

Social Support on Life Satisfaction: A Meta-Analysis Study

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Abstrack

The present meta-analytic study investigates the relationship between social support and life satisfaction by synthesizing findings from diverse empirical studies across cultural, age, and methodological contexts. A total of nine peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2025 were included, comprising 5,035 participants from varied demographic backgrounds. A random-effects model was fitted in Jamovi to account for potential heterogeneity across studies. The analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between social support and life satisfaction ($r = 0.525$, $p < 0.001$). Considerable heterogeneity was observed ($I^2 = 90.98\%$), suggesting substantial variability in effect sizes. Despite this, the direction and magnitude of the association remained consistent. No significant publication bias was detected, indicating the robustness of the findings. These results highlight social support as a critical predictor of life satisfaction and psychological well-being across different stages of life. The study underscores the importance of fostering supportive social environments in both clinical and community settings.

Keywords: social support, life satisfaction, meta-analysis

Abstrak

Studi meta-analitik ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara dukungan sosial dan kepuasan hidup dengan mensintesis temuan dari berbagai studi empiris yang berbeda dalam konteks budaya, kelompok usia, dan pendekatan metodologis. Sebanyak sembilan studi yang dipublikasikan antara tahun 2015 hingga 2025 dianalisis, melibatkan total 5.035 partisipan dari latar belakang demografis yang beragam. Model efek acak diterapkan menggunakan perangkat lunak Jamovi untuk mengakomodasi potensi heterogenitas antar studi. Hasil analisis menunjukkan adanya korelasi positif yang signifikan antara dukungan sosial dan kepuasan hidup ($r = 0,525$; $p < 0,001$). Tingkat heterogenitas yang tinggi teridentifikasi ($I^2 = 90,98\%$), yang mengindikasikan variasi efek yang substansial. Meskipun demikian, arah dan kekuatan hubungan tetap konsisten. Tidak ditemukan bias publikasi yang signifikan, sehingga memperkuat validitas temuan. Hasil ini menegaskan bahwa dukungan sosial merupakan faktor prediktif penting dalam meningkatkan kepuasan hidup dan kesejahteraan psikologis individu di berbagai tahap kehidupan.

Kata kunci: dukungan sosial, kepuasan hidup, meta-analisis

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INTRODUCTION

Life satisfaction is a fundamental aspect of achieving happiness and finding meaning in one's life. It reflects an individual's overall evaluation of their quality of life, both across time and at specific moments, based on personal values and self-defined standards (Chen et al., 2023; Yildırım et al., 2024). As a cognitive component of psychological well-being, life satisfaction has been identified as a key indicator of an individual's ability to adapt to life circumstances, positively influencing health, longevity, and the quality of social relationships (Rogowska et al., 2021).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that life satisfaction is closely associated with physical and mental health, healthy behaviors, academic achievement, work productivity, and interpersonal relationships (Miller et al., 2019). Individuals with strong social ties, including those in familial, marital, or peer contexts, tend to report higher levels of life satisfaction than those lacking such support (Antaramian, 2017). Social support, whether from family, friends, or the broader community, not only helps individuals cope with psychological stress but also enhances feelings of security, value, and purpose. For instance, Povedano-Diaz et al. (2019) found a significant positive relationship between family support and life satisfaction among Spanish adolescent girls. Similarly, Ooi et al. (2022) reported that low levels of life satisfaction among university students are associated with higher risks of depression, anxiety, and stress.

A cross-cultural study by Schunk et al. (2021) confirmed the link between life dissatisfaction and negative experiences such as bullying among students in Germany. Among older adults, social support has been found to mediate the relationship between forgiveness and life satisfaction (Tian & Wang, 2020) and to improve psychological well-being in nursing home residents (Soimah & Hartiani, 2020). Among working adults, including healthcare professionals, social support has been shown to foster resilience and mitigate depression, ultimately improving life satisfaction (Wu et al., 2022). Likewise, individuals with substance use disorders experience increased resilience and positive affect through perceived social support (Yang et al., 2020).

The availability of trustworthy social connections plays a crucial role in one's mental well-being (Amati et al., 2018). In academic contexts, students who are satisfied with their learning environment and peer support report higher levels of life satisfaction (Antaramian, 2017). Older adults who receive community-based care services also tend to show greater life satisfaction (Wang et al., 2023). In contrast, low life satisfaction can have detrimental effects, particularly for young people, contributing to anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and technology addiction (Cavioni et al., 2021; Longstreet & Brooks, 2017; Jensen et al., 2021).

Diener et al. (1985) argue that the fulfillment of needs, goals, and personal expectations shapes life satisfaction. Its evaluation encompasses various life domains such as health, relationships, career, spirituality, and leisure (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). Factors such as social connections, employment and income, physical health, and social roles are strong predictors of life satisfaction, whereas unemployment and psychological distress are associated with lower satisfaction levels (Diener & Ryan, 2009; Rogowska et al., 2021).

Social support, as one of these key variables, is particularly critical during transitional life phases, such as the shift from high school to university. Students undergoing such changes often face psychological, academic, and social challenges that can be mitigated by supportive family and peer relationships (Chen et al., 2023; Ma,



2019). Supportive environments enable students to cope with stress, meet basic needs, and maintain psychological well-being all of which contribute to higher life satisfaction.

However, despite growing empirical evidence, few meta-analytic studies have systematically examined the relationship between social support and life satisfaction across diverse age groups. Most existing reviews focus on limited populations, often lacking statistical synthesis or moderation analysis to explore contextual factors such as age, gender, or cultural background. This gap is critical, as prior findings indicate that the source and effectiveness of social support may vary by developmental stage and psychosocial context (Bing et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021). Additionally, two key theoretical models, the direct effect model and the buffering model, provide important perspectives in understanding this relationship. The direct effect model suggests that social support universally enhances well-being, while the buffering model posits that social support protects individuals from the negative consequences of stress and adversity (Sarafino, 2014).

Given the theoretical significance and practical importance of understanding this relationship, the present study aims to conduct a comprehensive meta-analysis that synthesizes quantitative findings from empirical studies published between 2015 and 2025. Using a systematic search strategy, inclusion criteria, and robust statistical analysis, this study seeks to estimate the overall strength of the relationship between social support and life satisfaction. Furthermore, it evaluates between-study heterogeneity and tests for potential publication bias. The findings of this study are expected to provide evidence-based insights that can guide interventions and policies aimed at enhancing life satisfaction through social support across different stages of life.

METHOD

This study is a meta-analysis examining the relationship between social support and life satisfaction, based on results from primary research published between 2015 and 2025. The study population comprises the general population (from children to the elderly) and is not limited to specific clinical subjects. Data collection was conducted using the PRISMA 2009 protocol, which includes the stages of identification, screening, selection, and inclusion. Data sources were obtained from the PubMed and Scopus databases using the keywords: “life satisfaction,” “*kepuasan hidup*”, “social support,” and “*dukungan sosial*.” Based on the search and selection results, nine studies met the inclusion criteria: a) quantitative studies with a correlational or regression design, b) scientific publications in reputable and internationally indexed journals, c) use of the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) tool for life satisfaction and the MSPSS for social support, d) Complete statistical data available for effect size calculations, e) Population encompassing various age ranges. The exclusion criteria were: a) non-quantitative studies, b) studies not presenting adequate statistical data, c) studies not examining direct relationships between variables, and d) studies using overly specific populations.



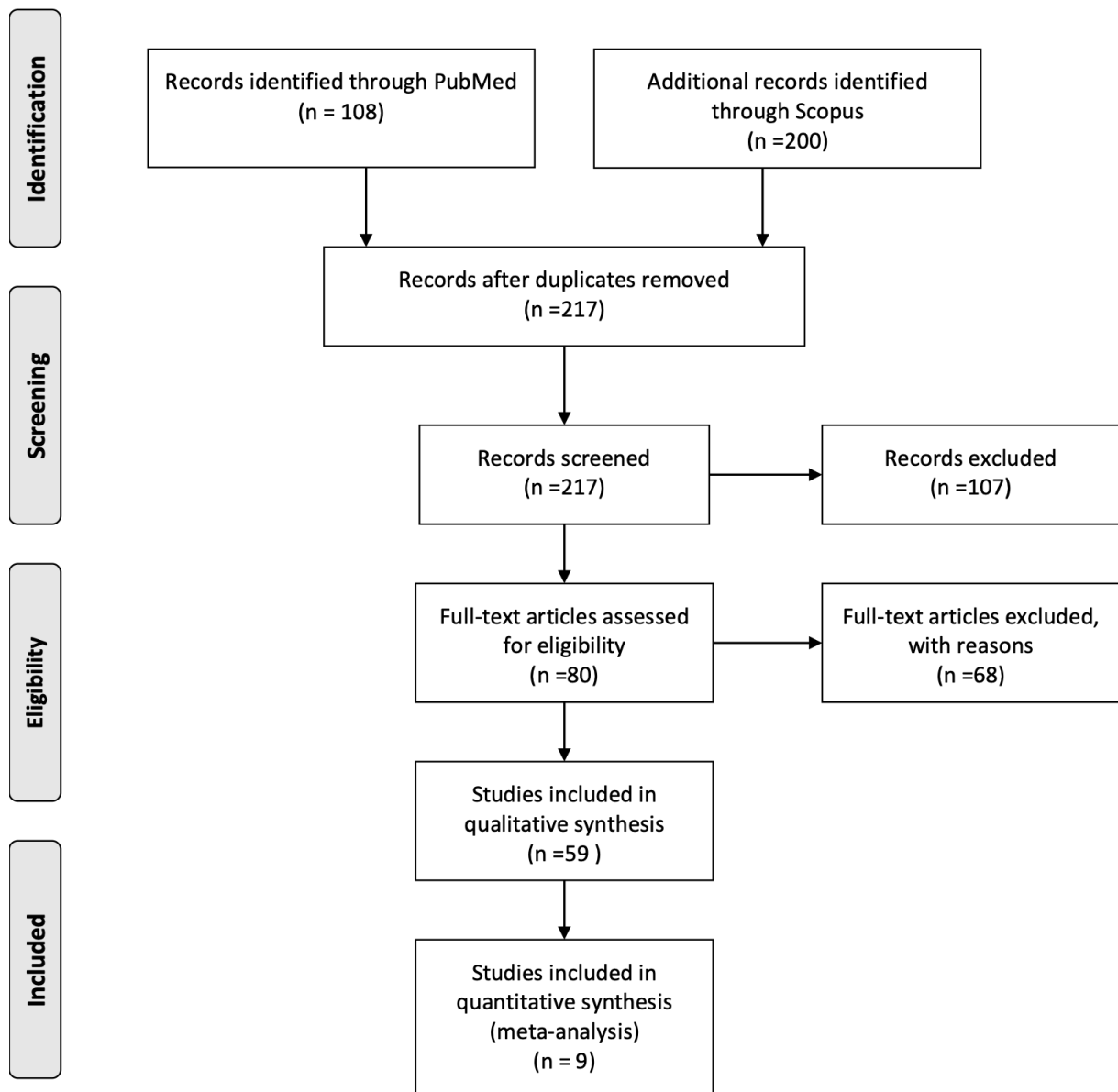


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Chart

Based on Figure 1, A total of nine single studies conducted between 2019 and 2025 were included in the analysis, involving a cumulative sample size of 5,035 participants. The number of participants per study ranged from 48 to 2,227. Sample characteristics were categorized into three age groups: adolescents, adults, and older adults. The adolescent group accounted for the largest proportion of participants, comprising 2,940 individuals across three studies. This was followed by the adult group, with 1,334 participants from four studies, and the older adult group, with 761 participants from two studies. The study with the largest sample size was conducted by Miao et al. (2020), involving 2,227 adolescent participants, whereas the study with the smallest sample size was conducted by Soimah et al. (2019), including only 48 older adult participants.



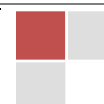
Data analysis was performed using Jamovi software version 2.6.44 with the MAJOR module. A random-effects model was used to calculate the combined effect size, with heterogeneity testing performed using Q, I², and Tau² statistics. Publication bias tests were performed using Fail-safe N, Egger’s Regression Test, and Begg and Mazumdar Rank Correlation. Results were visualized using forest plots and funnel plots.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Following the PRISMA 2009 guidelines and the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, nine eligible primary studies were identified and included in the present meta-analysis. All studies satisfied the required methodological rigor and employed validated instruments, specifically the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) to assess perceived social support and the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) to measure life satisfaction. These studies explored the association between the two constructs across diverse non-clinical populations, spanning age groups from adolescence to older adulthood.

Table 1.
Table Data

Authors	Social Scale	Support	Life Scale	Satisfaction With	N	r	Category
Yu et al., (2022)	Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)	Perceived Support	Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)		347	0.576	Adult
Wu et al., (2022)	Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)	Perceived Support	Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)		533	0.576	Adult
Soimah et al., (2019)	Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)	Perceived Support	Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)		48	0.475	Eldery
Kucar et al., (2025)	Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)	Perceived Support	Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)		363	0.480	Adolescents
Tian et al., (2020)	Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)	Perceived Support	Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)		713	0.430	Eldery
Ma et al., (2020)	Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)	Perceived Support	Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)		350	0.490	Adolescents
Yang et al. (2020)	Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)	Perceived Support	Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)		397	0.242	Adult
Miao et	Multidimensional		Satisfaction With		2227	0.470	Adolescents



al., (2019)	Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)	Life Scale (SWLS)					
Tserment seli et al., (2022)	Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)	Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)	57	0.423	Adult		

There were 9 studies conducted between 2019 and 2025, involving a total of 5,035 participants. Each study was a single study (study 1), with varying numbers of participants (N), ranging from 48 to 2,227 people. The sample characteristics in this study are divided into three categories: adults, adolescents, and the elderly. The largest sample came from the adolescent group, comprising 2,940 participants across three studies, followed by the adult group, with 1,334 participants across four studies, and the elderly group, with 761 participants across two studies. The study with the largest number of participants was conducted by Miao et al. (2020) with 2,227 adolescent participants, while the study with the fewest participants was conducted by Soimah et al. (2019) involving 48 elderly participants.

The variation in the number of participants and the diversity of age groups indicate that the studies analyzed involved a broad, heterogeneous population ranging from adolescents to the elderly. This shows that the research topic is relevant to various age groups. The samples presented in this table were obtained after a rigorous selection process following PRISMA guidelines and met the inclusion criteria established in this review. This diverse sample representation strengthens the external validity of the meta-analysis results, allowing conclusions to be drawn across a wider range of age groups and cultural backgrounds.

Table 2.
 Heterogeneity Statistics

Tau	Tau ²	I ²	H ²	R ²	df	Q	p
0.147	0.0215 (SE=0.0129)	90.98%	11.090	.	8.000	77.772	< .001

Based on Table 2, the heterogeneity analysis yielded a Tau value of 0.147 and a Tau² value of 0.0215 with a standard error of 0.0129. The I² value of 90.98% indicates that most of the variation between studies stems from actual differences in effect, not merely sampling error. The Q value of 77.772 with 8 degrees of freedom and a significance level of $p < 0.001$ reinforces the conclusion that there are significant differences between studies. These significant differences are attributed to varying sample characteristics that influence the relationship between social support and life satisfaction. Despite high heterogeneity, the direction of the relationship remains consistently positive, as seen from the 95% confidence interval for the true effect, which ranges from 0.219 to 0.831. Although this study did not conduct a formal moderator analysis, the high I² value indicates a strong need to explore underlying factors that may explain such variance. Future studies are encouraged to conduct subgroup analyses or meta-regressions to examine potential moderating effects of age, gender, cultural norms, and psychological traits such as hope, neuroticism, and extraversion. This indicates that



although the effect size varies across studies, all studies show the same direction of the relationship, namely, the greater the social support, the higher the life satisfaction.

Table 3.

Random-Effects Model

	Estimate	se	Z	p	CI Lower Bound	CI Upper Bound
Intercept	0.525	0.0538	9.75	<.001	0.419	0.631

Based on a meta-analysis of 9 studies examining the relationship between social support and life satisfaction, an effect estimate of 0.525 was obtained. This value indicates a positive relationship between the two variables. The analysis used a Random-Effects model with a τ^2 estimator, estimated via the Restricted Maximum-Likelihood method. The average correlation between social support and aspects of life satisfaction was calculated using Pearson's r , with a higher r indicating that an increase in social support is associated with higher life satisfaction. The standard error (SE) of the estimate is 0.0538 with a Z-score of 9.75.

The significance test in Table 3.2 yields a p-value <0.001, indicating statistically significant results. The 95% confidence interval for the effect estimate ranges from 0.419 to 0.631. These results indicate that all the studies analyzed show a consistent direction of association, with a consistent degree of correlation within that range. This is consistent with the study by Isik-Ercan et al. (2024), which found that perceived social support from immigrant families is positively correlated with life satisfaction. Similarly, research by Kućar et al. (2025) on students found that social support, particularly from family, is a significant predictor of life satisfaction, with a stronger positive correlation than support from friends or significant others. Additionally, Novara et al. (2023) also found that various sources and functions of social support contribute to increased life satisfaction.

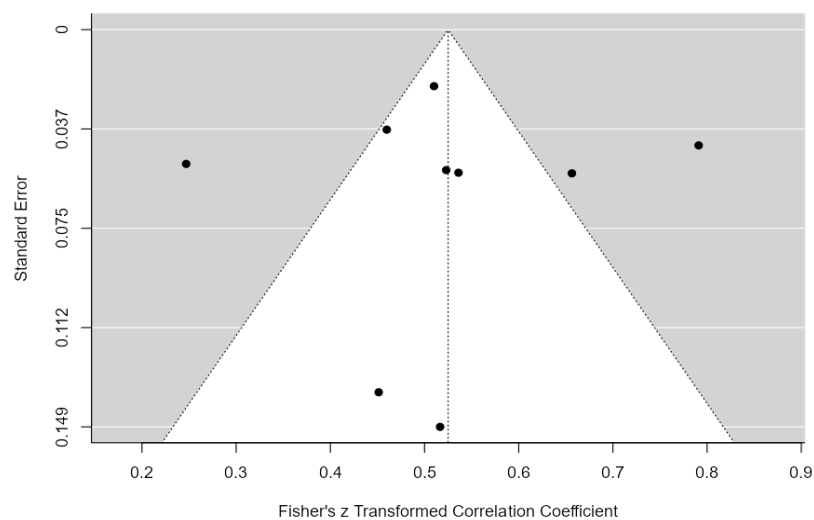


Figure 2. Funnel Plot



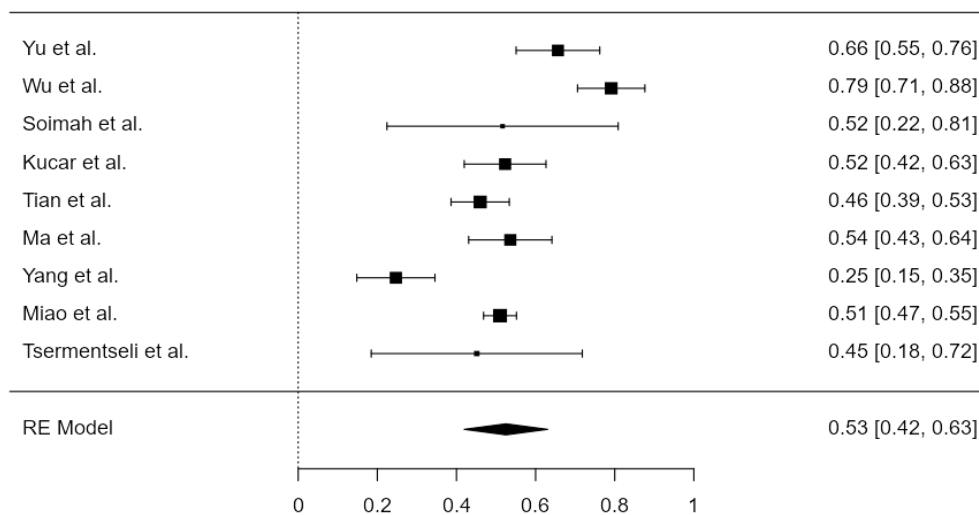


Figure 3. Forest Plot

Table 4.
 Publication Bias Assessment

Test Name	value	p
Fail-Safe N	3562.000	< .001
Begg and Mazumdar Rank Correlation	0.167	0.612
Egger's Regression	-0.264	0.791
Trim and Fill Number of Studies	2.000	.

Note. Fail-safe N Calculation Using the Rosenthal Approach

Based on Table 4 regarding Publication Bias Assessment, there are several statistical tests used to evaluate potential bias in meta-analyses:

- The Fail-Safe N value is 3.562 with $p < 0.001$. This value is very high, meaning that more than 3,500 additional studies with null (non-significant) results would be required to negate the significance of this meta-analysis. This indicates that the meta-analysis results are highly stable and unlikely to be influenced by publication bias.
- Egger's Regression Test yields a regression coefficient of -0.264 with a p-value of 0.791. This value is also not significant, further reinforcing the conclusion that there is no statistically significant publication bias, supported by the results of the Begg and Mazumdar test, which yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.167 with a p-value of 0.612, indicating no significant correlation between study effect rankings. This suggests that there is no notable publication bias.
- Trim and Fill estimated that only 2 additional studies may be "missing" due to publication bias. This number is small and insufficient to substantially affect the overall results.
- Based on the results of the Funnel Plot in Figure 4.2, which was used to evaluate potential publication bias, there were no noticeable patterns of asymmetry or indications that the points tended to concentrate on one side of the graph. This symmetrical distribution indicates no significant tendency toward publication bias.



This meta-analysis confirms a significant, positive association between social support and life satisfaction ($r = 0.525$), indicating that individuals who perceive stronger social support tend to report greater life satisfaction. Theoretically, this finding is in line with models that conceptualize social support as a multidimensional construct, comprising emotional, instrumental, and informational elements, which promotes psychological well-being by fostering feelings of security, self-worth, and belonging (Sarafino, 2014).

The present results are consistent with previous empirical findings. For instance, Bi et al. (2020) found that social support from family, teachers, and peers significantly predicted life satisfaction among adolescents across several Asian countries. Similarly, studies by Bing et al. (2020) and Chen et al. (2021) among elderly populations demonstrated that social support plays a role both directly and indirectly through improvements in physical and mental health. Among university students, Kućar et al. (2025) emphasized that family support is a stronger predictor of life satisfaction than peer or romantic partner support. These cross-age and cross-cultural findings reinforce the universal relevance of social support as a contributor to life satisfaction.

This relationship also aligns with two key theoretical frameworks: the direct effect model, which suggests that social support enhances well-being under all circumstances, and the buffering model, which posits that support mitigates the negative effects of stress. While the direct effect model appears dominant in the present findings, the buffering effect is particularly relevant for vulnerable populations, such as older adults, immigrants, or individuals facing chronic stress, where social support plays a protective role in sustaining psychological health.

A critical issue emerging from this study is the high degree of heterogeneity across studies ($I^2 = 90.98\%$), indicating substantial variation in effect sizes that cannot be attributed to sampling error alone. This suggests that differences in sample characteristics, such as age, gender, and cultural background, as well as methodological variations, may have influenced the strength of the observed effects. Although formal moderator analyses were not conducted, existing literature has identified several variables that could explain such variance. For example, psychological factors like hope (Cui, 2022), neuroticism, and subjective social status (Han et al., 2021) have been shown to influence the strength of this relationship. Therefore, future research should employ moderator testing (e.g., subgroup analysis or meta-regression) to examine how demographic and psychosocial factors shape the impact of social support on life satisfaction. Furthermore, this study contributes to the existing body of cross-cultural meta-analytic evidence by demonstrating that the association between social support and life satisfaction holds across diverse age groups and social contexts. The consistency in the direction of effect, despite differences in magnitude, strengthens the argument that social support is a universally beneficial resource for enhancing well-being.

Despite these strengths, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the relatively small number of included studies ($k = 9$) may limit the analysis's generalizability and statistical power. Second, although the dataset included studies from various cultural and demographic backgrounds, the role of cultural context was not analyzed in depth. Third, inconsistencies in the operational definitions and measurement tools across studies could have introduced additional heterogeneity.

In light of these limitations, future meta-analyses should aim to include a larger and more diverse sample of studies, conduct formal moderator testing, and systematically examine cultural and contextual variables. These efforts will contribute to a more nuanced



understanding of the mechanisms by which social support influences life satisfaction across populations. Overall, both theoretically and empirically, the findings of this study indicate that social support is an essential component in the formation and maintenance of life satisfaction. Supportive social relationships not only improve the quality of interpersonal relationships but also, directly and indirectly, positively impact how individuals assess their lives as a whole.

CONCLUSION

This meta-analytic study examined the relationship between perceived social support and life satisfaction by synthesizing findings from nine empirical studies involving 5,035 participants. The results confirmed a statistically significant and positive correlation ($r = 0.525$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that individuals who perceive higher levels of social support tend to report greater life satisfaction. These findings are consistent across diverse age groups and cultural contexts, reinforcing the theoretical frameworks that highlight social support as both a direct and buffering factor in enhancing psychological well-being. Despite the consistent direction of the relationship, the high level of heterogeneity observed ($I^2 = 90.98\%$) suggests substantial variation in effect sizes across studies. This variability likely reflects differences in demographic characteristics, cultural backgrounds, and study methodologies. Although no formal moderator analysis was conducted, the results underscore the need for future studies to explore potential moderating variables, including age, gender, type of social support, and psychological traits. Future research should aim to expand the number and diversity of included studies, conduct subgroup or meta-regression analyses to examine moderator effects, and explore underrepresented populations such as children, clinical groups, and individuals from non-Western societies. Additionally, longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to determine causal pathways and better understand the mechanisms through which social support influences life satisfaction.

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