

# Personality and Interpersonal Trust of New-generation Migrant Workers: Mediation of Social Support

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**【Abstract】** In this study, 1005 migrant workers were tested to investigate the relation among personality traits and interpersonal trust of Chinese New-generation Migrant Workers and to study the mediation effect of social support. Results from the cross-sectional structural equation analyses revealed that interpersonal trust was significantly positively correlated to social support but negatively correlated to neuroticism & psychoticism; while social support was significantly negatively correlated to neuroticism & psychoticism. Social support played a partial mediating role at the impact on neuroticism & psychoticism to interpersonal trust. In addition, the fitness of the structural equation model built up under the conditions where common method biases were under effective control was high and model assumptions were accepted.

**【Key words】** New-generation migrant workers; Personality; Social support; Interpersonal trust; Structural equation model

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## 中国新生代农民工人格特征与人际信任:社会支持的中介效应

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**【摘要】** 本研究以1005名新生代农民工为被试,采用问卷法探讨其人格特征与人际信任的关系,并考查社会支持在其人格特征与人际信任之间的中介作用。结果表明:①人际信任与社会支持呈显著正相关,与神经质、精神质呈显著负相关,社会支持与神经质、精神质呈显著负相关。②社会支持在神经质、精神质对人际信任影响中起部分中介作用。③在有效控制共同方法偏差条件下构建的结构方程模型各拟合度良好,接受模型假设。

**【关键词】** 新生代农民工; 人格特征; 社会支持; 人际信任; 结构方程模型

## 1 Introduction

With the development of urbanization in rural areas since the 1980s, a large number of China's surplus rural labor pour into cities and this group is known as the migrant workers. According to the assimilation theory of social inclusion, migrant population generally needs to go through three stages, namely settlement, adaptation and assimilation, so as to learn, adapt to and accept the local lifestyle and cultural values and to put away their original socio-cultural traditions and habits before achieving final assimilation and integration(Park, 1928; Gordon, 1964). Issues related to migrant workers integrating into the city have become an inevitable hot topic in modern times and these problems more or less

have forward or backward linkage to their psychological state(Zhong, 2006). Wang Chun-guang(2001) first proposed the concept of "new-generation migrant workers", and the Central First Document officially used the term "new-generation migrant workers" in 2010. The new-generation migrant workers refer to people with rural household registration who were born after the 1980s, are over the age of 16 and under 30, and leave their rural hometowns to obtain non-agriculture-related jobs in cities. There are big differences between the new-generation migrant workers and the first-generation migrant workers in terms of age, average years of education and other aspects(Ding, 2009). The new-generation migrant workers are more eager to join the urban civilization, but due to personal, institutional, social and other reasons, they suffer from a number of negative psychological problems such as inferiority complex, loneliness and resentment. The social psycho-

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logical characteristics are: they hope to get respect from the community and their cognition has limitations, duality and marginality(Wang, 2010). The new-generation migrant workers are further confronted with a series of problems such as low wages, the problem of education level and vocational skills lagging behind the needs of the urban labor market, restriction by the household registration system, confusion in career choice and emotional & mental dissatisfaction(Xu, 2011). A survey shows that the level of mental health of new-generation migrant workers is lower than the national average level(Yan, 2011). Although in the last decade, researches on psychological status of migrant workers and on measures to cope with psychological problems of migrant workers have made great achievements; empirical researches on their inner psychological mechanism are relatively insufficient in China(Hu & Peng, 2011).

Social support refers to the assistance rendered by family members, friends, neighbors and others(Weiner, 1992). According to the previous studies, social support plays a role in promoting interpersonal trust(McAllister, 1995). Studies have shown that, the doctor's supportive communication can effectively improve the patient's interpersonal trust, thus promoting treatment(Ommen et al., 2008). In the social support system reducing depression, interpersonal trust is a key factor(Marroquín, 2011). there is a significant positive correlation between social support and interpersonal trust in regard to the university students(Chen, 2011); online social support and online interpersonal trust are significantly positively correlated(Ding & Shen, 2005). Social support also plays an intermediary role in a variety of variables(Cobb, 1976; Tumer, 1983; Tsutsumi et al, 1998).

Deutsch(1958) pioneered the psychological study of interpersonal trust through the renowned Prisoner's Dilemma experiments. He believed that interpersonal trust is actually a reaction to a situation, it is the individual psychology and personal behavior determined by situational stimulation, and the level of trust between the two sides will change as situations change. In addition, the trust a person has towards something happened is the person's expectations for such an oc-

currence and corresponding actions the person will take. If the results of such actions are contrary to his expectation, it will cause negative psychological impacts on the person and this impact will be far greater than the positive psychological impact brought about when the results are in line with the person's expectation(Zou, 2010). Personality traits and interpersonal trust have a close and complex relationship and there are individual differences in people's general tendency to trust others, and personality traits can affect interpersonal trust(Sonja, 2003; Evans & Revelle, 2008; Jenkins-Guarnieria, Wright, & Hudiburgh, 2012; Clarka & Eisenstein, 2013). In social networking, personality trait is also an important factor that affects interpersonal trust(Zolfaghar & Aghaie, 2012). Some studies have found that for the university students, extraversion and interpersonal trust have a significant negative correlation while neuroticism and interpersonal trust have a significant positive correlation(Wang & Zhao, 2010); for the medical school students, neuroticism and interpersonal trust have a significant negative correlation while extraversion and interpersonal trust have a significant positive correlation(Zou & Xie, 2008). While some other studies which involve all types of students(Qi, 2003; Wu & Song, 2006; Yang & Zeng, 2009; Yang & Huang, 2011; Zhang, Li, & Yang, 2013) and a special group-juvenile delinquents(Ma, Wang, & Li, 2012) show that there is no correlation between extraversion and interpersonal trust.

Previous studies have shown that personality traits, social support and interpersonal trust are correlated. Studies conducted by Luo(1995) et al have shown that extraversion and social support present a significant positive correlation and other studies have further found that the perceived social support of newly-married men and women with different personalities is significantly different(Gretchen & Christina, 2001). Ding Daoqun et al.(2005) believe that personality trait, in addition to its direct effect online interpersonal trust, can also exert an indirect effect online interpersonal trust through online social support.

In China, researches on relationship between interpersonal trust and personality traits often take students as subjects(Qi, 2003; Wu, 2006; Yang & Zeng,

2009; Yang & Huang, 2011; Zhang et al, 2013), with very few from the new-generation migrant workers. Initial findings of Xuruo Lan, Xu Chuan's(2007) researches related to personality development of the new-generation migrant workers indicate that the personality traits of this population are closely linked to the social environment resources and organizational unit resources, social interpersonal relationships and other aspects; while Zhang Liande(2010) points out that young migrant workers lack interpersonal trust in the social network, and are faced with the risk of social isolation in social interaction. Studies on personality traits and social support of the rural migrant workers carried out by Du Lizhi et al(2011) indicate that extraversion and subjective support are positively correlated to each other in respect of the rural migrant workers; while Xing Haiyan et al(2013) have found that the level of social support for the new-generation migrant workers is relatively low. Thus, it predictably indicates that there may be a certain relationship mechanism among personality traits, social support and interpersonal trust of the new-generation migrant workers. Therefore, this study attempts to propose a relevant research assumption: among the new-generation migrant workers, personality traits play a predictive role in interpersonal trust while social support play intermediary role in the relationship between personality traits and interpersonal trust.

## 2 Method

### 2.1 Participants

The participants were selected from factories located in Shenzhen, Chongqing, Chengdu and Ningbo of China where the new-generation migrant workers are concentrated, with the whole class sampling method. All workers were from the assembly line in manufacturing. A total of 1005 valid questionnaires were obtained. Among them, there were 484 males and 521 females; 313 were married people and 692 unmarried; 354 with junior high school education and below, 466 with high school education, 185 with college degree and above; 339 aged 21 and below, 344 aged 22-25, 322 aged 26 and above; 273 with one year of experience and below, 413 with 2-4 years, 319 with 5 years and above.

### 2.2 Materials

2.2.1 Eysenck Personality Questionnaire for Adults (EPQ-A; Chen, 1983) The scale is one of the world's most popular personality tests. Compared with other scales, it has the advantages of centralized dimensions, reasonable number of items, and relatively complete and mature revised Chinese version in China. It is a self-report scale, with a "yes" or "no" for answer. It comprises 4 subscales, namely Extraversion(E), Neuroticism(N), Psychoticism(P) and Lie(L), among which the Lie(L) scale is a validity scale and is used to test the validity of all measurement data. Both positive scoring and negative scoring are available for each item. There is a total of 85 items intended for adults aged 16-70.

2.2.2 Social Support Rating Scale(SSRS; Wang, 1999) The Social Support Rating Scale designed by Xiao Shuiyuan in 1986 and later revised in 1990 was used. The scale is made up of 10 items, including three dimensions: objective support(3 items.), subjective support(4 items.) and utilization of support(3 items.). Existing researches and applications in the country have shown that the scale has good reliability and validity.

2.2.3 Trust Scale(TS; Wang, 1999) The scale is a 7-point scale, with a total of 18 items. Scoring of the scale comprises positive and negative modes. It covers three dimensions: predictability, dependability and reliability. According to existing researches and applications in the country, the scale has good reliability and validity and the measured content fit the Chinese cultural background well(Wang, 1999).

### 2.3 Procedure

The tests were conducted as written examination, assisted by standardized and detailed instructions. Under the guidance of researchers, three group tests were performed in July, August, and September 2014, among which the first test applied the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire for Adults (EPQA) and the second and third applied the Social Support Rating Scale (SSRS) and Trust Scale (TS) respectively. Each test was conducted during the monthly activity organized by the Labor Union of the test subjects' unit and was taken independently by new-generation migrant workers. Informed consent was obtained from all participants be-

fore any assessments were carried out. Questionnaires were recovered on the spot upon completion.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

The following types of software were used for statistical processing of data: SPSS 18.0 for correlation analysis, AMOS16.0 for structural equation model & common method biases analysis and G\*Power3.1.6 for the effect size and the statistical power analysis.

## 3 Results

### 3.1 Correlation among personality traits, social support and interpersonal trust

Table 1 showed that interpersonal trust was positively correlated to social support significantly, with  $r(1003)=0.190, P<0.001, \delta=0.99$ ; positively correlated to objective support significantly as well, with  $r(1003)=0.121, P<0.001, \delta=0.89$ ; positively correlated to subjective support significantly too, with  $r(1003)=0.182, P<$

$0.001, \delta=0.99$ ; and also positively correlated to utilization of support, with  $r(1003)=0.123, P<0.001, \delta=0.91$ ; but there was a very significant negative correlation between interpersonal trust and neuroticism, with  $r(1003)=-0.125, P<0.001, \delta=0.92$ ; there was also a very significant negative correlation between interpersonal trust and psychoticism, with  $r(1003)=-0.139, P<0.001, \delta=0.97$ ; there was no significant negative correlation with extraversion, with  $r(1003)=-0.045, P>0.05, \delta=0.40$ .

There was a significant negative correlation between social support and neuroticism, with  $r(1003)=-0.065, P<0.05, \delta=0.57$ ; there was a very significant negative correlation between social support and psychoticism as well, with  $r(1003)=-0.136, P<0.001, \delta=0.96$ ; there was no significant positive correlation between social support and extroversion, with  $r(1003)=0.032, P>0.05, \delta=0.26$ .

Table 1 Results of Analysis on Correlation among Personality Traits, Social Support and Interpersonal Trust(N=1005)

	M±SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	74.53±10.90										
2	24.36±4.20	0.610**									
3	25.08±5.24	0.806**	0.231**								
4	25.08±5.11	0.804**	0.243**	0.502**							
5	37.06±8.35	0.190**	0.076*	0.191**	0.145**						
6	7.55±3.05	0.121**	0.068*	0.116**	0.083**	0.739**					
7	21.79±5.17	0.182**	0.061	0.180**	0.152**	0.896**	0.450**				
8	7.71±2.23	0.123**	0.051	0.139**	0.079**	0.656**	0.352**	0.409**			
9	10.38±2.58	-0.045	0.005	-0.020	-0.080*	0.032	0.042	0.016	0.024		
10	10.33±3.60	-0.125**	-0.012	-0.087**	-0.166**	-0.065*	0.020	-0.089**	-0.065*	0.488**	
11	8.90±2.30	-0.139**	-0.052	-0.138**	-0.111**	-0.136*	-0.085**	-0.102**	-0.156**	0.185**	0.397**

Note: \* $P<0.05$ , \*\* $P<0.01$ , \*\*\* $P<0.001$ ; 1=Interpersonal Trust, 2=Predictability, 3=Dependability, 4=Reliability, 5=Social Support, 6=Objective Support, 7=Subjective Support, 8=Utilization of Support, 9=Extraversion, 10=Neuroticism, 11=Psychoticism

### 3.2 Structural equation modeling of personality traits, social support and interpersonal trust

3.2.1 Model establishment By keeping the balance of load of items(Nasser & Takahashi, 2003; Bian & Che, 2007), item parceling was conducted for latent variables of individual dimensions— neuroticism and psychoticism, in order to get N1, N2, N3 and P1, P2, P3. Combined with the aforementioned assumptions of the variables, structural equation models were established with Amos16.0 for neuroticism, psychoticism, social support and interpersonal trust, so as to obtain respectively a relational model as shown in Figures 1 and

2. Table 2 shows the specific fitness indexes of two models. As Figure 1 & 2 and Table 2 depicted, neuroticism and psychoticism all made direct prediction on interpersonal trust. In addition, they had indirect effects on interpersonal trust through social support respectively.

3.2.2 Test and control of the effect of common method bias Since the variables in this study were provided by the same test subject and questionnaire was used as the main method, there may be possible common method bias effects(Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 2003; Zhou & Long, 2004 ; Du & Zhao, 2005; Xiong &

Zhang, 2012). To avoid common method bias effects in the study results, anonymous questionnaire measurement, change of sequence of questionnaires in measurements, separation of measuring time were adopted in measurements of variables to perform process control of common method bias effect. Besides that, statistical test and control were carried out for common method bias effect by using correlated uniqueness model of biases (Marsh & Bailey, 1991). The theoretical assumption of this method is based on that the error term of the correlated uniqueness model comprises random measurement error and possible systematic error due to common method bias. If the error term only contains random error, then there is no or low correlation among er-

ror terms; If there is a common method variance, there will be significant correlation among error terms. The testing results showed that there were some correlations between error terms. After effective control of correlation of error terms and establishment of the new models, it was found that the difference of fitness between the old model and the new one was only 0.01–0.02(table 3), which demonstrated that the common methods variance of the study was within the acceptable thresholds and the old model was effective(Dulac, Henderson, & Wayne, 2008; Xie & Long, 2008; Li, Ling & Liu, 2012). The path effect of the direct and indirect effect is shown in Table 4.

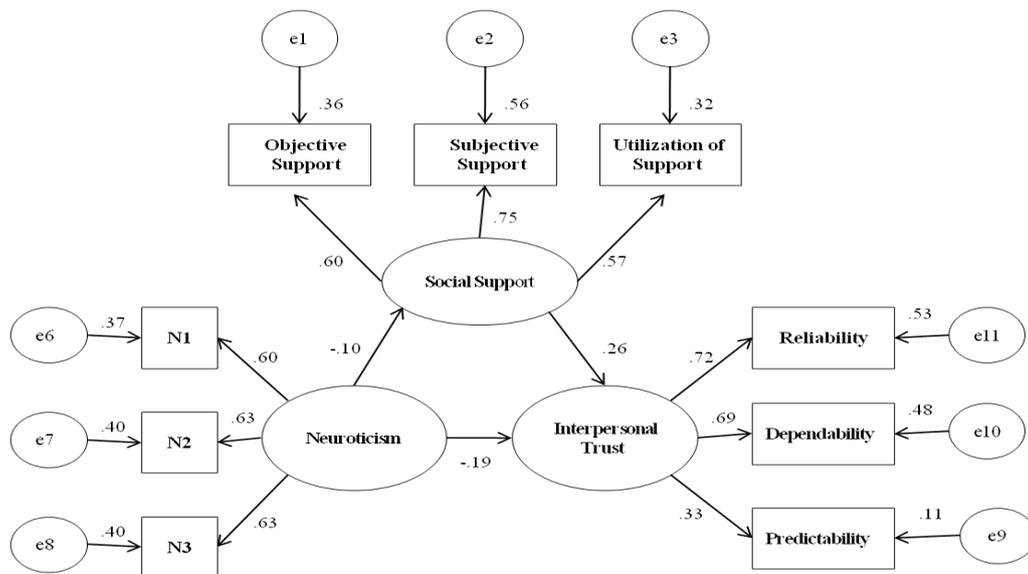


Fig. 1. Structural Equation Model 1 of Neuroticism, Social Support and Interpersonal Trust

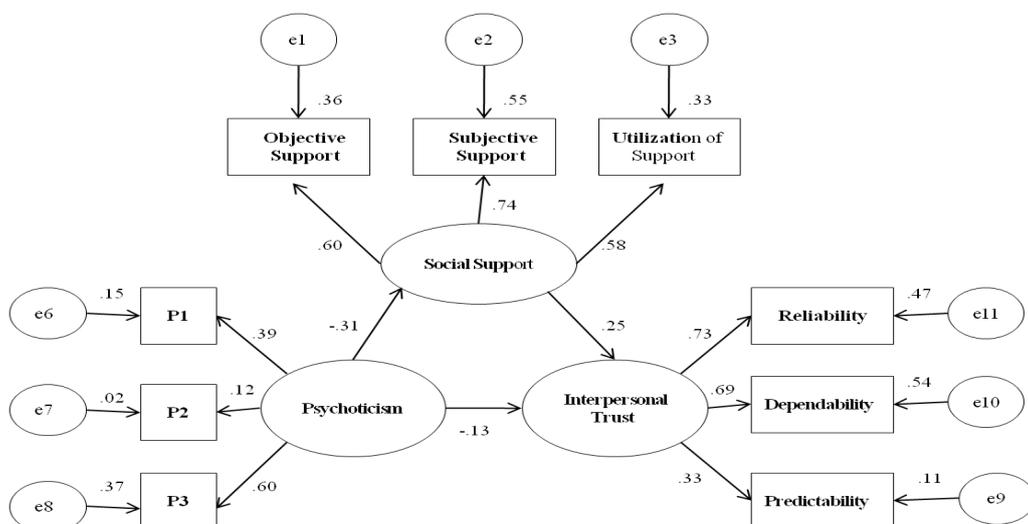


Fig. 2. Structural Equation Model 2 of Psychoticism, Social Support and Interpersonal Trust

Table 2 Fitness Indexes of Test Model

	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	AGFI	NFI	ECVI	AIC	CFI	RMSEA
Model 1(N)	52.311	24	2.180	0.989	0.979	0.961	0.094	94.311	0.979	0.034
Model 2(P)	39.665	24	1.653	0.992	0.984	0.961	0.081	81.665	0.984	0.025

Note: N=Neuroticism, P=Psychoticism

Table 3 Test Results of Common Method Biases of Structural Equation Model

	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	AGFI	NFI	ECVI	AIC	CFI	RMSEA
Model 1(N)	52.311	24	2.180	0.989	0.979	0.961	0.094	94.311	0.979	0.034
Model 1-1(N)	27.260	21	1.298	0.994	0.987	0.980	0.075	75.260	0.995	0.017
Model 2(P)	39.665	24	1.653	0.992	0.984	0.961	0.081	81.665	0.984	0.025
Model 2-1(P)	30.770	23	1.338	0.993	0.987	0.970	0.074	74.770	0.992	0.018

Note: N=Neuroticism, P=Psychoticism

Table 4 Decomposition Results of Path Coefficient

Outcome variable	Causal variable	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect
Interpersonal trust	Neuroticism	-0.221	-0.210	-0.011
	Social support	0.280	0.280	0.000
Interpersonal trust	Psychoticism	-0.210	-0.130	-0.080
	Social support	0.250	0.250	0.000

## 4 Discussion

### 4.1 The relationship of personality traits, social support and interpersonal trust

A special finding that emerged from the research was that the Extroversion(dimension E) in personality traits was neither related to social support nor interpersonal trust.

The absence of correlation between extraversion and social support in this study disagrees with the researches of Du Zhili et al(2011) on migrant workers over 30, according to which the extroversion of migrant workers has a positive correlation with subjective support. The root causes of the inconsistency may partially be explained from: ①age of the test subjects: the new-generation migrant workers were rural youth aged 16-30 and recent researches of Xing Haiyan et al(2013) have found that overall social support for the new-generation migrant workers is less than that for the first-generation migrant workers. Compared to the first-generation migrant workers, the new-generation migrant workers were younger and had less social experience, with lower participation in social networks and in organizations as well as less objective social support obtained. Also because they were unfamiliar with the environment, the new-generation migrant workers felt they got less support; ②works they engage in. All test

subjects of this study were from the assembly line in manufacturing industry, with closed work environment, monotonous work and fast pace of work. They were almost completely isolated during work, with all communication tools turned off. The only way to contact with the outside world was mobile phones which can only be used after work. Since most people were busy all day or working overtime to make money and their spare time was used to sleep and recuperate, the work units they worked for can hold just few activities. Therefore, during work, their communication with their colleagues and the outside world was limited and they felt like a machine operating all day and can only contact with friends and family during the long leave when they were “let out”. Generally, individuals who are more extroverted would actively seek social support, promoting mental health through the good subjective experience (Brian & Edward, 2011). However, in such working conditions, the difference in extraversion hardly made any sense and had little effect on social support for individuals.

It is also worth noting that the study results and the recent research results of Chen Nan et al(Chen, Zhao, Li, & Wang, 2012) on troops are consistent. Although the test subjects were from different background, they had common features such as strict management and less degree of freedom.

Previous studies have shown that the relationship between extraversion and interpersonal trust is rather complex: they are related but double-edged, with both positive correlation(Zou et al, 2008; Hong, Yang, 2011) and negative correlation(Li, He, & Tong, 2011; Yao &

Guo, 2011), specifically, outgoing personality allows individuals to improve the level of interpersonal trust, but can also reduce their interpersonal trust, and vice versa; there is no correlation(Du et al., 2011), which is consistent with the results of this study. If the special working environment of the test subjects was analyzed again, it can be found that environmental factors were still the primary elements which caused limited interpersonal space and superficial interpersonal communication, thus reducing the effect of personality (introversion and extroversion) on interpersonal trust. All these reveal the role of environmental variables. However, further study of this situation is required.

#### 4.2 The relational models of personality traits, social support and interpersonal trust

The relational models suggested that neuroticism and psychoticism affected interpersonal trust through mediating variable of social support. They had direct impact on interpersonal trust as well. The new-generation migrant workers were relatively simple, had narrow social networks, the social relations of whose showed homogeneity(He, 2010). When there was a strong mood swings or anxiety, fear, depression and other negative emotions, which cannot be effectively released in their narrow social networks, they may take unfriendly, hostile and irrational actions against others, resulting in lower social support, which led to reduction of their interpersonal trust for others. Social support made a very significant positive prediction on interpersonal trust, which was consistent with the findings of Chen Xifeng(2011). This implies that the more the social support for the new-generation migrant workers, the higher the interpersonal trust. Therefore, social support is recommended for use to alleviate partial the negative effect and influence in personality and better promote interpersonal trust.

In this study, Structural Equation Models were established based on relevant assumptions on the relationships between the previously mentioned personality traits, interpersonal trust and social support. Test and control of common method bias effects were performed through correlated uniqueness model of biases, and fitness indexes of models were reasonable. Through decomposition of effects of path coefficients of Models, it

was found that the direct impact of neuroticism and psychoticism on interpersonal trust was larger than their indirect impact on interpersonal trust.

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