

Role Of Pro-Socialness In Creating Social Entrepreneurial Intention: A Study Of Omani Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

Purpose: To examine how pro-socialness affects students' social entrepreneurial intentions.

Design: Data was collected from 400 undergraduate Omani students, and pro-socialness was incorporated into the model developed by Tran and Korflesch (2016) to understand their social entrepreneurial intentions. This was analyzed using AMOS structural equation model analyses. Serial mediation analysis using PROCESS MACRO tested the specific indirect effects of the mediators in the research model.

Findings: Pro-socialness significantly influences social entrepreneurial self-efficacy and outcome expectations. A person with high pro-sociality will have a strong belief in their abilities and expect favorable outcomes from starting a social venture. The findings verified the effect and positive influence of social entrepreneurial outcome expectations on social entrepreneurial intention. This implies that pro-socialness is not a sufficient antecedent for intention, but can induce self-efficacy, which develops favorable outcome expectations and ultimately leads to intention.

Originality: This study provides an empirical validation of Tran and Von Korflesch's (2016) model to study social entrepreneurial intentions. It examines how socially relevant traits develop such intentions, and validated the serial mediating model, proving that pro-socialness indirectly influences intention through self-efficacy and outcome expectation in series. This serial mediation effect has not been examined in extant literature.

Practical Implications: The findings suggest the need to inculcate pro-sociality among students. Policymakers can consider various methods to inculcate pro-socialness among university students to develop social entrepreneurial self-efficacy, such as introducing social entrepreneurship into the curriculum.

Keywords Social Entrepreneurial self-efficacy, Pro-socialness, Social entrepreneurial outcome expectations, Social entrepreneurial intention

1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is “an entrepreneurial activity with an embedded social purpose” (Austin et al., 2006). It can be considered as a catalyst to conquer the various disparities

(economic, social, and political) in society, thereby facilitating economic and social development (Tiwari et al., 2017). Social entrepreneurs identify new opportunities to create social value (Ahuja et al., 2019). They start by addressing the problems in their locality, which

have international relevance, such as water accessibility or waste management (Santos, 2012).

There is a huge potential for social entrepreneurship in Oman because the country tries to encourage the role of the non-public sector within in the economy, in addition to the point of interest of enterprises on sustainability. There is scope for social entrepreneurship throughout all areas in Oman through getting to know from Omani heritage techniques which include the development of falaj (irrigation) systems, making garments out of reused materials, etc. (Prins, 2016). In order to mold social entrepreneurs in the country, Knowledge Oman—one of the leading platforms in Oman for social innovation and knowledge sharing—has initiated different activities. Oman's Social Enterprise Accelerator Program is designed to offer training and mentoring support to create projects that have a social impact by generating solutions for the country through entrepreneurship. In order to predict individuals' behavior, their intentions can be considered as a starting point. (Ajzen, 1991). According to Ernst (2011), social entrepreneurial intention (SEI) is a "self-acknowledged conviction by a person that they intend to become a social entrepreneur and consciously plan to do so at some point in the future." In this context, an understanding of the factors that drive the entrepreneurial intentions of Omani youth is important.

Mair and Noboa (2006) developed the first conceptual model to analyze SEI by merging the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and Shapero's entrepreneurial event model, two commonly used theories to study entrepreneurial intent. Later researchers have used extended models of TPB to study SEI (Tran and Von Korflesch, 2016). Since there was no evidence in the literature with regard to the application of social cognitive career theory (SCCT) for studying SEI, Tran and Von Korflesch (2016) extended the SCCT and developed a model to study SEI. There has been a significant increase in the number of empirical studies in the field of social entrepreneurship Tan et al. (2019). But the new social entrepreneurship (SE) model by Tran and Von Korflesch (2016) requires further testing (Tan et al., 2020). Even

though there are various research studies on the effect of personal traits and background influences on SEI, the impact of more "social" relevant factors such as pro-socialness is missing in the literature (Tan et al., 2020). Further, extant literature also lacks studies on Omani students' social entrepreneurial intention. Thus, this research tries to fill these gaps through analyzing the impact of pro-socialness on SEI in the Omani context using the framework of the SE model by Tran and Von Korflesch (2006).

This research adds to the body of knowledge on social entrepreneurship in a number of ways. First, we extend the research on SEI by exploring the role of pro-socialness in developing entrepreneurial intention using the SE model. Second, our research is one of the first empirical efforts to probe the serial mediation effect, which proved that pro-socialness indirectly influences SEI through entrepreneurial self-efficacy and expectation in series. Third, this research helps us to understand how pro-socialness contributes to the formation of SEI of Omani students. This could help policymakers design a social entrepreneurship curriculum aimed at developing such intentions.

The remaining part of this research paper is organized as follows: Section 2 analyzes the literature and suggests hypotheses for the current study; the research methodology is explained under section 3; the data analysis results presented under section 4; and the last section concludes with a discussion of the findings and implications for future research.

Review of literature and hypothesis

Social entrepreneurship intention models

To examine entrepreneurial intentions, researchers have developed a variety of models. One of the earliest models to investigate entrepreneurial intention was Shapero's entrepreneurial event model. (Shapero and Soko, 1982). Later, researchers used the TPB theory (Ajzen, 1991) to study entrepreneurial intentions. The other models are the TPB entrepreneurial model (TPBEM; Krueger and Carsrud, 1993) and SCCT (Lent et al., 1994). Many research studies have been conducted using these models. In order to explore SEI, researchers have used several of

these entrepreneurial intention models in the field of social entrepreneurship. The first model to study SEI was developed by combining TPB and Shapero's entrepreneurial event model (Mair and Noboa, 2006). Following this line of research, various studies have been conducted to study SEI (Tran and Von Korflesch, 2016). As most of the research on SEI was built on the extension of TPB, Tran and Korflesch (2016) extended the SCCT to develop a model to SEI. According to the model, the antecedents of SEI are personality traits, contextual factors, social entrepreneurial self-efficacy (SESE), and social entrepreneurial outcome expectations (SEOE).

Researchers have studied the role of personality traits in the formation of SEI which includes emotional intelligence, proactivity creativity, self-efficacy compassionate love, risk taking propensity, hardship in life, and moral judgment competence (Tan et al., 2020) Pro-socialness is one of the psychological traits that distinguishes social and traditional entrepreneurs, and its significance in the establishment of SEI has not been investigated in the literature. (Tan et al., 2020).

Any act that is intended to help others is referred to as pro-socialness (Jensen, 2016). Pro-socialness is defined as "an enduring tendency to think about the welfare and rights of other people, to feel concern and empathy for them, and to act in a way that benefits them" (Penner and Finkelstein, 1998, p. 526). Research on social entrepreneurship revealed that the selflessness of their deeds drives social entrepreneurs to work for a social cause (Ernst, 2011). Mair and Noboa (2006) observed a special trait for social entrepreneurs: "[...] many of these attributes may equally apply to business entrepreneurial behaviour, with one exception, receptivity to the feelings of others, or put differently, empathy" (p. 123f.). Social entrepreneurship is about finding and addressing the needs of society (Alvord et al., 2004; Lumpkin et al., 2013).

Pro-socialness, SESE, and SEOE

We explore the mechanism through which pro-socialness influences SEI. Through a serial mediation mechanism, we propose that pro-socialness indirectly influences social

entrepreneurial intention. Three important relationships are proposed as the framework for a serial mediation process. First, we propose that pro-socialness influences students' SESE. Second, we speculate that an increase in SESE positively influences SEOE. Finally, SEOE positively influence entrepreneurial intention. Following that, we present an explanation for each major relationship in the serial mediation process, drawing on the literature as well as the SCCT and SE models.

According to Bandura (1986) self-efficacy is "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of actions required to attain designated types of performance" (p. 391). Personality can influence the judgment or beliefs of a person in a given circumstance (Tran et al., 2016). Tran and Von Korflesch (2016) defined SESE as "the dynamic set of beliefs about one's capacity to start a new social venture and succeed in carrying it out."

Outcome expectations are the expected results of performing a particular action (Bandura, 1986). By applying this in the social entrepreneurial context, Tran and Von Korflesch (2016) defined social entrepreneurial outcome expectation as a person's expectations regarding the consequences of being a social entrepreneur. We proposes that pro-socialness influences a person's belief in their ability to start a social business because it is manifested in compassion and care for others, as well as a commitment to behave in a manner which benefits others. Hence, we test the following hypotheses:

H1: Pro-socialness positively influences SESE.

H2: Pro-socialness positively influences SEOE.

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy has been found to be a predictor of entrepreneurial intent in previous studies. The following hypothesis is based on SCCT and the SE model.

H3: SESE positively influences social entrepreneurial intention.

According to SCCT (Lent et al., 1994), self-efficacy and outcome expectations are predictors of entrepreneurial intention. There is a positive association between self-efficacy and outcome

expectations, according to the literature. (Landry, 2003; Lent et al., 2008). According to the SE and the greater body of research, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H4: SESE positively influences SEOE.

H5: SEOE positively influences social entrepreneurial intention.

Consistent with this overall body of work, we specifically argue that pro-socialness influences SEI through a serial mediation process. Formally, we put forward the following hypothesis:

H6: The relationship between pro-socialness and social entrepreneurial intention is serially mediated, such that pro-socialness enhances students' social entrepreneurial intention through the mediating influence of SESE and, in turn, SEOE.

<Figure 1 here>

2. Methodology

Data collection

We proposed to study how pro-socialness influences the SEI of undergraduate university students using the SE model developed by Tran and Von Korflesch (2016). Cross sectional data was collected using convenience sampling by distributing 450 questionnaires among UG students belonging to one of the oldest private universities in the Sultanate of Oman. The original English questionnaire was translated into Arabic for data collection. The target population was UG students from a university receiving entrepreneurship education. A total of 400 of the 450 surveys distributed to students were completed and returned.

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Majority of respondents (89.4%) belonged to the age group of 18–24 years. About 88% of the respondents were enrolled in a bachelor's program and the remaining for a diploma program. Of the respondents, 64.4% were from non-science backgrounds and 35.6% were from science backgrounds; 12.5 percent of respondents were in their second year of study, 49 percent

were in their third year, and 38.5 percent were in their final year of study. All of the respondents had taken an entrepreneurship course, according to the results.

Measurements

All reflective constructs were measured using multi-item scales, and measures were chosen from previous research. Pro-socialness was measured on a 7-point scale using the Prosociality Scale developed by Caprara et al. (2005). SESE and social entrepreneurial intention were measured using two 3-item scales developed by Hockerts (2017). SEOE was measured by adapting the scale used in the study by Aure et al. (2019).

Analysis

The research model was analyzed using AMOS structural equation model (SEM) analyses. To assess the specific indirect effects of the mediators in the research model, a serial mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS MACRO.

Normality

To perform structural equation modelling, it is mandatory that the data follow a normal distribution, and the skewness and kurtosis approach was used to assess the normality of data (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Byrne, 2016). All of the items' statistical skewness and kurtosis values were within the required ranges of 3 and 8, respectively (Kline, 2011).

3. Results

Measurement model's reliability and validity

We used confirmatory factor analysis to look at the measurement model in order to analyze the measures' reliability and validity (CFA). The CFA was carried out with four latent constructs and 22 items. The measurement model was validated by inspecting the reliability and validity of the measurement scales and the overall fit of the measurement model. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were used to determine the scales' reliability, while standardized regression loadings and average

variance were used to determine the scales' convergence validity (AVE). To confirm the discriminant validity of the measurement model, the square root of the AVE and inter-construct correlation coefficients were evaluated. (see Table 1).

<Table 1 here>

All of the constructs had Cronbach's alpha and CR values more than 0.70, indicating construct reliability. All of the items' standardized regression loadings to their respective latent variables were more than 0.5 and statistically significant at the 5% level.; all constructs had an AVE more than 0.5, ranging from 0.720 for pro-socialness to 0.783 for SEOE, indicating good convergence validity., as endorsed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) and Hair (2014).

The square root of the AVE was compared to the inter-construct correlation coefficients to determine the discriminant validity of the measurement scales. Table 2 reveals that the square root of each construct's AVE is more than the inter-construct correlation coefficients, implying discriminant validity. (Hair, 2014; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Finally, as suggested by Hair (2014) the measurement model was tested. The recommended fit indices threshold values of CFI, NFI, and TLI were greater than 0.90, while the RMSEA and χ^2 /df cutoff levels were less than 0.08 and 5, respectively (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Hair, 2014). The suggested measurement model's results revealed a 3.192 ($\chi^2= 648.023$, df = 203) chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio, CFI = 0.951, TLI = 0.944, IFI = 0.951, NFI = 0.930, and RMSEA = 0.074, indicating an adequate model fit for the measurement model.

<Table 2 here>

Structural Equation Model

After the measurement model's reliability and validity were validated, structural equation modeling was used to test the hypotheses. In addition to chi-square, goodness of fit indices such as CFI, NFI, IFI, TLI, and RMSEA were performed to measure model fitness. The

calculated SEM results are summarized: chi-square to degrees of freedom= 3.182 (df = 204), CFI = 0.951, TLI = 0.944, IFI = 0.951, NFI = 0.930, and RMSEA = 0.074, showing that the proposed conceptual model was acceptable, as stated by Hair 2014.

Path analysis

The study tested the five direct hypotheses (H1–H5) proposed in this study using SEM, and the results provided empirical support for four of these (H1, H2, H3, and H5). The significant beta coefficient of each hypothesized relationship in the conceptual model along with the R^2 values were inspected. The unstandardized path coefficients and path significance are shown in Table 3 and Figure 2. SEI was significantly and positively predicted by SEOE ($\beta = 0.526$; SEI = 0.056; $p = 0.000$), with an R^2 of 0.495. SESE had an insignificant direct effect on social entrepreneurial intention ($\beta = 0.057$; SEI = 0.066; $p=0.387$), thereby not supporting H4. The results verified that social entrepreneurial outcome expectation is positively influenced by pro-socialness ($\beta = 0.190$; SE = 0.072; $p = 0.008$) and SESE ($\beta = 0.609$; SE = 0.072; $p = 0.000$), and they together explained 65.2% of the variation in SEOE. Furthermore, prosocial behavior was found to have a substantial positive effect on social entrepreneurial self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.890$; SE = 0.051; $p = 0.00$), accounting for 67.4 percent of the variation in self-efficacy.

<Table 3 here>

<Figure 2 here>

Results of mediation models

The sixth hypothesis (H6), which states the indirect effect of pro-socialness on SEI through SESE and SEOE, was tested using serial mediation analysis with model number 4 of SPSS Process Macro recommended by Hayes 2013. In terms of the presence of full mediation, the results corroborated H6, meaning that the direct influence of pro-socialness on SEI is minor, but the indirect effect is significant (see Table 4).

There was a significant positive link between proactive personality, SESE, social entrepreneurial outcome expectation, and SEI,

according to a bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval (CI) for the total indirect impact (effect = 0.4947; BootSE = 0.0587; CI95 [0.3848, 0.6159]). It is clear that proactive personality and SEI have no direct relationship (effect = 0.0239; SE = 0.0617; CI95 [-0.1453, 0.0974]). The effect size was stronger in the serial mediation path (effect = 0.2231; BootSE = 0.0389; BootCI [0.1493, 0.3038]), indicating that pro-socialness has an indirect effect on SEI via self-efficacy and outcome expectation in series (effect = 0.2231; BootSE = 0.0389; BootCI [0.1493, 0.3038]) thus providing empirical support for H6.

<Table 4 here>

<Figure 3 here>

4. Discussion

This study examined the mechanism through which pro-socialness influences social entrepreneurial intention. It incorporated pro-socialness into the SE model developed by Tran and Von Korflesch (2016) to understand the antecedents of SEI among Omani undergraduate students. The study tested four direct and three mediation hypotheses. The results of the SEM and mediation analysis provided empirical support for all the hypotheses except H4 proposed by the study. The results indicate that pro-socialness exerts a significant influence on SESE and SEOE, thereby supporting H1 and H2. The findings imply that someone with a high level of pro-sociality has high self-confidence in their abilities to establish a social initiative and has positive expectations from it.

The results show that SEOE have an impact on SEI. SEOE positively influence SEI. This is consistent with the findings of the study by Aure et al (2019). The study findings do not show a direct link between SESE and social entrepreneurial intent. According to Aure et al prior findings, SESE alone may not be sufficient to predict social entrepreneurial intention (2019).

While testing the effect of pro-sociality on SEI, we found an insignificant direct effect, while significant indirect effects were observed through the mediators, SESE and SEOE. The mediation analysis found full mediation, with the

connection between pro-sociality and social entrepreneurial intention being fully mediated in a sequential pattern by SESE and social entrepreneurial outcome expectation. This finding implies that pro-socialness is not a sufficient antecedent for SEI, but can induce SESE, which helps to develop favorable SEOE and ultimately leads to SEI.

Research and practice implications

Theoretical Contributions

The model developed by Tran and Von Korflesch (2016) for studying SEI is empirically validated in this study. The study also examined the role of more socially relevant traits, such as pro-socialness, in developing SEI. The serial mediating model, which established that pro-socialness indirectly promotes social entrepreneurial intention through entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial outcome anticipation in a series of steps, was also verified in this study. This serial mediation effect has not been examined in existing SEI research.

Implications for Practice

This study examined the role of pro-socialness in developing SEI. The study proposes that policy makers consider various methods through which pro-socialness can be inculcated among university students. SESE can be developed by introducing social entrepreneurship into the curriculum.

Limitations and future research directions

The present study was conducted in Oman, and therefore cannot be considered generalizable. There is scope for future studies to validate the model in the context of other countries to arrive at a broader understanding of the impact pro-socialness can have on SEI. Further, this study identified only pro-socialness, SESE, and SEOE as antecedents of SEI. There are other relevant propositions stated in the framework created by Tran and Von Korflesch (2016). Future studies can be conducted by extending the current research model using these constructs.

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Figure 1. A Conceptual Model of Social entrepreneurial Intention

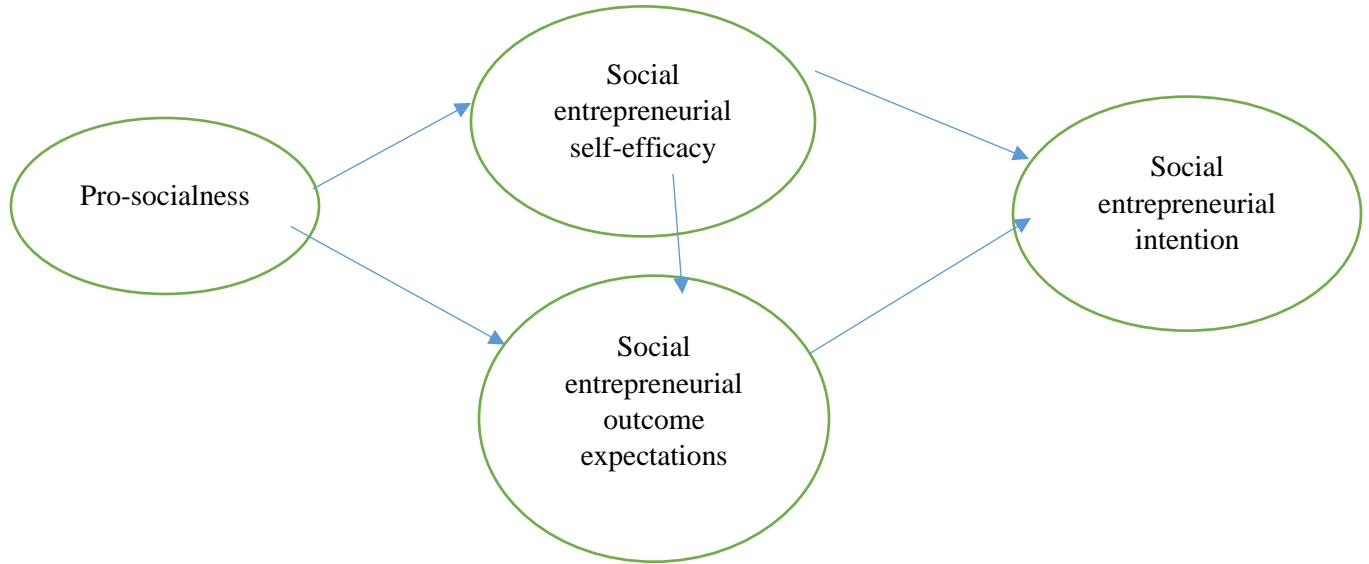


Figure 2. Validated structural model

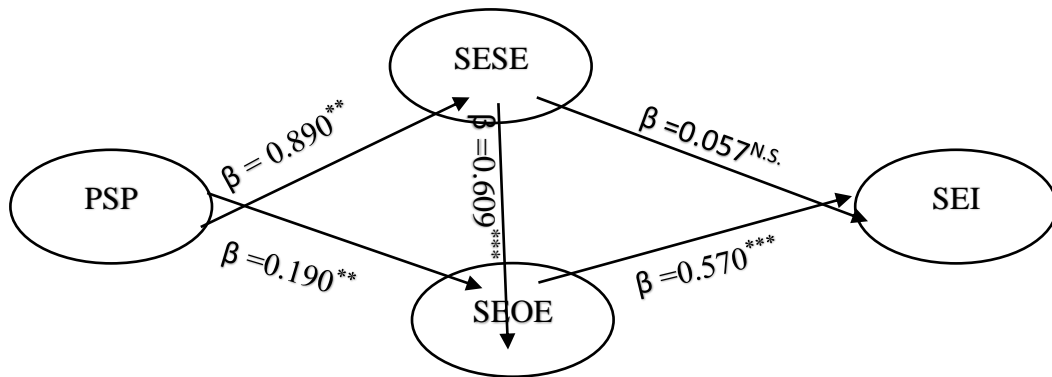


Table 1 Convergent validity and construct reliability

Factor	Item	Standardized loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Pro-socialness	PSP1	0.803	0.968	0.969	0.720

	PSP2	0.806			
	PSP3	0.812			
	PSP4	0.796			
	PSP5	0.888			
	PSP6	0.886			
	PSP7	0.895			
	PSP8	0.886			
	PSP9	0.861			
	PSP10	0.846			
	PSP11	0.832			
	PSP12	0.861			
SESE	SESE1	0.859	0.890	0.891	0.732
	SESE2	0.890			
	SESE3	0.816			
SEOE	SEOE1	0.884	0.935	0.935	0.783
	SEOE2	0.880			
	SEOE3	0.908			
	SEOE4	0.868			
Social Entrepreneurial Intention	SEI1	0.835	0.895	0.898	0.745
	SEI2	0.912			
	SEI3	0.841			

Table 2 Discriminant Validity

	SEOE	PSP	SESE	SEI
Social entrepreneurial outcome expectation	0.885			
Pro-socialness	0.719	0.848		
SESE	0.800	0.821	0.856	
Social entrepreneurial intention	0.703	0.500	0.592	0.863

Note: Off-diagonal numbers are inter-construct correlation coefficients; diagonal elements in bold represent square root of AVE.

Table 3 Results of path analysis

Hypothesis	β	SE	CR	P value	Decision
Pro-socialness \rightarrow SESE	0.890	0.051	17.482	0.000	Supported
Pro-socialness \rightarrow SEOE	0.190	0.072	2.656	0.008	Supported
SESE \rightarrow SEOE	0.609	0.072	8.511	0.000	Supported
SESE \rightarrow SEI	0.057	0.066	0.866	0.387	Not Supported
SEOE \rightarrow SEI	0.570	0.073	7.861	0.000	Supported

Table 4 Indirect effect of pro-socialness on social entrepreneurial intention through SESE and SEOE

Antecedent	Consequent								
	M ₁ (SESE)			M ₂ (Social entrepreneurial outcome expectation)			Y (Social Entrepreneurial Intention)		
	Estimate	95% BC Bootstrap CI		Estimate	95% BC Bootstrap CI		Estimate	95% BC Bootstrap CI	
		Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper
Total effect						0.4738 (0.0444)	0.3865	0.5611	
Direct effect						-0.0239 (0.0617)	-0.1454	0.0974	
X (PSP)	0.8585 (0.0357)	0.7883	0.9287	0.3044 (0.0523)	0.2016	0.4073			
M ₁ (SESE)				0.4665 (0.0468)	0.3745	0.5585	0.1188 (0.0592)	0.0023	0.2353
M ₂ (SEOE)							0.5571 (0.0566)	0.4459	0.6684
	R² = 0.5899			R² = 0.5749			R² = 0.4299		
Indirect effects									
Indirect Path	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI					

Total indirect effect	0.4947	0.0587	0.385	0.615 9
PSP→SESE→SEI	0.1020	0.0506	0.007	0.207 6
PSP→SEOE→SEI	0.1696	0.045	0.0919	0.266 0
PSP→SESE→ SEOE→SEI	0.2231	0.039	0.1493	0.303 8

Notes: N= 403; Boot strap sample size = 5,000; Figures in parenthesis