The Power of Belonging: How Social Identity Influences Well-being through Self-Esteem and Prejudice

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Abstract

This empirical study investigates the intricate relationship between social identity and individual well-being, emphasizing the mediating roles of self-esteem and social prejudice, and the moderating role of social support. Utilizing a sample of 300 respondents, the study examined how the affective, cognitive, and evaluative dimensions of social identity influence well-being. The findings confirm that social identity positively impacts well-being, with self-esteem and social prejudice serving as significant mediators. Contrary to initial hypotheses, social support did not moderate the relationship between self-esteem, social prejudice, and well-being.

Results indicate that higher levels of social identity are associated with increased self-esteem and reduced social prejudice, both of which enhance well-being. This offers a theoretical contribution to the existing literature. The findings underscore the importance of fostering strong, positive social identities to boost self-esteem and reduce prejudice, thereby promoting mental health. The lack of a significant moderating effect from social support suggests that its role in these relationships may be more complex than anticipated, necessitating further investigation into the quality and type of support provided.

This study contributes to the broader understanding of social identity's impact on psychological well-being and offers practical implications for mental health interventions. By highlighting the roles of self-esteem and social prejudice, the study provides a nuanced view of how social identity dimensions can be leveraged to enhance well-being. Future research should delve deeper into the dynamics of social support and explore additional factors that may influence these relationships,

aiming to develop more effective strategies for improving mental health through social identity enhancement.

Keywords: Social Identity, Well-being, Self-Esteem, Prejudice

1. Introduction and Background

In contemporary society, individuals' sense of identity is deeply intertwined with their social affiliations, beliefs, and perceptions. Individuals like to identify themselves with a specific social identity. Studies show that social identity theory posits that individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups, which influences their attitudes, behaviors, and interactions with others (Larson & Shevchenko, 2019). This contributes to their personal accomplishments and might contribute towards their emotional well-being (Lewis, Hood & Gabrys, 2024). Furthermore, research suggests that social identity plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' psychological well-being, as it provides a sense of belonging, meaning, and purpose in life. Understanding this complex rather interesting interplay between social identity and well-being is essential for addressing mental health challenges and fostering positive social relationships in today's interconnected world.

Research shows that social identity encompasses various dimensions, including affective, cognitive, and evaluative components, each contributing uniquely to individuals' perceptions of themselves and their social groups (Tuncer & Kartal, 2024).This shows a growing stream of literature within the field of social identity and also leads towards the significance of social identity in understanding human behavior. Tuncer and Kartal (2024) stated that the affective dimension reflects individuals' emotional attachment to their group memberships, while the cognitive dimension points towards their beliefs, perceptions, and stereotypes about these groups. Furthermore, the evaluative dimension involves individuals' overall assessment of their social groups, including feelings of pride, respect, or stigma. These dimensions collectively influence individuals' self-esteem, which serves as a key determinant of their psychological well-being.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the significant impact of social identity on psychological well-being across different contexts and populations. For instance, research has shown that individuals who identify strongly with their social groups report higher levels of life satisfaction, happiness, and positive affect (Camus, Rajendran & Stewart, 2024). This indicates the significance of society and the environment which shapes the life direction of an individual. Conversely, experiences of social segregation and marginalization on the basis of social identity can detrimentally affect individuals' mental health and well-being (Matschke, 2022). Moreover, social identity can also serve as a protective factor against psychological distress, providing social support and a sense of resilience in the face of adversity. Social support is required by individuals if they are looking for approval of any

kind of the behavior from the society. If society is supporting a specific social behavior which could be related to self esteem or on the basis of social prejudice, individuals' well being could be at stake.

1.1 Research Gap

While existing literature has shed light on the relationship between social identity and well-being (Tuncer & Kartal, 2024; Camus, Rajendran & Stewart, 2024), there remains a need for further exploration of the underlying mechanisms and moderators that shape this relationship. Previous studies have taken social identity as a whole concept which this study has segregated social identity on the basis of affective, cognitive and evaluative dimensions and their effects which help in understand the social identity phenomenon in a better way. More specifically, understanding the roles of self-esteem and social prejudice, as well as the influence of social support, can provide valuable insights into how social identity impacts individuals' psychological well-being since previous studies were lacking exploring these intricate relationships while there is a need for understanding this phenomenon. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the complex interplay between social identity dimensions, self-esteem, social prejudice, and social support in predicting individuals' well-being, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of the psychological processes underlying social identity and mental health.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background provided, following research questions are identified which are answered as a result of this study:

1. How does individuals' affective, cognitive and evaluative identity of their social groups affect their psychological well-being?

2. How does individuals' self-esteem influence the relationship between their social identity and psychological well-being?

3. How do experiences of social prejudice based on social identity affect individuals' psychological well-being?

4. How does perceived social support from social networks influence the relationship between individuals' social identity and psychological well-being?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Perspective

Social Identity Theory (SIT) provides a framework for understanding how individuals' self-concept and behavior are shaped by their membership in social groups. Social Identity Theory (SIT),

developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, is a social psychological theory that discusses that how individuals identify themselves with regard to their group memberships and how these group identities influence their attitudes, perceptions and behavior (Trepte, 2013). A person's social identity is most of the time dependent on the people around him/her or to he/she wants to be associated with (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019; Kwon, & Ha, 2023). Social Identity Theory states that individuals classify themselves and others into different social groups which could be based on their and others' nationality, gender, ethnicity, profession and/or hobbies and derive their identity and sense of self-esteem from the membership of these groups (Hogg, 2016). While SIT has traditionally been applied in different fields just like psychology and sociology, its relevance goes beyond the territory of consumer behavior, predominantly in understanding how group affiliations of individuals influence their brand perceptions, purchasing decisions, and consumption patterns (Wang, 2024).

Social Identity theory is composed of various components. Below are discussed various components of social identity theory:

2.1.1 Social Categorization

Being a component of Social Identity Theory, social categorization refers to the cognitive process by which individuals categorize themselves and others into different social groups on the basis of attributes, shared characteristics or memberships (Hornsey, 2008). In other words, it includes mentally categorization oneself and others into distinctive groups or social categories where he/she feels himself/herself comfortable.

This process is elementary to how one perceives himself and his social world around (Edwards, 2022). It permits individuals to organize and simplify multifaceted social information by grouping people into significant categories on the basis of differences and similarities. As mentioned above, these categories may include but not limited to the important human characteristics just like gender, nationality, age, occupation, ethnicity or group memberships similar to the sports teams, political affiliations and religious affiliations (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019). Furthermore social categorization serves numerous functions within the Social Identity Theory including group formation, in-group favoritism and social comparison.

2.1.2 Social Identification

Psychological process by which individuals align themselves with, adopt the norms and values of and perceive themselves as members of specific social groups is referred as social identification (Albarello, Crocetti & Rubini, 2021). It involves the emotional and cognitive attachment with a group as well as the internalization of its identity as part of one's self-concept. Key aspects of social identification within Social Identity Theory include group membership, cognitive dimension, emotional dimension, self-enhancement and social comparison. Social identification also relates to the choices of a consumer to buy or not to buy something which may identify his/her personality in the society.

With regard to group membership, social identification involves individuals recognizing themselves as members of a specific social group (Prati, Crisp & Rubini, 2021). Being part of a social group conforms to their group identity. This acknowledgment is on the basis of apparent resemblances between oneself and members of other group, as well as the recognition of shared group goals, characteristics, or interests (Derks, Stedehouder, & Ito, 2015). When the interests are shared an individual feels more comfortable with the other members of the group. In addition, social identification also includes a cognitive dimension, where individuals classify themselves as a part of a particular social group and mentally correspond to the norms, values and goals of the group (Hornsey, 2008). This cognitive facet includes the configuration of a shared social identity that describes the boundaries of the group and differentiates it from the other groups.

2.1.3 Social Comparison

Social comparison, being a component of social identity theory, points out to the process by which individuals compare themselves, their group, and others in relation to the social groups or categories (Larson & Shevchenko, 2019). Individuals think that either the group members have similar traits or at least there exist any comparison. It entails comparison of one's own traits, attitudes, beliefs and/or behaviors with those of others to evaluate one's status and social identity within a specific social context. Research studies have identified key elements of social comparison within the social identity theory including in-group favoritism, social enhancement, social identity threat, comparative optimism and inter-group conflict and co-operation.

Studies show that social comparison most of the times also involves comparing one's own group (the in-group) with other groups (out-groups) to evaluate their relative class, reputation, or superiority (Gyberg & Frisén, 2017). Individuals tend to display in-group favoritism by favoring their own group over out-groups and focusing on the positive characteristics and accomplishments of their group while downplaying those of others. It is also reported that social comparison serves as a mechanism for enhancing social identity and self-esteem of individuals by asserting the dominance or uniqueness of their own group (Dorčić, Smojver-Ažić & Malkoč, 2023). Individuals may tend involve in upward social assessment, comparing their group to higher-status or more thriving groups, to lift up their group's status and augment their own self-esteem and prestige.

2.2 Dimensions of Social Identity

2.2.1 Affective Identity

Rooted in an individual's emotional attachment to his social groups, affective dimension of social identity has garnered considerable attention of researchers in understanding their patterns of social media usage. Research studies have suggested that individuals with a strong affective connection to their social identities are more likely to engage in similar activities (Fujita et al., 2020). Fujita and colleagues further added that for example users who perceive social media as an extension of their

social identity show signs of higher levels of participation, including frequent posting on social media platforms, liking the stuff posted by others, commenting on various posts, and sharing content of their interest.

Furthermore, the emotional investment in one's social identity fosters a sense of belonging and community, driving individuals to actively contribute to and engage with fellow beings in a society (Rodgers & Rousseau, 2022). Furthermore, the affective bond between users and their social identities can motivate them to look for and connect with individuals having similar thoughts, hobbies and interests and groups on social media platforms, further reinforcing their engagement and participation on social media platforms.

2.2.2 Cognitive Identity

The basic understanding of cognitive dimension of social identity states that beliefs, perceptions, and stereotypes of individuals about their social groups, plays an important role in shaping one's beliefs (Osborn et al., 2024). Extent research suggests that individuals' cognitive associations with their social identities influence their social behaviors and interactions on different platforms (Lau et al., 2023). Scholars like Lau and colleagues further exemplified individuals may actively seek out social communities and groups that align with their cognitive perceptions of their social identity, just like their personal interests, social values and system of beliefs.

In addition, the cognitive dimension of social identity can also influence individuals' preferences and engagements. Preference refers to what they intent to look into and what they are willing to ignore on different platforms (Kaur et al., 2020) i.e. social media. Individual preference is based on personal liking as they are more likely to interact with content that resonates with their cognitive perceptions of their social groups. This cognitive alignment brings in a sense of connection and relevance among the social members, motivating them to enthusiastically take part in similar activities and contribute to the community development.

2.2.3 Evaluative Identity

Individuals' overall assessment of their social groups is considered as evaluative dimension (Zhang & Li, 2022). Zahang and Li (2022) further suggested that individuals' evaluative judgments of their social identities impact their engagement and interactions on various platforms. Farivar and Wang, (2022) mentioned that individuals who hold positive evaluations of their social groups are more likely to actively participate in similar communities, share content, and engage with peers. This is because when you have capacity to evaluate something in a positive manner; it brings in positive emotions and motivates to be involved in community discussions in online platforms.

This positive evaluation of situation fosters a sense of belongingness and pride among the members of social communities, motivating them to contribute to and enhance their social environments. In addition, evaluative perceptions of individuals of their social identities can further influence their

preferences for certain social platforms or communities over others, as they seek out environments that align with their positive assessments of their social groups.

2.3 Social Identity and Individuals' Well-being

Social identity, encompassing affective, cognitive, and evaluative dimensions, plays a significant role in shaping individuals' well-being. Research indicates that individuals who identify strongly with their social groups experience higher levels of life satisfaction, happiness, and positive affect (Zhang & Li, 2022). This is because a social identity brings in self-confidence and affects an individual psychologically in a positive way. Conversely, negative experiences such as social exclusion or discrimination based on social identity can lead to decreased psychological well-being. Individuals' well-being, in the context of this literature, refers to their overall psychological state characterized by feelings of happiness, life satisfaction, and positive effect, as well as the absence of mental health problems such as depression or anxiety (Matschke, 2022). Well-being encompasses various domains including emotional, social, and psychological aspects of individuals' lives, highlighting the importance of understanding the role of social identity in promoting or hindering their overall well-being.

Research further suggests that individuals who feel attached to their social groups report higher levels of life satisfaction, happiness, and positive affect (Manzi, Paderi & Benet-Martinez, 2024). For instance, studies have shown that individuals who identify strongly with their social groups experience greater psychological well-being, as they derive support, validation, and a sense of belonging from their group memberships. This emotional connection to social identity serves as a protective factor against psychological distress, providing individuals with a source of resilience and coping in the face of adversity. Based on the above, following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: Social identity (including affective, cognitive, and evaluative dimensions) positively influences an individual's well-being.

2.4 Mediating Role of Self-esteem

Research shows that individuals who possess higher levels of self-esteem tend to interpret their social identity more positively, leading to enhanced well-being outcomes (Alparslan & Akdoğan, 2023). Specifically, individuals with higher self-esteem are more likely to perceive their social groups in a favorable light, experiencing greater emotional attachment, positive beliefs, and overall positive evaluations (Anggraini & Marsasi, 2024). This positive interpretation of social identity contributes to increased feelings of self-worth, competence, and belongingness, which in turn bolster individuals' psychological well-being. Conversely, individuals with lower self-esteem may struggle to derive positive meaning from their social identities, leading to diminished well-being outcomes such as decreased life satisfaction, increased negative effect, and higher levels of psychological distress.

Therefore, self-esteem plays a crucial role in mediating the relationship between social identity and individuals' well-being by influencing how individuals perceive, interpret, and internalize their social group memberships. Based on this discussion, following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2: Self-esteem mediates the relationship between the three dimensions of social identity (affective, cognitive, and evaluative) and an individual's well-being. Specifically, higher levels of affective, cognitive, and evaluative social identity will be associated with higher self-esteem, which in turn will lead to greater well-being.

2.5 Mediating Role of Social Prejudice

Individuals who experience social prejudice based on their social identity are more likely to internalize negative stereotypes, perceptions, and discriminatory treatment which may lead to the decreased psychological well-being (Bukowski et al., 2024). Social prejudice can erode individuals' sense of self-worth, belongingness, and overall positive evaluations of their social groups. This negative interpretation of social identity exacerbates feelings of social exclusion, alienation, and psychological distress, contributing to lower levels of life satisfaction, happiness, and positive affect.

Moreover, experiences of social prejudice can undermine individuals' confidence, self-esteem, and coping mechanisms, further compromising their ability to maintain optimal psychological well-being (Wu et al., 2023). Therefore, social prejudice plays a pivotal role in mediating the relationship between social identity and individuals' well-being by shaping how individuals perceive, internalize, and respond to discriminatory treatment and negative social evaluations based on their group memberships. In the light of above, following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 3: Social prejudice mediates the relationship between the three dimensions of social identity (affective, cognitive, and evaluative) and an individual's well-being. It is expected that higher levels of affective, cognitive, and evaluative social identity will be associated with lower levels of social prejudice, which in turn will lead to greater well-being.

2.6 Moderating Role of Social Support

Research suggests that the positive relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being is strengthened when individuals perceive higher levels of support from their social networks (Häusser, Hadi, Reichelt & Mojzisch, 2023). Studies have shown that social support serves as a buffer against the negative effects of low self-esteem on mental health outcomes (Matschke, 2022). Specifically, individuals with higher levels of self-esteem who perceive greater social support tend to experience higher levels of life satisfaction, happiness, and overall well-being. Conversely, the absence of social support may exacerbate the detrimental effects of low self-esteem on mental health, leading to feelings of loneliness, isolation, and psychological distress. This leads to following hypothesized path:

Hypothesis 4a: Social support moderates the relationship between self-esteem and an individual's well-being. Specifically, the positive relationship between self-esteem and well-being will be stronger when individuals perceive higher levels of social support compared to when they perceive lower levels of social support.

It is also expected that the negative relationship between social prejudice and psychological well-being is attenuated when individuals perceive higher levels of social support from their social networks. Research indicates that social support can buffer the detrimental effects of social prejudice on mental health outcomes (Li et al., 2022). Individuals who perceive greater social support are better equipped to cope with experiences of discrimination, stigma, and marginalization, leading to higher levels of resilience and psychological well-being (Carter, Dennis, Williams & Weston, 2023). Conversely, the absence of social support may exacerbate the negative impact of social prejudice on mental health, contributing to feelings of vulnerability, distress, and diminished well-being and leads to following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4b: Social support also moderates the relationship between social prejudice and an individual's well-being. It is expected that the negative relationship between social prejudice and well-being will be weaker when individuals perceive higher levels of social support compared to when they perceive lower levels of social support.

2.7 Theoretical Framework
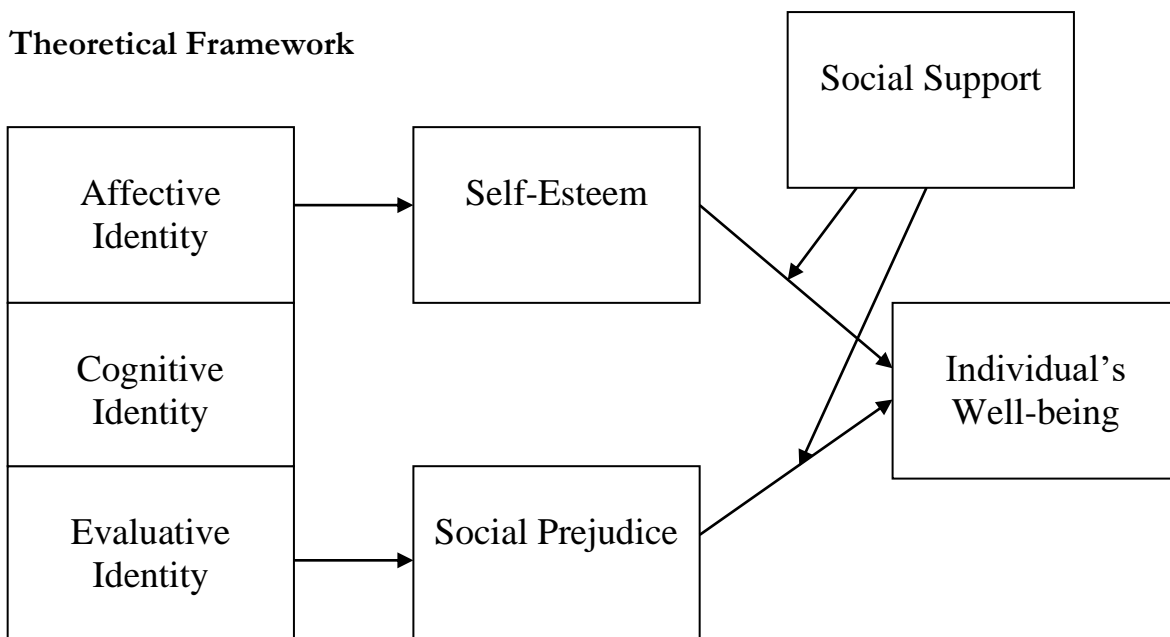
3. Methodology

3.1 Research Approach, Data Collection Tool and Population

To measure the hypothesized paths (4 hypotheses) this study adopted quantitative approach where data is collected through the questionnaires. A questionnaire was developed on Google form for the collection of data. Google forms helps in collecting data by avoiding the missing values, it convenient, economical and user friendly as well as it saves time of manual entry of data into analysis files. Data was collected from those individuals having age 18 years or more, can read and understand English and include individuals from diverse demographic backgrounds who are willing to provide self-report data on their social identities, well-being, self-esteem, social prejudice, and perceived social support. These participants were recruited from various sources, including community organizations, social media platforms, educational institutions, or online panels. A total of 300 responses were collected for the sake of analysis because this much sample size is considered sufficient for quantitative studies involving five variables.

3.2 Measurement Items

This study looks into the effect of affective, cognitive and evaluative dimension of social identity on the individual's well-being. Affective dimension is measured by using a four item scale and is adopted from Ellemers et al. (1999), cognitive dimension is measured by using a three item scale and is adopted from Dholakia et al. (2004) and evaluative dimension is measured with the help of four item scale and is also adopted from Dholakia et al. (2004). Furthermore well-being is measured by using a five item scale and is adopted from Diener et al. (1985) and self-esteem is measured by using a three item scale and is adopted from Rosenberg (1989).Social prejudice is measured using three item scale and was adopted Dholakia et al. (2004). Similarly social support is measured using two item scale and was adopted from Häusser, Hadi, Reichelt and Mojzisch (2023).All items are measured on a 7 point Likert scale. List of questions for measuring each item is provided in Table 1 below:

Affective identity	1.When someone praises social networking sites you use, it feels like a personal compliment.
	2. I would experience an emotional loss if I had to stop using social networking sites I currently use.
	3.How attached are you to social networking sites you currently use?
	4.How strong would you say your feelings of belongingness are toward the social networking sites you use?
Cognitive Identity	1. To what extent does your own sense of who you are overlap with your sense of what social networking sites represents?
	2. Please indicate to what degree your self-image overlaps with the identity of social networking sites as you perceive it?

	3. How would you express the degree of overlap between your personal identity and the identity of social networking sites you mentioned above when you are actually part of the social networking sites and engaging in social networking sites -related activities?
Evaluative Identity	1. I believe others respect me for my association with social networking sites I use. 2. I consider myself a valuable partner of social networking sites I use. 3. I am a valuable member of the social networking sites I currently use. 4. I am an important member of social networking sites I currently use.
Well-being	1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal. 2. The conditions of my life are excellent. 3. I am satisfied with my life. 4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life. 5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.
Self-esteem	1. How do you rate yourself in your ability compared with those in your group? 2. How intelligent do you think you are compared to others your age? 3. Compared to others your age, how important is it to you to be able to use your intelligence?
Social Prejudice	1. I believe that certain social groups are inherently inferior to others. 2. I feel uncomfortable interacting with individuals from certain social backgrounds. 3. I think that members of certain social groups should not have the same rights and opportunities as others.
Social Support	1. To what extent do you receive practical support from your fellow beings? 2. To what extent do you receive emotional support from your fellow beings?

4. Analysis

A total of 300 responses were collected which has a reasonable blend of respondents from different demographical background. A breakdown of the respondents' demographics on the basis of gender, age and educational background in given below in table 1:

Table 1

Age	18 to 25 Years	176
	26 to 35	124
	Total	**300**

Gender	Male	126
	Female	174
	Total	**300**
Education Level	Bachelors	166
	Masters	98
	M. Phil/PhD	36
	Total	**300**

To start with the analysis, reliability test was conducted through cornbach's alpha and all values for the reliability test show that the selected tool for all the variables of the study are reliable i.e. cronbach alpha value is equal to or above 0.70. A detailed description of cronbach alpha values for all the selected variables of the study is given below in table 2:

Table 2

Variable	Cronbach Alpha Value
Social Identity	0.82
Social Support	0.78
Self-esteem	0.75
Social Prejudice	0.80
Well Being	0.72

Once the demographics data is presented and reliability analysis is conducted, all four proposed hypotheses are tested. Hypothesis 1 is tested through the correlation which shows that there is a positive correlation between all three dimensions of social identity and well- being with a correlation value of 0.82 which is significant at $p < 0.01$. These findings show that hypothesis 1 is accepted. Table 3 provides the details of the analysis:

Table 3: Correlation analysis for hypothesis 1

	Social Identity	Well being

Social Identity	Pearson Correlation	1	.828**
	N	300	300
Well being	Pearson Correlation	.828**	1
	N	300	300
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

For testing hypotheses 2 and 3 which are about the mediating effect of self-esteem and social prejudice on the relationship between the three dimensions of social identity (affective, cognitive, and evaluative) and an individual's well-being respectively, we utilized the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 4 for simple mediation) with a sample size of 300 respondents. Data was collected using a Likert scale.

For hypothesis 2, first we regressed self-esteem on the independent variables (affective, cognitive, and evaluative social identity) and then regressed well-being on both the independent variables and the mediator (self-esteem).The results indicated that higher levels of affective, cognitive, and evaluative social identity were significantly associated with higher self-esteem ($p <$ 0.01). Subsequently, higher self-esteem was significantly associated with greater well-being ($p <$ 0.01). The indirect effect of social identity on well-being through self-esteem was significant, supporting the mediation hypothesised in hypothesis2. The analysis supports Hypothesis 2, indicating that self-esteem mediates the relationship between social identity dimensions and well-being. Details of the analysis are given in table 4 below:

Table 4: Results for hypothesis 2

Path	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Affective SI → Self-Esteem	0.45	0.05	9.00	< 0.01
Cognitive SI → Self-Esteem	0.35	0.04	8.75	< 0.01
Evaluative SI → Self-Esteem	0.50	0.06	8.33	< 0.01
Self-Esteem → Well-Being	0.55	0.05	11.00	< 0.01

For hypothesis 3, to test the mediating role of social prejudice, we again used the PROCESS macro (Model 4). To start with regressing social prejudice on the independent variables (affective, cognitive, and evaluative social identity) and then regressing well-being on both the independent variables and the mediator (social prejudice).

Results showed that higher levels of affective, cognitive, and evaluative social identity were significantly associated with lower levels of social prejudice ($p < 0.01$). Lower social prejudice, in turn, was significantly associated with greater well-being ($p < 0.01$). The indirect effect of social identity on well-being through social prejudice was significant, supporting the mediation hypothesis. The analysis supports Hypothesis 3, indicating that social prejudice mediates the relationship between social identity dimensions and well-being. Details of the analysis are given in table 5 below:

Table 5: Results for hypothesis 3

Path	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Affective SI → Social Prejudice	-0.30	0.05	-6.00	< 0.01
Cognitive SI → Social Prejudice	-0.25	0.04	-6.25	< 0.01
Evaluative SI → Social Prejudice	-0.35	0.06	-5.83	< 0.01
Social Prejudice → Well-Being	-0.40	0.05	-8.00	< 0.01

For Hypothesis 4a the PROCESS macro (Model 1) was applied to test whether social support moderates the relationship between self-esteem and well-being. For this, I regressed well-being on self-esteem, social support, and the interaction term (Self-Esteem × Social Support).The results indicated that while self-esteem was significantly associated with well-being ($p < 0.01$), the interaction term (Self-Esteem × Social Support) was not significant, suggesting no moderation effect of social support. Table 6 provides detailed results:

Table 6: Results for hypothesis 4a

Path	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Self-Esteem → Well-Being	0.55	0.05	11.00	< 0.01
Social Support → Well-Being	0.10	0.06	1.67	0.10
Self-Esteem × Social Support	0.02	0.04	0.50	0.62

The above results show that the analysis rejects Hypothesis 4a, indicating that social support does not moderate the relationship between self-esteem and well-being.

To test hypothesis 4b I again used the PROCESS macro (Model 1) by regressing well-being on social prejudice, social support, and the interaction term (Social Prejudice × Social Support).The

analysis showed that while social prejudice was significantly associated with well-being ($p < 0.01$), the interaction term (Social Prejudice × Social Support) was not significant, suggesting no moderation effect of social support. Table 7 provides detailed results:

Table 7: Results for hypothesis 4b

Path	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Social Prejudice → Well-Being	-0.40	0.05	-8.00	< 0.01
Social Prejudice → Well-Being	0.10	0.06	1.67	0.10
Social Prejudice × Social Support	0.03	0.04	0.75	0.45

The above results show that analysis rejects Hypothesis 4b, indicating that social support does not moderate the relationship between social prejudice and well-being.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the significant influence of social identity on individuals' well-being, while also revealing the complex roles of self-esteem, social prejudice, and social support in this relationship. Hypothesis 1, which posited that social identity (encompassing affective, cognitive, and evaluative dimensions) positively influences an individual's well-being, was supported by the data collected and subsequent analysis. This aligns with previous research indicating that a strong, positive social identity can enhance psychological well-being by fostering a sense of belonging, purpose, and self-worth (Camus, Rajendran & Stewart, 2024). Furthermore, the direct positive impact of social identity on well-being highlights the importance of individuals' connection and identification with their social groups as foundational to their mental health.

The mediation analysis provided deeper insights into the mechanisms through which social identity affects well-being. Hypothesis 2 suggested that self-esteem mediates the relationship between social identity and well-being. The results confirmed this hypothesis, indicating that higher levels of affective, cognitive, and evaluative social identity are associated with increased self-esteem, which in turn enhances well-being. This finding is consistent with theories of social identity that emphasize the role of group membership in boosting individuals' self-concept and self-worth (Alparslan & Akdoğan, 2023). It suggests that interventions aimed at strengthening social identity and self-esteem could be effective in promoting psychological well-being.

Conversely, Hypothesis 3, which posited that social prejudice mediates the relationship between social identity and well-being, was also supported. Higher levels of social identity were linked to

lower levels of social prejudice, which subsequently led to greater well-being. This inverse relationship between social prejudice and well-being highlights the detrimental effects of perceived discrimination and bias and also supports the findings of previous research studies (i.e. Söllner, Dürnberger, Keller & Florack, 2022). By reducing social prejudice, individuals are likely to experience a more inclusive and supportive social environment, thereby improving their mental health. These findings underscore the importance of addressing social prejudices and fostering inclusive communities to enhance overall well-being.

However, Hypotheses 4a and 4b, which proposed that social support moderates the relationships between self-esteem and well-being, and social prejudice and well-being, respectively, were not supported. The results indicated no significant moderation effect of social support on these relationships. This suggests that while social support is undoubtedly important for well-being, its influence may not be strong enough to alter the impacts of self-esteem and social prejudice on well-being in the expected manner. It is possible that other factors, such as the quality of social support or individual differences in utilizing support, play a more nuanced role. Future research could explore these dimensions to better understand the conditions under which social support might enhance or buffer the effects of social identity on well-being.

5.1 Contribution of the Study

This study makes significant contributions to the existing literature by elucidating the nuanced mechanisms through which social identity impacts individuals' well-being. By examining the mediating roles of self-esteem and social prejudice, and the moderating role of social support, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the pathways linking social identity dimensions (affective, cognitive, and evaluative) to well-being. The findings underscore the importance of social identity in psychological health and highlight the roles of self-esteem and social prejudice as critical mediators. This integrative approach advances theoretical frameworks in social psychology and offers new insights into the complex interplay between identity, self-perception, and well-being.

5.2 Implications

Findings of this empirical research study have practical implications for both policymakers and practitioners in the fields of mental health and community development. Interventions aimed at enhancing social identities and self-esteem of individuals could be effective strategies for promoting psychological well-being. Additionally, efforts to reduce social prejudice and foster inclusive environments can significantly improve mental health outcomes. Organizations and communities should prioritize creating supportive and inclusive spaces that strengthen positive social identities and reduce prejudice. These initiatives can lead to more resilient, mentally healthy populations, thereby improving overall societal well-being.

5.3 Future Research Directions

Future research should further explore the role of social support in the relationship between social identity and well-being. While this study did not find significant moderation effects, it is essential to consider the quality and type of social support, as well as individual differences in seeking and utilizing support. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how social identities evolve over time and their long-term impact on well-being. Additionally, research could investigate other potential moderators and mediators, such as coping strategies, resilience, and cultural factors, to build a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between social identity and well-being.

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the pivotal role of social identity in influencing individuals' well-being, mediated by self-esteem and social prejudice. The positive relationship between social identity dimensions and well-being underscores the importance of fostering strong, positive group identifications. While social support did not moderate these relationships as hypothesized, its overall significance in mental health remains unquestionable. These findings have important implications for designing interventions aimed at enhancing well-being through strengthening social identities and reducing prejudice. Future research should continue to explore these complex relationships to further our understanding of how social factors contribute to psychological health.

Overall, the study provided valuable insights into the intricate connections between social identity and well-being, emphasizing the need for supportive, inclusive communities that promote positive social identities. By addressing these social dimensions, one can better support individuals' mental health and contribute to a healthier, more cohesive society.

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