

Research Paper

The Effect of Personality on Romantic Relationship Satisfaction in Millennials: With the Mediating Role of Self Esteem

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to assess the role of personality on romantic relationship satisfaction with the mediating role of self-esteem in millennials. Further gender differences were explored among millennials in the study variables. For this purpose, 160 (80 males and 80 females) millennials who were born in between 1980 and 1996 were selected through a random sampling technique. Costa & Mc Crae Big Five Inventory (1987), Hendrick Relationship Assessment Scale (1988) and Rosenberg Self Esteem Questionnaire (1965) were used to collect data from the participants. Inter correlation between the study variables was also explored. The findings of the study revealed that there is positive relationship between openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and romantic relationship satisfaction whereas there is a negative relationship between neuroticism and romantic relationship satisfaction in millennials. It was also found that there is a positive relationship between openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and self-esteem whereas there is a negative relationship between neuroticism and self-esteem in millennials. There is a positive relationship between romantic relationship satisfaction and self-esteem in millennials. The findings also revealed that there exist significant gender differences in personality and romantic relationship satisfaction in millennials.

Keywords: Millennials, Personality, Romantic Relationship Satisfaction, Self Esteem

Millennials commonly referred to as Generation Y are people born in the 1980s, till mid 1990's. Millennials is the generation following generation X (born in 1960s, 1970s) and preceding generation Y (Kaifi et al., 2012). Millennials is a generation born in between 1981 to 1996 (American Psychological Association). Personality can be defined as distinctive and stable ways of behavior (Ewen, 2010). The ability of a personality feature to remain constant throughout time and in many contexts is a crucial attribute that distinguishes each person (Othman et al., 2020).

The model of the five major personality factors is one of the most widely recognized personality models. The big five personality factors include: neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience. It is now the most often used method of depicting the human trait structure. Vulnerability to emotional instability and self-consciousness is referred to as neuroticism. The cognitive propensity towards aesthetics and

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Received: March 31, 2025; Revision Received: July 23, 2025; Accepted: July 28, 2025

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creative thinking is an indicator of openness to experience. The interpersonal relationship is the focal point of both agreeableness and extraversion. While agreeableness relates to the inclination to be warm, kind, gentle, trustworthy, and reliable, extraversion reflects the drive to be sociable, energetic, forceful, and to seek excitement. Conscientiousness is defined as a propensity for efficiency and perseverance (Zakiei et al., 2020; Shi et al., 2018). The drive to belong is a fundamental characteristic of humans (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). During the transition to adulthood, romantic relationships play an essential developmental function (Erikson, 1982). An individual creates many relationships throughout the course of their lifetime, but romantic ties are by far the most significant.

Satisfying relationships are characterized by good conflict management, effective communication, high levels of mutual support, positive behavior and realistic relationship beliefs (Halford, 2001). Relationship stability is influenced by the environment in which individuals live, their interactions, experiences during the relationship and their unique personalities. Intimacy, passion, and commitment are predictors of relationship satisfaction for women; however, males don't really validate commitment (Rodrigues & Wachelk, 2015).

Self-esteem is how much an individual has affection for oneself. It is an individual's value in his or her own eyes. **Piskin (2014)** defined "self-esteem as the difference between an individual's image of self and the ideal self. He stated that self-esteem of a person can be understood by looking at the discrepancy between how the individual perceives oneself and the self they would like to be". The development of self-esteem is a lengthy process connected to the growth of self-image and self-awareness. This progression includes challenging periods, especially during transitions between life stages or statuses, such as adolescence (due to psychosomatic changes) and old age (related to changes in status, retirement, and responsibilities) (Orth, Trzesniewski & Robins, 2010). Although self-esteem seems to decline during youth, it tends to increase during early adulthood (Tsai, Ying & Lee, 2001).

Relationship satisfaction and happiness is significantly impacted by self-esteem, which in turn has a significant impact on our social interaction habits. A relationship's beginning was found to boost self-esteem, and the boost persisted after the couple had been together for at least a year. Breakup affected self-esteem, although it was discovered that the impact vanished within a year. Marriage was not found to affect one's sense of self (Luciano & Orth, 2017).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ricafrente et al., (2024) investigated the correlations of Personality Traits and Romantic Relationship Satisfaction was to assess the relationship between personality traits and the respondents' romantic relationship satisfaction level. It shows a negative correlation between the two variables. In other words, the study revealed that when personality traits decrease, romantic relationship satisfaction increases. Finding fulfillment in a romantic partnership is a key aspiration for many people. Among personality variables, neuroticism has emerged as one of the significant predictors of relationship satisfaction. High levels of neuroticism predicted lower relationship satisfaction in oneself and the partner. Higher levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness also tend to go along with higher relationship satisfaction, while evidence for extraversion is more inconsistent. Openness to experience, in contrast, seems to be unrelated to relationship satisfaction. Apart from the Big Five, secure

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attachment and high self-esteem have been found to be positively linked to relationship quality. In contrast, antagonistic aspects of narcissism are linked to reduced relationship satisfaction (Gerlach et al., 2020). Couples high in neuroticism had low levels of marital satisfaction, while couples high in conscientiousness were more satisfied with their marital relationship. Because personality traits are relatively stable over time, they can be used to predict an individual's behaviors in different life situations, including marital relationship. Given that personality traits remain relatively constant throughout one's life, they can serve as indicators of how a person might behave in various life contexts, including within a marriage. Married partners with high levels of neuroticism experienced less satisfaction in their relationships. In contrast, those who scored high in conscientiousness reported greater marital satisfaction (Sayehmiri et al., 2020).

Fagundes et al. (2021) studied use of Instagram, social comparison and personality as predictors of self-esteem. The goal of the study was to see how well Instagram's use intensity, social comparison, and the five primary personality characteristics of self-esteem could predict self-esteem in a population that is becoming increasingly connected online. Neuroticism and social comparison (abilities component) were found to be negative predictors of self-esteem. Self-esteem was found to be positively correlated with extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, social comparison (opinions factor) and age.

Kaur and Singh (2019) studied the relationship between personality and self-esteem in university students in Malaysia and their results discovered that extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness were found to be substantial positive predictors of self-esteem, while neuroticism versus emotion stability was found to be a significant negative predictor. The findings of the analytical t-test revealed a gender difference in two personality characteristics; conscientiousness and neuroticism, in males and females, but no significant gender difference were found in extraversion, agreeableness, or openness aspects. Lee and Chang (2021) studied factors affecting romantic relationship satisfaction of university students and the results revealed through final regression model showed that self-esteem, anxiety attachment, and avoidance attachment were significant predictors related to romantic relationship satisfaction in university students. Pronk (2020) studied gender differences and the relation between self-esteem and romantic relationship satisfaction and regression analysis depicted a positive relation between self-esteem and relationship satisfaction. When examining gender differences with independent samples t-tests, men score significantly higher on self-esteem than women, whereas there were no significant gender differences in relationship satisfaction.

Significance

Millennials are the first generation to come of age in a truly globalized world, setting them apart from their predecessors. Their moniker, "Millennials," stems from their close association with the new millennium and their formative years in an era of unprecedented technological advancement (Kaifi et al., 2012). This generation was shaped by the ubiquity of computers and a broader acceptance of diverse family structures and belief systems (Andert, 2011). Examining the interplay between personality traits, satisfaction in romantic relationships and self-esteem among Millennials can offer valuable insights into the evolving psychosocial landscape of our society. Despite constituting a significant portion of the demographic dividend in many countries, the psychological profile of Millennials remains understudied. To gain a comprehensive understanding of contemporary society's psychology, it is imperative to focus on Millennials, who represent the largest segment of

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today's population. This approach to studying Millennials can illuminate the generational shifts in attitudes, behaviors and values that are shaping our current social fabric and will likely influence future trends.

Objectives

The purpose of this research is to assess the relationship between personality with romantic relationship satisfaction and self esteem in millennials.

The main objectives of the present study are-

1. To explore the relationship between personality and romantic relationship satisfaction in millennials
2. To explore the relationship between personality and self esteem in millennials.
3. To determine the relationship of romantic relationship satisfaction with self esteem.

Hypotheses

1. There will be positive relationship between openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and romantic relationship satisfaction whereas there will be negative relationship between neuroticism and romantic relationship satisfaction in millennials.
2. There will be positive relationship between openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and self esteem whereas there will be negative relationship between neuroticism and self esteem in millennials.
3. There will be positive relationship between romantic relationship satisfaction and self esteem in millennials.

METHOD

Sample

The subject in the study included millennials in the Chandigarh- Tricity. The total sample of the present study consists of 160 millennials, 80 of whom were males and 80 of whom were females. Participants who were born in between 1980s and 1996 were taken. The researcher used simple random sampling for the study.

Measures

Following scales were used in the conduction of the study.

- **Personality- Costa & Mc Crae Big Five Inventory (1987)**
- **Relationship Satisfaction- Hendrick Relationship Assessment Scale (1988)**
- **Self Esteem- Rosenberg Self Esteem Questionnaire (1965)**
- **Personality was studied using Big Five Inventory (1987)** which was given by John and Srivastava. Big Five inventory is a forty four item inventory that measures an individual on the Big Five factors of personality. The scale measures different facets of Big Five dimensions that includes extroversion vs introversion, agreeableness vs antagonism, conscientiousness vs lack of direction, neuroticism vs emotional stability and openness vs closedness to experience. It is a self reported measure and the response could be given by numbers ranging from 1 to 5 where 1 stands for strong disagreement, 2 for disagreeing a little, 3 for neither agreeing nor disagreeing, 4 for agreeing a little and 5 for agreeing strongly.

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- **Relationship satisfaction - Relationship Assessment Scale (1998):** Relationship satisfaction was measured by Relationship Assessment Scale given by Hendrick. It is a measure to assess global relationship satisfaction. It consists of 7 items each rated on 5 point likert scale. It is suitable for use with individuals who are in intimate relationships such as dating couples, married couples, cohabiting couples or engaged couple.
- **Self Esteem – Rosenberg Self Esteem Questionnaire (1965):** Self esteem was measured using Rosenberg Self Esteem Questionnaire. It is a 10 item scale that measures self worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. All the 10 items are answered using a 4 point likert scale (ranging from 1 which connotes strong disagreement to 4 which connotes strong agreement. The items include statements which deal with general feelings about self.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Subjects born in between 1980 and 1996 were taken.
2. Subjects who are in romantic relationships from past one year were taken.
3. Subjects who agreed to voluntarily participate in the study were chosen.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Individuals suffering from psychopathology or deteriorated mental and physical health were excluded from the study.
2. Those suffering from any other chronic illness were excluded.

Ethical Consideration

1. Informed consent of the participants was obtained.
2. The confidentiality of information given by the subjects was ensured.

Statistical Analysis

In the light of the aim of the study, descriptive statistics and correlation was computed. Correlation was computed to explore the inter relationship between personality, romantic relationship satisfaction and self esteem in millennials.

Procedure

The data was collected from 160 millennials. The sample consisted of millennials who were in romantic relationship from past one year in Chandigarh Tri city. Participants were approached individually and were informed that the information will be kept confidential and will be used for the sole purpose of the study. Prior interview was taken to gather information about the relationship duration. A compiled questionnaire including the socio demographic datasheet and the scales for assessing the study variables was provided. The participants were instructed to read each item carefully and tick mark the response that best represented their opinion about themselves. The scoring of the collected data was done manually and data was analyzed using SPSS version 23.

RESULTS

Table 1 reflects the gender differences in terms of self esteem (N=160).

| Gender | | Mean | Std. Deviation | t-value | p-value |
|-------------|--------|-------|----------------|---------|---------|
| Self-Esteem | Male | 27.11 | 6.20 | .228 | .820 |
| | Female | 27.28 | 6.47 | | |

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Based on the information provided in the table 1, the mean self-esteem score for females (27.28) is slightly higher than for males (27.11). However, the t-value of 0.228 and the p-value of 0.820 suggest that this difference in mean self-esteem scores between males and females is not statistically significant.

Table 2 reflects the gender differences in terms of romantic relationship satisfaction (N=160).

| Gender | | Mean | Std. Deviation | t-value | p-value |
|---------------------------|--------|-------|----------------|---------|---------|
| Relationship Satisfaction | Male | 26.33 | 4.52 | 2.188 | .029* |
| | Female | 27.51 | 4.77 | | |

Based on the information provided in the table 2, the mean romantic relationship satisfaction score for females (27.51) is higher than for males (26.33). The t-value of 2.188 and the p-value of 0.029 (marked with an asterisk) suggest that this difference in mean romantic relationship satisfaction scores between males and females is statistically significant at the chosen level of significance.

Table 3 reflects the gender differences on personality traits of openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism (N=160).

| Gender | | Mean | Std. Deviation | t-value | p-value |
|------------------------|--------|-------|----------------|---------|---------|
| Neuroticism | Male | 33.66 | 9.19 | 3.928 | .0001** |
| | Female | 37.53 | 7.83 | | |
| Extraversion | Male | 40.19 | 7.13 | 1.961 | .051 |
| | Female | 38.40 | 8.64 | | |
| Openness to experience | Male | 40.09 | 4.59 | 2.186 | .030* |
| | Female | 38.87 | 5.07 | | |
| Agreeableness | Male | 36.77 | 5.13 | 2.912 | .004** |
| | Female | 38.65 | 5.98 | | |
| Conscientiousness | Male | 42.19 | 7.19 | 2.050 | .041* |
| | Female | 44.05 | 8.53 | | |

Independent t test was employed to evaluate gender differences in the personality traits. The t test findings indicated a substantial difference in neuroticism $t = 3.928, p < .05$ and females ($M = 37.53, SD = 7.83$) reported higher neuroticism than males ($M = 33.66, SD = 9.19$). For extraversion t test findings revealed a statistically insignificant difference $t = 1.961, p > 0.05$ and males ($M = 40.19, SD = 7.13$) reported higher extraversion than females ($M = 38.40, SD = 8.64$). The t test further depicted significant difference in openness to experience $t = 2.186, p = 0.05$ and males ($M = 40.09, SD = 4.59$) had higher openness to experience than females ($M = 38.87, SD = 5.07$). For agreeableness the findings indicated significant difference $t = 2.912, p < .05$ and females ($M = 38.65, SD = 5.98$) than males ($M = 36.77, SD = 5.13$). The t test further depicted significant difference in conscientiousness $t = 2.050, p = 0.05$ and females ($M = 44.05, SD = 8.53$) had higher conscientiousness than males ($M = 42.19, SD = 7.19$).

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Table 4 reflects the correlation (Combined, N=160) between personality traits openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism and self-esteem. The table also reflects on the correlation value between self-esteem and romantic relationship satisfaction.

| Correlations | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| | Self-Esteem | Neuroticism | Extraversion | Openness to experience | Agreeableness | Conscientiousness | Relationship Satisfaction |
| Self-Esteem | 1 | -.400** | .417** | .383** | .391** | .390** | .318** |
| Neuroticism | | 1 | -.316** | -.343** | -.369** | -.326** | -.317** |
| Extraversion | | | 1 | .245** | .375** | .613** | .290** |
| Openness to experience | | | | 1 | .300** | .263** | .283** |
| Agreeableness | | | | | 1 | .464** | .274** |
| Conscientiousness | | | | | | 1 | .415** |
| Relationship Satisfaction | | | | | | | 1 |

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

To determine the relationship between personality traits, romantic relationship satisfaction and self esteem, Pearson correlation was computed. As shown in table 4, personality traits openness to experience (R= .383, p<.05) conscientiousness (R=.390, p<.05), extraversion (R= .417, p<.05), agreeableness (R=.391, p<.05) and neuroticism (R= -.400, p<.05) and romantic relationship satisfaction (R=.318, p<.05) were significantly correlated with self esteem for both the genders.

Table 5 reflects the correlation (Males, N=80) between personality traits of openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism and self-esteem. The table also reflects on the correlation value between self-esteem and romantic relationship satisfaction.

| Correlations | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| | Self-Esteem | Neuroticism | Extraversion | Openness to experience | Agreeableness | Conscientiousness | Relationship Satisfaction |
| Self-Esteem | 1 | -.411** | .430** | .284** | .220** | .349** | .308** |
| Neuroticism | | 1 | -.385** | -.315** | -.464** | -.425** | -.404** |
| Extraversion | | | 1 | .265** | .245** | .567** | .332** |
| Openness to experience | | | | 1 | .194* | .272** | .305** |
| Agreeableness | | | | | 1 | .360** | .158 |
| Conscientiousness | | | | | | 1 | .409** |
| Relationship Satisfaction | | | | | | | 1 |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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To determine the relationship between personality traits, romantic relationship satisfaction and self esteem in males, Pearson correlation was computed. As shown in table 5, personality traits openness to experience ($R = .284, p < .05$) conscientiousness ($R = .349, p < .05$), extraversion ($R = .430, p < .05$), agreeableness ($R = .220, p < .05$) and neuroticism ($R = -.411, p < .05$) and romantic relationship satisfaction ($R = .308, p < .05$) were significantly correlated with self esteem.

Table 6 reflects the correlation (Females, N=80) between personality traits of openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism and self-esteem. The table also reflects on the correlation value between self-esteem and romantic relationship satisfaction.

| Correlations | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| | Self-Esteem | Neuroticism | Extraversion | Openness to experience | Agreeableness | Conscientiousness | Relationship Satisfaction |
| Self-Esteem | 1 | -.419** | .416** | .479** | .540** | .427** | .328** |
| Neuroticism | | 1 | -.227** | -.344** | -.389** | -.312** | -.309** |
| Extraversion | | | 1 | .211** | .512** | .682** | .291** |
| Openness to experience | | | | 1 | .432** | .290** | .302** |
| Agreeableness | | | | | 1 | .522** | .341** |
| Conscientiousness | | | | | | 1 | .406** |
| Relationship Satisfaction | | | | | | | 1 |

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

To determine the relationship between personality traits, romantic relationship satisfaction and self-esteem, Pearson correlation was computed for females. As shown in table 6, personality traits openness to experience ($R = .479, p < .05$) conscientiousness ($R = .427, p < .05$), extraversion ($R = .416, p < .05$), agreeableness ($R = .540, p < .05$) and neuroticism ($R = -.419, p < .05$) and romantic relationship satisfaction ($R = .318, p < .05$) were significantly correlated with self-esteem.

Sociodemographic Characteristics

In this study used a Personal Information Form was used to collect information about the participants' sociodemographic characteristics, including their gender, age, education level, relationship status and relationship duration.

DISCUSSION

According to table 1, the correlation between Openness to experience and Self-Esteem was found to be 0.383. This positive value indicated positive correlation between these two variables. The data suggested that individuals who are more open to experiences tend to have higher levels of self-esteem and this relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance alone (Niazi,2017, Kaur & Singh,2019).

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Based on table 1, a significant positive correlation coefficient between Openness to experience and Relationship Satisfaction was found to be 0.283. Therefore, the data suggests that individuals who are more open to experiences tend to report higher romantic relationship satisfaction, and this relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance alone (Zhou et al., 2017). Openness in a relationship, understood as the ability to reveal one's feelings, thoughts, needs and fears, is associated with a higher satisfaction with the relationship (Pagani et al., 2015).

Conscientiousness was found to have positive and significant correlation 0.390 with self-esteem. Previous research conducted also found that emotionally stable, extraverted, and conscientious people had higher self-esteem at every age than emotionally unstable, introverted, and less conscientious people (Erol & Orth, 2011). High self-esteem individuals were found to be more emotionally stable, extraverted, and conscientious and were somewhat agreeable and open to experience (Carey, 2024, Zheleva et al., 2024).

Conscientiousness was found to have positive and significant correlation of 0.415 with romantic relationship satisfaction. Research studies also indicated that high conscientiousness lead to more satisfaction with romantic relationship (Ricafronte et al., 2024). In fact, conscientiousness in both partners has been associated with greater relationship satisfaction (Sayehmiri et al., 2020, Savard, et al., 2024). Individuals with self-compassion high level of conscientiousness make much effort for their improvement and resolving their committed mistakes. For this reason, they have high motivation to maintain relationships (Maleki et al., 2019).

The results also revealed that agreeableness was significantly associated with self-esteem and romantic relationship satisfaction. In several studies agreeableness vs antagonism was positively correlated (Niazi, 2017). as well as found to be significant positive predictors of self-esteem (Amirazodi & Amirazodi, 2011, Javed & Ramzan, 2022). Agreeableness is the personality trait most strongly linked to relationships between people. It also acts as a moderator of a variety of interpersonal behaviors, describing individual differences in likeability, pleasantness, and harmony in relationships with others (Shen & Lan, 2023).

Additionally similar to the previous findings and the hypothesis it was found that neuroticism had a significantly negative relationship with self-esteem and romantic relationship satisfaction. It has been found that people high in self-esteem tend to be low on neuroticism (Yao, 2020, Kenneth, 2014). On the other hand, level of romantic relationship satisfaction in intimate heterosexual partners correlated with low neuroticism (Malouff, 2010). Neuroticism was considered to be detrimental to romantic relationship satisfaction and changes in neuroticism accompanied parallel changes in relationship satisfaction (O'Meara & South, 2019).

According to Table 1, the relationship between extraversion and self-esteem came out to be positive and significant at 0.01 levels. Self-esteem and extraversion have been found to be positively correlated in several previous studies (Fagundes et al., 2021; Zeigler-Hill, 2015). Self-esteem increased on average for those who wanted to decrease their negative emotionality or increase their extraversion (Allemand, 2024).

Meanwhile the correlation between extraversion and romantic relationship satisfaction also was found to be significant and positive. A study reported that extroverts are more

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enthusiastic, effective communicators and high on positive affect which leads to their higher romantic relationship satisfaction (Jain & Singh, 2019). Also, it was discovered that emotional intelligence acted as a mediating variable in the relationship between extraversion and relationship satisfaction (Baker, 2022).

Self-esteem and romantic relationship satisfaction were also found to be positively correlated. The correlation was significant at 0.01 levels. Several studies show a positive relationship between self-esteem and romantic relationship satisfaction, implying that those who have high self-esteem experience higher romantic relationship satisfaction (Jaffar et al., 2021; Pronk, 2020). High self-esteem was researched to be beneficial in romantic relationships. Furthermore, research suggested that high self-esteem has a positive effect also on the partner's happiness with the relationship (Erol, & Orth, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that there is a positive relationship between openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and romantic relationship satisfaction whereas there is a negative relationship between neuroticism and romantic relationship satisfaction in millennials. It was also found that there is a positive relationship between openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and self-esteem whereas there is a negative relationship between neuroticism and self-esteem in millennials. There is a positive relationship between romantic relationship satisfaction and self-esteem in millennials. Lastly, this study adds to the growing body of knowledge that personality, romantic relationship satisfaction and self-esteem share a vital relationship and openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and high self-esteem are beneficial to satisfying romantic relationship.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Sharma, T. (2025). The Effect of Personality on Romantic Relationship Satisfaction in Millennials: With the Mediating Role of Self Esteem. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(3), 948-959. DIP:18.01.086.20251303, DOI:10.25215/1303.086