



Psychological Resilience and Social Support on Active Aging in Older Adults: An Empirical Study Based in Urban Communities in Guangdong

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Abstract: Objective: This study aims to explore the direct impact and interaction of psychological resilience and social support on active aging in older adults, and to examine the mediating effect of social support on the relationship between psychological resilience and active aging. **Methods:** A cross-sectional survey design was adopted. A questionnaire survey was conducted on 449 older adults aged 60 and above (mean age 71.5 ± 5.2 years) from Guangdong Province through random sampling. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, hierarchical regression analysis, and mediation effect tests were performed using SPSS 26.0 and PROCESS macro programs. **Results :**(1) Psychological resilience ($r = 0.48, p < 0.001$) and social support ($r = 0.28, p < 0.001$) were significantly positively correlated with active aging in older adults. (2) Hierarchical regression analysis showed that psychological resilience ($\beta = 0.36, p < 0.001$) and social support ($\beta = 0.23, p < 0.001$) independently and significantly positively predicted active aging. (3) Mediation analysis showed that social support partially mediated the relationship between psychological resilience and active aging, with a mediation effect value of 0.12, accounting for 25% of the total effect. **Conclusion:** This study indicates that high psychological resilience and strong social support are important protective factors for older adults to maintain active aging. Psychological resilience can not only directly enhance active aging but also indirectly play a role by strengthening the capacity for social support.

Keywords: older adults; psychological resilience; social support; active aging

1. Introduction

In 2002, the World Health Organization proposed the concept of active aging, aiming to address the challenges brought about by the aging of the global population. Its core idea is to help older adults maintain vitality and independence in life by promoting their health, social participation and economic security. Psychological resilience plays a stabilizing role in the development of life, and is the ability of individuals to maintain psychological balance, recover and grow when they encounter adversity, trauma, threats or major stress. For older adults, psychological resilience means being able to flexibly cope with age-related stressors such as retirement, bereavement, and chronic diseases, and recover or even grow from them^[1]. Individuals with high psychological resilience usually have traits such as optimism, resilience, strong self-efficacy and good emotional regulation ability^[2]. Social support theory refers to the emotional support, information support and practical help that individuals obtain in social networks, which is an important social psychological factor in promoting mental health^[3]. For older adults, emotional support from children, companionship from spouses, communication support from friends, and respect and acceptance from the community can effectively offset the negative impact of social age discrimination, alleviate loneliness, enhance life satisfaction, and reduce the incidence of depression and anxiety in older adults^[4].

The existing literature describes a link between psychological resilience, social support and active aging, but the mechanisms remain unclear. One possibility is that psychological resilience, as an intrinsic resource, motivates individuals to more proactively seek and build social support networks (actively creating pathways), and social support may amplify the positive effects of psychological resilience. Another possibility is that psychological resilience enhances an individual's perception and utilization efficiency of existing social support (a cognitive filtering pathway). Older adults with high social support are more likely to translate psychological resilience into positive emotional states and a sense of psychological youth; while low social support environments may weaken this positive effect. Regardless of the pathway, social support may serve as an important intermediary in the influence of psychological resilience on active aging. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that social support plays a mediating role between psychological resilience and active aging.

2. Research Subjects and Methods

2.1 Research Subjects

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A random sampling method was used to distribute questionnaires to 12 large community activity centers for the elderly in Guangzhou, Foshan, Dongguan, and Zhanjiang from June to September 2025. Inclusion criteria: (1) age \geq 60 years; (2) local residence time \geq 1 year; (3) clear consciousness and no severe cognitive impairment (score $>$ 24 points using the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE)); (4) informed consent and voluntary participation in this study. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed, and 449 valid questionnaires were collected, with an effective response rate of 89.8%.

2.2 Research Tools

Demographic variables were collected through questionnaires, which included information on gender, age, marital status, living style, education level, pension insurance, and medical insurance. This study also used the "Active Aging Scale" developed by Wu Feng, the Cronbach's α is 0.905; the "Short Version of the Psychological Resilience Scale" translated and revised by Wang Li et al., the Cronbach's α is 0.871; and the "Social Support Rating Scale" developed by Xiao Shuiyuan, the Cronbach's α is 0.891.

2.3 Analytical Methods

SPSS 26.0 software was used for data entry and statistical analysis. The relevant programs included descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and the SPSS PROCESS macro program (Model 4) developed by Hayes.

3. Results

3.1 Common Method Bias Test

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted on all questionnaire items using Harman's one-way test. The results showed that the variance explained by the first common factor extracted without rotation was 24.6%, which is less than the critical criterion of 40%, indicating that there was no serious common method bias in this study.

3.2 Demographic information of the participants

As shown in Table 1, the gender ratio of the participants was 43.4% male and 56.6% female. The average age was 71.5 years (SD=5.2). Among them, 76.2% of the participants were aged 60-69, 18.5% were aged 70-79, and 5.3% were aged 80 and above.

Regarding marital status, 417 people (92.9%) were married, while only 32 people (7.1%) were unmarried. Furthermore, 87.1% of them lived with their children.

Regarding education level and degree, 145 people had primary school education or below, accounting for 32.3%; 205 people had junior high school education, accounting for 45.6%; 87 people had high school education, including vocational school education, accounting for 19.4%; and only 12 older adults had a college degree or above, accounting for 2.7%.

Regarding pension and medical insurance, only 135 people have pensions, accounting for 30.1%; 352 people have medical insurance, accounting for 78.4%. 135 people have both.

Table 1 Characteristics of the demographic distribution within the sample (N=449)

Items		N	%
Gender	Male	195	43.4%
	Female	254	56.6%
Age	60-69	342	76.2%
	70-79	83	18.5%
	\geq 80	24	5.3%
Marital status	Married	417	92.9%
	Unmarried	32	7.1%
Living style	Not living with children	58	12.9%
	Living with children	391	87.1%
Education	Primary school and below	145	32.3%
	Junior high school	205	45.6%
	Senior high school and Secondary technical school	87	19.4%
	Junior college and above	12	2.7%
Pension insurance and medical insurance	Pension insurance	135	30.1%
	Medical insurance	352	78.4%
	Both	135	30.1%

3.3 Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis of psychological resilience, social support and active aging

As shown in Table 2, this study confirms the close relationship between psychological resilience, social support and active aging. First, there is a significant positive correlation between psychological resilience and social support ($r = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$), and a strong social support network is a key environmental factor for cultivating psychological resilience [5]. Second, there is a significant positive correlation between psychological resilience and active aging ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$). Finally, there is also a significant positive correlation between social support and active aging ($r = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$). These three pairs of significant positive correlations together constitute an integrated model for understanding the development of active aging in older adults.

Table 2 The correlation between the psychological resilience, social support and active aging of the elderly (r)

Items	M±SD	Psychological resilience	Social support	Active aging
Psychological resilience	28.55 ± 6.46	1		
Social support	48.64 ± 8.38	0.41 ***	1	
Active aging	94.37 ± 12.28	0.48 ***	0.28 ***	1

Legend: **p<0.01, *p<0.001, the same applies below.**

3.4 Testing the Mediating Effect of Social Support

Using the SPSS PROCESS macro, Model 4 (simple mediation model) was selected. The Bootstrap sampling method was used to calculate the confidence interval (95% CI) of the mediation effect. Mediation effect analysis was conducted with psychological resilience as the independent variable, social support as the mediating variable, and active aging as the dependent variable. The results are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Examining the overall effect of psychological resilience on active aging (without introducing mediating variables). The direct effect of psychological resilience on active aging is significant ($\beta=0.36$, $p<0.001$). Psychological resilience has a significant positive predictive effect on social support ($\beta=0.41$, $p<0.001$). When both psychological resilience and social support are included in predicting active aging, the direct predictive effect of psychological resilience on active aging remains significant, The predictive effect of social support on active aging is also significant ($\beta=0.23$, $p<0.001$).

Table 3 The mediating model test of social support between psychological resilience and active aging

Regression equation		Fitting index			Coefficient significance	
Result variable	Predictor variable	R	R-sq	F(df)	β	t
Active aging	Psychological resilience	0.48	0.23	39.66***	0.48	6.28***
Social support	Psychological resilience	0.41	0.17	65.38***	0.41	8.85***
Active aging	Social support	0.35	0.12	42.35***	0.23	4.13***
	Psychological resilience				0.36	2.98***

The Bootstrap test shows that the mediating effect value of social support is 0.12, and its 95% deviation corrected confidence interval does not include 0, indicating a significant mediating effect. The proportion of mediation effect to the total effect is $0.12/0.48=25\%$, and the mediation model is shown in Figure 2. Conclusion: Social support plays a partial mediating role between psychological resilience and active aging. This means that 25% of the positive effect of psychological resilience on active aging is achieved through "enhanced social support".

Table 4 Bootstrap analysis for the significance test of the mediating effect

Path	Non-standardized indirect effects	95%LLCI	95%ULCI
Total effect	0.48	0.36	0.58
Psychological resilience→active aging	0.36	0.26	0.43
Psychological resilience → social support → active aging	0.12	0.08	0.18

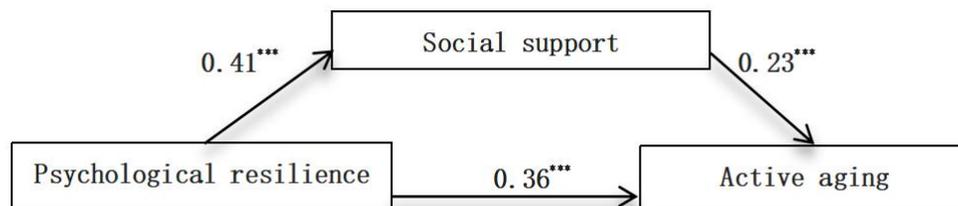


Figure 2 The chain mediating model between Psychological resilience and Active aging .

4. Discussion

Based on an integrative theoretical framework, this study verified the promoting effects of psychological resilience and social support on active aging. Psychological resilience is the strongest direct predictor of active aging. This result supports the stress and coping model, indicating that the older adults with high psychological resilience, can effectively resolve pressure caused by changes in physical function and social role transformation [6]. The predictive effect of social support on active aging is also significant. When older adults receive emotional affirmation and social connection from family, friends and community, they are more likely to form a positive self-cognition, thereby weakening the negative labels brought by age [7]. Positive social interaction experiences can enhance the perception of psychological youthfulness and become an important external support resource for active aging [8].

The mediating pathway of social support between psychological resilience and active aging. Psychological resilience not only directly shapes active aging, but also empowers social support to indirectly play a role. Proactive creation path: Individuals with high psychological resilience are usually more socially proactive, maintaining old relationships,

establishing new social connections, and building a high-quality social support network for themselves^[9]. Cognitive filtering pathway: Even when faced with the same level of external support, individuals with high psychological resilience can perceive more support^[10]. They tend to view the help of others as sincere care and draw psychological energy from it.

The limitations of this study are that the cross-sectional design cannot confirm the causal relationship between variables, in the future, longitudinal tracking or intervention experimental designs can be used to further verify this; The sample only came from urban communities, and caution should be exercised when extending its conclusions to rural or vulnerable elderly populations; relying mainly on self-report methods may lead to social approval bias.

In summary, active aging is a psychological state shaped by both internal psychology and external environmental resources. Psychological resilience, as an internal resource of individuals, not only helps elderly people overcome age and maintain a youthful self perception, but also promotes the establishment of social support networks to enhance this experience. Therefore, in the practice of active aging, we should implement a "dual wheel drive" strategy: first, psychological training empowers individuals and enhances their internal strength to cope with aging; The second is to create a supportive environment through community and social policies, so that every elderly person can feel the connection and value, and truly achieve a positive life state of "age leaves its mark, but the heart remains young".

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