is an effect of self-esteem, social support, personality, and demographic factors on the loneliness of students who study outside their hometown city. This study was conducted cross-sectionally with multiple linear regression analysis and the sample was selected using snowball sampling technique. The sample of this study amounted to 225 transient university students in Jabodetabek. The instruments used are The Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale, The State Self-Esteem Scale, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, and the Extrovert and Introvert Personality Inventory. The results showed that self-esteem had the largest significant effect ( $\beta = -0.583, p < 0.000$ ). Among the types of social support, friends' support made a significant contribution ( $\beta = -0.250, p < .000$ ), while family support and significant other support did not have a significant effect. In addition, introversion personality also does not have a significant effect on loneliness. Based on the results of this study, transient students are expected to maintain the attachment of supportive friendships, and keep a journal of notes related to their achievements and shortcomings considering the importance of increasing self-esteem as an effort to prevent loneliness.

**Keywords:** loneliness, transient university students, self-esteem, social support, personality

**Abstrak:** Mahasiswa rantau yang mengalami kesepian dapat mengalami dampak negatif, seperti penurunan kesejahteraan mental yang berkaitan dengan penurunan tingkat kebahagiaan, gejala depresi, stres, dan kecemasan. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji apakah ada pengaruh self-esteem, dukungan sosial, kepribadian, dan faktor demografi terhadap kesepian mahasiswa yang merantau. Penelitian ini dilakukan secara crossectional dengan metode regresi linier berganda dan

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nonprobability sampling. Sampel penelitian ini berjumlah sebanyak 225 mahasiswa rantau di Jabodetabek. Instrumen yang digunakan yaitu The Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale, The State Self-Esteem Scale, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, dan Extrovert and Introvert Personality Inventory. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan self-esteem memberikan pengaruh signifikan ( $\beta = -0.583, p < 0.000$ ). Di antara jenis dukungan sosial, dukungan teman memberikan kontribusi signifikan ( $\beta = -0.250, p < .000$ ), sedangkan dukungan keluarga dan dukungan significant other tidak memberikan pengaruh yang signifikan. Selain itu, kepribadian introvert juga tidak memberikan pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap kesepian. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian ini mahasiswa rantau diharapkan dapat menjaga keterikatan hubungan pertemanan yang suportif, dan membuat jurnal catatan terkait pencapaian dan kekurangan diri mengingat pentingnya meningkatkan self-esteem sebagai upaya untuk mencegah kesepian.

**Kata Kunci:** kesepian, mahasiswa rantau, self-esteem, dukungan sosial, kepribadian.



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## Introduction

The uneven distribution and quality of higher education in Indonesia have led to many students migrating to other regions in search of better quality education. This migration is undertaken to access higher quality education. Consequently, transient university students experience numerous changes in various aspects of their lives, including the absence of parental guidance, limited social networks, different norms in the local environment, heightened academic expectations, and dissatisfaction with their current social life, potentially resulting in feelings of loneliness.

A study by Mental Health Foundation in 2010 found that people aged 18 to 34 feel lonely more often than those over 55 (Gil, 2014). Then, in 2023, a survey conducted by Meta-Gallup found that the highest levels of loneliness were experienced by young adults in the 19-29 age range (Nicioli, 2023). Therefore, it can be said that university students are a group that is vulnerable to loneliness. Furthermore, in Oxford English Dictionary It is explained that loneliness is related to two phenomena, namely the physical absence of friends, and feelings of sadness for being alone or emptiness due to lack of friends. In this case, transient university students often feel that the social relationships they are currently living are not in accordance with expectations (Marisa & Afriyeni, 2019).

Research related to loneliness in transient university students conducted by Gondokusumo and Soetjiningsih (2023) with 109 respondents from Satya Wacana Christian University who came from outside Java showed that transient university students who experienced high levels of loneliness reached a percentage of 20.18% or 22 people. A similar study was also conducted by Repi (2023) to 161 transient university students from outside Java who are spread across Surabaya. From this study, 30 respondents experienced high levels of loneliness with a percentage of 18.6%.

When loneliness experienced by transient university students is protracted and not immediately overcome, it can even have a negative impact. Cosan (2014) explains the negative impacts of loneliness,

including a decrease in mental well-being related to decreased levels of happiness, symptoms of depression, stress, and anxiety. In addition, loneliness can also interfere with motivation, concentration and focus on learning, leading to reduced academic performance (Bagaskara & Nisa, 2023), may even affect physical health (Maese, 2023). Therefore, loneliness can indirectly reduce a person's quality of life periodically if not resolved immediately. Furthermore, unhappiness and dissatisfaction due to loneliness can trigger the worst impact, namely suicide. Reported from Tribun Kaltim.co, a student of STIE YKPN was found dead hanging himself in his boarding room and was strongly suspected of being lonely because his mother left him. In line with this, Izzi Seccombe, from the Local Government Association's committee on well-being, said that the impact of loneliness is as dangerous as smoking 15 cigarettes a day (Coughlan, 2018).

There are several factors that can influence loneliness: (1) *self-esteem* (Vanhalst et al., 2013; Ishaq et al., 2017; Usenmez et al., 2023) (2) *shyness* (Hidayati, 2016; Sun et al., 2021) , (3) social skills (Moeller & Seehuus, 2019), (4) displacement (Perlman & Peplau, 1984), (5) social support (Marini & Hayati, 2012; Nurdiani & Mulyono, 2014; Chen et al., 2019; Meianisa & Rositawati, 2023), (6) personality (Levin & Stokes, 1986; Hawkins-Elder et al., 2017; Buecker et al., 2020), (7) socioeconomics (Gul & Bano, 2017; Samuels, 2019; Wu et al., 2022).

One of the factors that influence loneliness is self-esteem. Someone who has a high level of self-esteem will have a more positive self-image, such as being more confident and having self-esteem so that they will be more flexible or easy to carry themselves in social relationships. Conversely, individuals with low self-esteem tend to be insecure and insecure, so they will often avoid social interactions. As research conducted by Vanhalst et al., (2013); Ishaq et al., (2017); Usenmez et al., (2023) which shows that self-esteem affects loneliness.

The next factor that significantly influenced loneliness was social support. According to Zimet et al., (1988). Social support is all forms of support that individuals get from the three main sources, namely family, friends, and significant others. Referring to Meianisa & Rositawati (2023) with the majority of respondents from transient university students from outside Java who live in Bandung, totaling 88 people with a percentage of 56.1% experiencing loneliness at a low level with the percentage of social support at a high level reaching 45.2%. This shows that the acquisition of high social support will make a significant contribution in reducing the risk of loneliness.

Personality also has an effect on loneliness. Hawkins-Elder et al. (2017) in their research revealed that people with high loneliness are introverts. This can occur because in social interactions introverted people tend to be more aloof and have a more limited scope of friendship (Masitoh et al., 2023). In contrast, according to Card & Skakoon-Sparling (2023) extroverted people have more friends. Therefore, introverted personalities can be an obstacle in building social relationships that result in loneliness.

Furthermore, research by Prezza et al. (2004) and Victor & Yang (2012) indicate that women are more lonely than men. Women are seen as more expressive than men who tend to be reluctant to admit their feelings of loneliness. In addition, differences in social expectations also cause differences in loneliness levels in men and women.

Then, monthly allowance as a socio-economic factor will also be seen to have an effect on loneliness, because for transient university students limited monthly allowance can hinder social activities in the overseas environment, which can make them marginalized from social life. As research by Gul and Bano (2017); Samuels (2019); Wu et al. (2022) that people with low socioeconomic status will experience higher loneliness. In this study, monthly allowance refers to rent, food, transportation, and other daily needs.

The novelty of this research from previous studies is that it uses research subjects of transient university students in Jabodetabek and uses extrovert-introvert personality variables that have not been widely reviewed for their influence on loneliness. In addition, this study also uses demographic variables of gender and monthly allowance. This research is important to enrich new findings related to loneliness in transient university students.

## Method

This study uses a quantitative method that aims to determine whether there is an effect of self-esteem, social support, and personality on loneliness in transient university students. In this study, loneliness is the dependent variable (Y), while the independent variables (X) include: self-esteem (X1), family support (X2), friend support (X3), significant other support (X4), introverted personality (X5), gender (X6), monthly allowance (X7).

The sample used in this study were transient university students from outside Jabodetabek who were studying in Jabodetabek and lived in rental house/dormitory. The sampling used snowball sampling, where the initial respondent who was selected intentionally recommended or referred other individuals who had matching characteristics with the criteria of the research subject. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires containing loneliness, self-esteem, social support, and personality measurement tools online through social media. 225 respondents of transient university students in Jabodetabek were obtained.

**Loneliness measuring instrument.** In this study, the measuring instrument used was The Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale developed by (Russell et al., 1980). This measure consists of 20 items which were modified to 14 items by reducing similar items. The instrument was tested for construct validity using Confirmatory Factor Analysis with Lisrel 8.80 software and the results showed model fit with p-value = 0.059 and RMSEA = 0.039, 13 items were found to be valid and 1 item was dropped as invalid. The factor scores were then extracted for each respondent. A common step taken in psychological research is to convert factor scores to T-scores to eliminate negative values. In this study, the factor scores were converted to T-score with mean 50 and standard deviation 10 using the formula of  $T - score = 50 + (10 \times factorscores)$ . This step was done for all variables used in this study.

**Self-esteem measuring instrument.** The measuring instrument used is The State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES) developed by (Heatherthon & Polivy, 1991) which consists of 20 items. This measure was modified by the researcher to 16 items by reducing similar items. The results of the construct validity test with

Confirmatory Factor Analysis using Lisrel 8.80 software showed a model fit with  $p$ -value=0.077 and RMSEA=0.036 with all 16 items valid.

**Social support measuring instrument.** The measuring instrument used is the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) by (Zimet et al., 1988) which consists of three dimensions with 12 items. The researcher made modifications by adding items so that there were 5 items for each dimension on the grounds that it could be tested for construct validity using Confirmatory Factor Analysis. The results of the construct validity test using Confirmatory Factor Analysis using Lisrel 8.80 software show a fit model with  $p$ -value=0.388; 0.722; 0.322 and RMSEA=0.000; 0.000; 0.027 for each dimension. All items in each dimension are valid so that there are 5 items for the dimensions used for further analysis.

**Personality measuring instruments.** The measuring instrument used is the Extrovert and Introvert Personality Inventory (IPEI) developed by (Arip et al., 2017) which consists of 30 items. This scale was modified by the researcher to 20 items by reducing similar items. The results of the construct validity test with Confirmatory Factor Analysis using Lisrel 8.80 software showed a model fit with  $p$ -value=0.099 and RMSEA=0.029. All items are valid and can be used in further analysis.

## Result

Table 1 presents information about 225 respondents based on gender, regional origin, residence, college location, semester, and monthly allowance.

**Table 1**  
*Demographic Data of the Research Subjects*

Demographic Data of Respondents	N	(%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	101	45%
Female	124	55%
<b>Regional Origin</b>		
Sumatera Utara	10	4.5%
Sumatera Barat	9	4%
Sumatera Selatan	17	7.6%
Bengkulu	4	1.7%
Riau	7	3.2%
Lampung	13	5.8%
Banten	5	2%
Jawa Barat	53	23.6%
Jawa Tengah	41	18.3%
Jawa Timur	35	15.6%
D.I Yogyakarta	18	8%
Bali	9	4%
Nusa Tenggara	4	1.7%
<b>Place of Residence</b>		
Rental house	202	90%
Dormitory	23	10%

<b>Demographic Data of Respondents</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>(%)</b>
<b>Location of College</b>		
Jakarta	116	52%
Bogor	20	9%
Depok	46	20%
Tangerang	39	17%
Bekasi	4	2%
<b>Semester</b>		
1	15	7%
3	19	8%
5	34	15%
7	122	54%
9	31	14%
11	4	2%
<b>Monthly allowance</b>		
<Rp 1.600.000	65	29%
Rp 1.600.000 s/d Rp 2.000.000	83	37%
>Rp 2.000.000	77	34%

The majority of respondents are female as much as 55% (124 people), while men are 45% (101 people). Then, related to regional origin, most respondents came from Java island as much as 67.5% (152 people), while the middle proportion of respondents came from Sumatra island as much as 26.8% (60 people), and the least respondents came from Bali island 4% (9 people) and Nusa Tenggara island 1.7% (4 people).

As for the place of residence, most respondents live in rental house 90% (202 people), and the other 10% live in dormitories (23 people). Then, the majority of respondents are studying in Jakarta 52% (116 people), followed by Depok 20% (46 people), Tangerang 17% (39 people), Bogor 9% (20 people) and the least Bekasi 2% (4 people). Based on semester, the most respondents in semester 7 were 54% (122 people), semester 5 15% (34 people), semester 9 14% (31 people), semester 3 8% (19 people), semester 1 7% (15 people), and the least semester 11 2% (4 people).

Based on the nominal amount of monthly allowance, the majority of respondents 37% (83 people) have a monthly allowance in the range of Rp. 1,600,000 to Rp. 2,000,000, the middle proportion 34% (77 people) have a monthly allowance > Rp. 2,000,000, and the remaining 29% (65 people) have a monthly allowance <Rp. 1,600,000.

The results of hypothesis testing using multiple regression analysis obtained an R-Square value of 0.478 or 47.8% of the proportion of loneliness that can be explained by self-esteem, family support, friend support, significant other support, introvert, gender and monthly pocket money, while the other 52.2% is influenced by other variables outside this study.

**Table 2***F Test of the Effect of All Independent Variables on the Dependent Variable*

	<b>Model</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
1	Regression	9676.532	7	1382.362	28.412	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	10558.082	217	48.655		
	Total	20234.613	224			

The results of the F test based on Table 2 show an F value of 28,412 with a p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicating that the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant effect of self-esteem, family support, friend support, significant other support, introvert personality, gender and monthly allowance on loneliness.

**Tabel 3***Regression Coefficients*

<b>Model</b>		<b>Unstandardized Coefficients</b>		<b>Standardized Coefficients</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
		<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>		
1	(Constant)	92.269	5.722		16.126	0.000
	Self-esteem	-0.583	0.056	-0.582	-10.485	0.000*
	Family support	-0.015	0.059	-0.015	-0.257	0.797
	Friend support	-0.250	0.064	-0.250	-3.909	0.000*
	Significant other support	0.047	0.061	0.048	0.771	0.441
	Introvert personality	-0.037	0.055	-0.337	-0.667	0.505
	Gender	0.774	0.951	0.041	0.814	0.416
	Monthly Allowance	-0.334	0.596	-0.028	-0.559	0.576

Based on the regression coefficient of each independent variable, it can be seen that of the seven independent variables, only two variables have a significant influence on the dependent variable. The four independent variables are self-esteem, and friend support. The coefficient of the self-esteem variable, and friend support is negative, which affects loneliness negatively, where the higher the value of the independent variable, the lower the value of loneliness.

## Discussion

Based on hypothesis testing and the significance of each variable, it shows that of the eight independent variables in this study, only two variables have significant regression coefficients on loneliness, namely self-esteem and friend support. Self-esteem affects loneliness in a negative direction. These results are in line with the research of Vanhalst et al. (2013); Ishaq et al. (2017); Usenmez et al. (2023) that self-esteem affects loneliness in a negative direction, namely the higher the self-esteem, the lower the loneliness. It starts with individual dissatisfaction with themselves triggering broader dissatisfaction with their social life which results in feelings of loneliness.

People who have a high level of self-esteem will assess themselves more positively, be more confident, and have self-esteem so that they will be more flexible or easy to carry themselves in social relationships, and avoid feelings of loneliness. Peplau dan Perlman (1982) argues that in individuals with low self-esteem there are certain cognitive and behavioral processes that hinder satisfaction in social relationships. For example, they tend to perceive other people's reactions as rejection of themselves. Low

self-esteem forms individual perceptions that others do not like, do not consider, or do not expect them, even though there is actually no rejection. Therefore, someone with low self-esteem is more likely to feel lonely.

In the social support variable, only the dimension of friend support has a significant effect on loneliness. The dimension of friend support has a negative influence, namely the higher the support of friends obtained, the lower the loneliness in students who migrate. Therefore, these results are in line with previous research conducted by Lee and Goldstein (2016); Šolak and Dragičević (2021); Zhang and Dong (2022) which states that support from friends affects loneliness. As Pierce et al. (1991) state that in student groups support from friends is more effective in preventing loneliness when compared to support from family or special people.

The dimensions of family support and significant other do not have a significant influence on loneliness. This may occur because overseas students invest more time in developing quality friendships in the hope that vulnerability to feelings of loneliness will be reduced. In addition, friendship relationships tend to be more flexible and easy to obtain in the campus social environment, so they can provide more consistent support. As research by Zhang and Dong (2022) that the intensity of friends' support for loneliness is higher than family support and significant other support. Based on the respondent data that has been obtained, the participants of this study are in the age range of 18-24 years, in connection with this, it is mentioned in the results of Šolak dan Dragičević (2021) that significant other support has a significant influence on loneliness only for respondents aged 46-55 years. In the researcher's view, significant other support does not have an influence on loneliness because significant other support is more effective in individuals over 45 years of age, at which age individuals have entered the middle adult phase which focuses on romantic relationships with partners and building a home life.

The variable of introverted personality does not have a significant influence on loneliness. People with introverted personalities often feel more comfortable in limited social interactions, are not flexible in social situations, tend to be closed and socially passive. Individuals with introverted personalities have smaller but more intimate social networks, consisting of those closest to the individual with deep and meaningful relationship qualities. Therefore, despite not always interacting with many people, the strong and meaningful relationships that those with introverted personalities have can prevent the risk of loneliness. Therefore, introverted personalities do not inhibit individuals from building social relationships with others.

However, the demographic variables of gender and monthly allowance did not have a significant influence on loneliness. This study shows that there is no significant difference between loneliness in men and women. In other words, the results of this study contradict previous research which says that there are differences in the level of loneliness between men and women. For example, that men feel more lonely than women (Barreto et al., 2021; Le Roux, 2009), or that women are more lonely (Prezza et al., 2004; Victor & Yang, 2012).

Women are perceived to be less lonely than men because women generally put more time and energy into developing friendships and are more expressive in valuing friendships than men. Meanwhile,



men are perceived to be less lonely than women because men tend to follow social expectations that men are not lonely (Septiningsih & Na'imah, 2012). Therefore, men are often less likely than women to acknowledge their feelings of loneliness. Also, compared to women, men spend less time with their friends. According to Mahon et al. (2006) The diversity of research on gender and loneliness shows that there are inconsistent differences in loneliness between men and women. Therefore, the results of this study are in accordance with Lasgaard et al. (2011); Ilhan (2012); Lee and Goldstein (2016) that most studies report no significant gender differences in loneliness. This could be because previously very rigid gender roles are starting to become more flexible. For example, social expectations that men should not be lonely are becoming less strict than before. Along with changes in perceptions and expectations of gender, expectations of men and women are becoming more uniform. The experience of loneliness between men and women becomes more similar and balanced, so there is no significant difference in male and female loneliness.

Furthermore, the monthly allowance factor in this study shows no significant effect on the loneliness of students who migrate. Therefore, the results of this study are in contrast with Samuels (2019; Wu et al. (2022) which states that there is a socioeconomic influence on loneliness. This may occur because overseas students develop different coping mechanisms to overcome loneliness, such as feeling that social connections are not entirely dependent on the amount of money they have. For example, someone who is experiencing financial difficulties still has a strong social network. So the monthly allowance does not directly contribute to loneliness. In relation to that, The results of this study are in line with Maes et al. (2019) which concluded that monthly allowance as a socio-economic factor has no significant effect on loneliness.

## Conclusions

Based on the results of hypothesis testing using multiple linear regression analysis method, it can be concluded that there is a significant influence of self-esteem, social support (family support, friend support, significant other support), introverted personality gender and monthly allowance on loneliness in overseas students in Jabodetabek. Furthermore, based on the regression coefficient obtained from the results of hypothesis testing, it is concluded that the independent variables that have a statistically significant effect on loneliness are self-esteem and friend support, while other independent variables are not significant. The limitation of this study is that the significant other measurement items in this study are translated as the support of a meaningful person, which in this case does not clearly refer to who, whether it is a spouse, lecturer or dormitory caretaker and so on. Therefore, it is recommended to translate the significant other support measuring instrument more specifically in future studies. To future researchers, it is recommended to use research subjects with more varied regional boundaries of overseas students, because each region has different characteristics, and review whether there are moderators or mediators between variables.

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