

Exploring Social Support Theory: Key Concepts, Current Research Hotspots and Future Gaps

Jiao Lin^{1,a,*}

¹*Faculty of Humanities and Arts, Macau University of Science and Technology, Macau, 999078, China*
^a*31686856@qq.com*

**Corresponding author*

Abstract: *This paper systematically explores the evolution, current trends, and future directions of social support theory, with a focus on its application in the context of social media, particularly China's dominant platform, WeChat. By synthesizing three major research orientations—sociological/social network, psychological/cognitive, and communication/interaction—the study clarifies the theoretical foundations and measurement methodologies of social support. It highlights the growing emphasis on "online social support" in the digital age, analyzing empirical findings across diverse populations, including vulnerable groups (e.g., cancer patients, migrant workers) and specific demographics (e.g., elderly users, new mothers). The paper innovatively identifies gaps in existing research, such as the understudied role of strong-tie relationships (e.g., family or friend-based WeChat groups), the nuanced impact of platform-specific features (e.g., Moments, WeChat Sports), and the unique stressors faced by middle-aged women in fragmented identity contexts. This study not only maps current research hotspots but also proposes novel pathways for future inquiry, emphasizing interdisciplinary collaboration, platform-specific functional analyses, and the psychosocial dynamics of underrepresented groups.*

Keywords: *Social Support Theory; Online Social Support; WeChat; Research Hotspots; Research Gaps; Strong/Weak Ties*

1. Introduction

The concept of social support emerged in the 19th century when demographic studies in the United Kingdom and France first documented the positive correlation between marital status and health outcomes, laying the theoretical foundation for subsequent social support research. Émile Durkheim's seminal study on suicide further substantiated this concept by demonstrating that socially isolated individuals exhibit higher suicide risks (MacGeorge, Samter, Feng, Gillihan, & Graves, 2004). These early findings constitute the cornerstone of modern social support theory. In the digital era, the proliferation of social media has catalyzed novel theoretical frameworks and empirical investigations into "online social support."

This paper aims to systematically delineate the conceptual dimensions and measurement methodologies of social support theory, with particular emphasis on examining online social support mechanisms. Through an analysis of empirical studies conducted on WeChat—a quintessential Chinese social media platform—we seek to identify innovative trajectories for future research in this domain.

2. Conceptual Evolution of Social Support

Post-Durkheim scholarship witnessed accelerated development in social support research. The introduction of the "support system" framework marked a paradigm shift, emphasizing the interplay between social support resources and individual psychological states. This conceptual model posits that individuals' access to material and emotional resources exerts a salutary effect on mental and physical well-being (Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983). A pivotal contribution came from S. Cobb (1976), who operationally defined social support as the subjective perception of being valued and cared for—a definition that informed the tripartite research orientations subsequently dominating the field.

The pursuit of individual well-being has long been a central concern across anthropology, sociology, and psychology, with social support remaining a key research focus. Divergent disciplinary

perspectives have engendered three primary research orientations in conceptualizing social support.

2.1 The Sociological Orientation of Social Support Theory

This approach prioritizes structural analyses of social networks, examining variables such as network density, tie strength, and relational breadth (Gottlieb, 1983), while concurrently investigating health-related outcomes (Wood, 1996). Within this framework, social support is operationalized as instrumental or emotional assistance accessible through social ties (Thoits, 1982). Research methodologies typically employ quantitative indicators (e.g., community engagement metrics, network size) and qualitative assessments (e.g., emotional vs. informational support nodes) to evaluate the "objective dimensions" of social support systems (Xia & Zhou, 1999).

The structural emphasis of this orientation has attracted substantive critique. Sarason et al. (1990) notably challenged the assumption that network characteristics directly predict health outcomes, advocating instead for greater attention to perceived support quality. These critiques precipitated the emergence of psychological/cognitive orientations in the field (Burlenson, B. R., Albrecht, T. L., & Sarason, I. G., 1994).

2.2 The Psychological Orientation of Social Support Theory

Some scholars have dissected social support into objective and subjective aspects. The objective aspect refers to the actual support provided, while the subjective aspect emphasizes the individual's perception of that support (Cobb, S., 1976). Since purely objective observation of support is relatively difficult, the measurement of subjective social support has become mainstream (Bryant, C. M., 1998). This focus represents the psychological perspective. Sarason et al. defined the psychological perspective, which measures social support as the perceived support by individuals, emphasizing the availability and perceptibility of support (Sarason et al., 1990). Regardless of the objective support situation, individuals' physical and mental health will benefit positively only when they perceive being supported and the intensity of that support (Castells, M., 2006).

Tracy (1990) believed that, from a psychological perspective, social support can be defined as an interpretation of the social environment, which is the confidence that individuals have in the usefulness and effectiveness of support when they need it. However, what factors influence an individual's perception of support? From a psychological/cognitive perspective, the focus is on the static examination of individual psychological cognition, without considering the influencing mechanisms. As Burlenson et al. (1994) pointed out, research on social support should not look at social connections and relationships statically, but should examine the process and interaction of support relationships. To address this issue, the communication and interaction research perspective emerged (Gottlieb, B. H., 1983).

2.3 The Communication and Interaction Orientation of Social Support Theory

The communication and interaction perspective holds that social support is inseparable from communication behavior. Such supportive communication is a series of interactive behaviors that help individuals overcome anxiety, stress, and other issues (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987). In this sense, the focus of social support shifts from the subjective psychological feelings of the supported individual to the interaction and exchange behaviors in interpersonal relationships (Sarason et al., 1990). From the practice of human social interaction, communication is undoubtedly an important medium and mechanism for forming social support, realized through the process of information exchange between individuals (Granovetter, M. S., 1973).

Research on social support from this perspective can be carried out in several aspects:

- (1) The content of communication messages for obtaining and providing social support (Sun Shaojing, & Kang Jingshi, 2022);
 - (2) How these messages are interpreted and produced in interactions;
 - (3) How social support affects relationships and communication behaviors (Liang Xiaoyan, 2008).
- Albrecht et al. (1994) believed that research in the communication orientation focuses on observing verbal and non-verbal communication practices, in which the process of how messages influence the cognition of both the support provider and the recipient about themselves and their relationships.

The above sections have sorted out the three major orientations of social support research and summarized their three types of definitions. The social network perspective views social support as a network of individual support nodes, which includes structural characteristics such as strength and density. The psychological/cognitive perspective considers social support as the subjective feeling of being supported and the perceived usefulness of support. The communication perspective emphasizes the interaction between the supporter and the supported during the support process and its impact on individuals and relationships.

3. Types and Measurement of Social Support

Scholars have developed various measurement tools based on different research orientations and pathways of social support. Barrera compiled the Social Support Behavior Questionnaire, which measures support across four dimensions: emotional support, instrumental support, informational support, and guidance support (Barrera Jr, M., & Ainlay, S. L., 1983). Cohen and Sheldon, among others, focused on the perceived availability of support and developed the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL), emphasizing companionship support, material support, emotional support, and informational support (Behar, J., 1986).

Another tool that focuses on the self-perception of support recipients is the Perceived Social Support Scale, compiled by Blumenthal et al. in 1987, which has been widely used and later optimized by Jiang Qianjin. This scale measures subjective social support from various sources, such as family and friends (Wang Xiangdong, Wang Xilin, Ma Hong, et al., 1999).

In China, a representative measurement tool in the 1990s is the Social Support Rating Scale developed by Xiao Shuiyuan, which introduced the important consideration of support utilization, focusing on the degree to which individuals utilize different types of support (Xiao Shuiyuan, 1994). Another category of measurements distinguishes specific support scenarios. For example, the Social Support Questionnaire for Interpersonal Influence (SSQT) measures five types of social support under the categories of "daily" and "problem" situations, including daily emotional and instrumental support, and problem-related emotional, instrumental, and social membership support, with questions primarily in the form of yes/no items (Shi, J. F., & Ma, J. H., 2003). Wu Jiahui focused on both real-life and online social support, with consistent items for both, including emotional support, informational support, and instrumental support (Wu, J. H., 2007). It is worth noting that some scholars have combined the sources and nature of support in their measurements. Yang Xiaohui's Social Support Scale examines support from sources such as parents and teachers and also emphasizes the importance of material support (Yang Xiaohui, 2005). There is also a rich variety of scales developed for specific groups. Liang Xiaoyan was among the first to define the concept of "online social support" and compiled the College Student Online Support Scale, which includes four dimensions of support: emotional, instrumental, informational, and companionship support (Liang Xiaoyan, 2008).

In summary, most of the above support types and scales focus on objective support from the social network perspective and subjective feelings from the psychological/cognitive perspective (MacGeorge, E. L., et al, 2004). Some scales emphasize the sources of support, while others focus on the types of support. In terms of sources, the main focus is on strong ties such as parents, friends, and teachers (Hall, S., &du Gay, P., 2010). In terms of types, most studies concentrate on emotional support, informational support, and instrumental support. Gradually, some scholars have realized that there is a lack of research from the social interaction orientation, examining the interaction between support providers and recipients. Cutrona et al.'s research indicates that when the expected social support does not match the actual support received, it can have a negative impact on marital satisfaction (Cutrona, C. E., Shaffer, P. A., Wesner, K. A., & Gardner, K. A., 2007). Shanock et al. also found that the gap between expected and actual support positively predicts depressive symptoms (Shanock, L. R., Baran, B. E., Gentry, W. A., Pattison, S. C., & Heggstad, E. D., 2010).

Therefore, the measurement of social support should not be limited to sources and types alone; it should also consider the match between expected and actual support. Social support has a complex structure and is a multidimensional composite concept (Liu Xiao & Huang Xiting, 2010). Consequently, multidimensional social support scales have emerged. Zhang Meng et al. combined three sources of support—family, peers, and teachers—with three types of support—emotional, instrumental, and informational—to examine the expected level of support, the actual perceived level of support, and the sufficiency of support (the difference between the former two) (Zhang Meng, Zhao Menghan, Dong Jiahui, & Gong Huoliang, 2021).

4. Social Support Theory in the Context of Social Media

4.1 Relevant Research Results on the Theory

Overall, research on social media and social support has developed rapidly in recent years, with a significant focus on the types of social support in online support groups for specific populations. Qijin and Christine, for example, studied the online groups of Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong, China and conducted a content analysis of their posts on Facebook groups. They found that informational content was the primary aspect of support, followed by emotional and instrumental support (Cheng, Q., & Vicera, C., 2022). Li Ziyi conducted in-depth interviews at a cancer hospital and found that, contrary to findings in foreign studies, cognitive and companionship support were the main types of support that cancer patients received through online communities. Browsing entertainment information, avoiding disease-related information, and escaping from online communities were their primary behavioral characteristics. This study innovatively proposed the concept of "reverse social support" to describe the tendency of cancer patients to distance themselves from online community life (Li Ziyi, 2022). Dong Shuyan used content analysis, in-depth interviews, and online ethnography to examine the subcultural Douban group "Hikikomori Self-Help Alliance." The study showed that emotional support was the main type of support in this online community, with informational and companionship support as supplementary (Burleson, B. R. E., Albrecht, T. L. E., & Sarason, I. G. E., 1994). Verbal comfort was the primary method of support, and the communication process exhibited four patterns: one-on-one, radiating, converging, and networked (Dong Shuyan, 2022).

In these studies, some scholars have categorized support into "demand" and "supply" for examination. Sun Shaojing et al. conducted a content analysis of posts on the "Depression Baidu Tieba" and found that emotional support was the main aspect of demand support, while topic responses were the primary method of supply support. The study pointed out that, unlike online support communities for physiological diseases (Thoits, P. A., 1982), online support for psychological and psychiatric conditions such as depression is more often realized through sharing emotions and experiences, with informational support not being the most important aspect (Sun Shaojing & Kang Jingshi, 2022).

Dar Meshi and Morgan simultaneously examined real-life social support and social media support, focusing on the impact of improper social media use on individual physical and mental health. They revealed that real-life social support can buffer against poor mental health associated with problematic social media use, while social support provided through social media does not have the same effect (Meshi, D., & Ellithorpe, M. E., 2021).

Given the global COVID-19 pandemic in recent years, a number of studies in the field of social media and social support have emerged based on this context. Xiaoquan Pan and Yiqun Luo conducted a large-scale survey to explore the complex relationships between social media support, social confidence, media credibility, and attitudes toward life during the pandemic. They found that social media support promotes social confidence through perceived media credibility, thereby highlighting the important role of social media support in social governance (Pan, X., & Luo, Y., 2022).

Researchers have also focused on the psychological mechanisms of individual social media use. Jung Won Chun et al. found that perceived social support acts as a mediating variable affecting individuals' sense of power and control, which in turn influences their willingness to speak up on social media (Chun, J. W., & Lee, M. J., 2017). Other studies have examined nonverbal digital affordances, using mixed methods to compare the perceived social support through "likes, shares, and comments" across different social media platforms. Surveys revealed cross-platform differences in the effectiveness of support perception, while focus group research uncovered variations in users' network relationships across different social media platforms, explaining the factors influencing these differences (Hayes, R. A., Carr, C. T., & Wohn, D. Y., 2016).

Some scholars have conducted comparative studies across different dimensions such as age and sexual orientation. P. Madison et al. compared the social support obtained by adolescents and young adults through social media and found that adolescents are more likely to receive positive health impacts through social media than young adults (Politte-Corn, M., Nick, E. A., & Kujawa, A., 2023). For minority gender groups, online communities for transgender individuals can provide emotional, evaluative/affirmative, and informational support to their members (Selkie, E. M., Adkins, V., Masters, E., Bajpai, A., & Shumer, D., 2020).

Most of these studies have confirmed the positive impact of social media on individual health and identity, acknowledging the social support provided by social media. However, some studies have

yielded different results. For example, Milojev et al. surveyed adults in New Zealand and found that Facebook use affects body satisfaction, with higher levels of Facebook use correlating with greater body dissatisfaction among middle-aged women (Stronge, S., Greaves, L. M., Milojev, P., West-Newman, T., Barlow, F. K., & Sibley, C. G., 2015). It is evident that the relationship between social media and individual psychology and health is a complex system. Targeted research analyses are required, tailored to specific social media contexts and focusing on Individual perception or health.

Overall, the academic community has emphasized the significance of social support in social media (Zhang Wenhong; Ruan Danqing; Pan Yunkang, 1999). Research themes can be categorized as follows: First, the research examines the types of social support within online support groups for specific populations; second, it explores the impact and mechanisms of social support on the relationship between social media use and individual physical and mental health; and third, comparative studies of social support across different social media platforms, gender orientations, and age groups are conducted. These studies exhibit the following characteristics:

(1) A rich variety of research methods, with a primary focus on quantitative research to explore variable relationships, supplemented by a small number of qualitative studies focusing on support methods and mechanisms;

(2) The primary research populations are disease groups, health-risk groups, or marginalized groups;

(3) The relationships examined are predominantly weak ties among group members.

4.2 The Role of Social Support in the Impact of WeChat on Individual Perception and Health

The above literature review is based on the general concept of "social media." Different social media platforms, such as Facebook, Douyin (TikTok), Instagram, and QQ, each have distinct features in terms of functionality and interface. Research specifically targeting the mainstream Chinese social media platform "WeChat" and its relationship with social support is relatively prominent (Ndasauka, Y., Hou Juan, et al., 2015). The following section will focus on organizing and reviewing this area. Research in this area primarily explores three directions:

4.2.1 The mediating role of online social support in the relationship between WeChat use and individual perceptions such as loneliness and happiness

This is the most extensively studied direction. Deng Yana used both interviews and questionnaires to investigate the usage patterns of "empty-nest youth" and found that group chats, Moments, and one-on-one chats are the three most frequently used features. These features provide emotional and companionship support. The intensity of WeChat use is positively correlated with the level of online social support received by this group, which in turn negatively predicts loneliness. Yu Guoming and colleagues revealed that subjective social support can mitigate the negative impact of WeChat use on happiness. Specifically, while WeChat use might otherwise negatively affect happiness, the social support perceived through WeChat offsets this negative effect (Zuo Xiaohan, 2022).

4.2.2 The impact of specific WeChat features on social support and well-being

A significant portion of research focuses on WeChat Moments. Studies indicate that positive self-presentation strategies can enhance subjective well-being through the partial mediation of social support, while authentic self-presentation strategies rely entirely on social support to influence happiness (Zhu Wei, 2018). Additionally, "WeChat Sports," which exemplifies the socialization and data-driven nature of individual physical activity, has been explored as a context for studying social support and health behaviors. Research shows that comparing oneself with higher-ranked friends in the sports leaderboard affects users' perception of social support (Zeng Enyu, 2020).

4.2.3 Social support for vulnerable and crisis-prone groups

This research direction pays particular attention to vulnerable populations such as the elderly and college students. Jiang Junjie et al. examined the relationship between WeChat use intensity and the sense of gain among the elderly, revealing that social support and a sense of life meaning mediate this relationship (Turner, J. B., 1995). Wei Jingjing focused on construction migrant workers and found that perceived social support mediates the negative impact of social media use on loneliness (Tracy, E. M., 1990).

4.2.4 Social Support in Weak-Tie WeChat Groups

A substantial body of research examines social support within WeChat groups, especially those related to mental health. For instance, studies on depression-related WeChat groups have identified four types of group members (core, active, etc.) with varying contributions to discussions on social support. Active members are found to be the most engaged in providing social support. In these groups, the demand for support generally exceeds the supply, with emotional and entertainment support being the primary types (Yang Yingxi & Yu Guoming, 2020).

Social support for women in specific life stages. Research has highlighted the importance of social support for women, particularly new mothers, through WeChat. Wang Yixin used online ethnography to study pregnancy and maternity-related WeChat groups, finding that these groups primarily provide emotional and informational support. The motivation for new mothers to seek online social support includes the efficiency of online support and the need for a sense of belonging. Ye Weiming and Ding Ning explored how new mothers, especially those engaged in WeChat commerce, accumulate social capital and achieve identity recognition through their business activities.

The role of strong-tie social support. Some studies emphasize the importance of strong-tie networks. For example, Liang Haixia focused on the use of WeChat by mothers, revealing that family support positively mediates the relationship between mothers' self-disclosure on WeChat and their life satisfaction. Internationally, research on women's social support through social media often focuses on women dealing with health issues. For instance, Kaur et al. highlighted the role of Facebook in connecting women with endometriosis, summarizing the types of social support provided by online support groups (Wilson, S., Mogan, S., & Kaur, K., 2020).

5. Discussion

The relationship between social media and social support has emerged as a growing area of scholarly inquiry, characterized by methodological diversity and interdisciplinary perspectives. Existing research primarily addresses three key domains: typologies of online support systems, psychosocial impacts of digital social support, and comparative analyses across different sociotechnical contexts. Within WeChat-related scholarship specifically, substantial attention has been directed toward understanding how this platform mediates social support mechanisms in health perception and behavioral outcomes.

Current investigations into WeChat groups predominantly employ qualitative methodologies to examine group dynamics, member relationships, and support exchange patterns. Notably, recent scholarship reflects the "sisterhood solidarity" phenomenon in digital spaces through intensified focus on female-centered communities. These studies particularly analyze weak-tie networks formed around shared life transitions (e.g., maternity groups) or health challenges (e.g., chronic illness support groups), offering rich phenomenological accounts of support mechanisms in transitional life stages.

This analysis proposes three strategic directions for advancing research in this domain: subject diversification, platform-specific functional analysis, and relational dimension expansion.

5.1 Subject Diversification

Contemporary research disproportionately focuses on three vulnerable demographics: 1) developmental transition groups (geriatric populations, undergraduates, postpartum mothers), 2) clinical populations (oncology patients, depression cohorts), and 3) occupational precariat (migrant laborers, gig economy workers). While methodologically robust, this concentration has resulted in significant thematic redundancy.

The resurgence of digital feminism presents novel opportunities for subject innovation. Middle-aged women constitute a particularly understudied demographic facing multidimensional stressors including role conflict (work-family balance), economic dependency, emotional labor demands, and identity fragmentation in hyperconnected societies. Unlike crisis-driven support needs observed in existing studies, this population's chronic stress ecosystem - stemming from persistent socioeconomic pressures rather than acute events - warrants systematic investigation. Examining their social media engagement patterns could reveal how distributed support networks mitigate cumulative stress effects while negotiating multiple social roles.

Such scholarly expansion would not only enhance understanding of intergenerational media

practices but also inform targeted interventions for stress management in digitally-mediated environments.

5.2 Platform-Specific Functional Analysis

While extant literature demonstrates breadth in platform comparison (Facebook, Douyin, Douban), depth in functional contextualization remains underdeveloped. WeChat's unique position as a multi-functional ecosystem integrating diverse communication modalities (interpersonal messaging, content sharing, health tracking) creates distinct "virtual-real" continuums that remain underexplored.

Notably, scholarly attention has treated WeChat as a monolithic entity rather than analyzing its discrete functional components. The platform's group chat feature - constituting a novel form of online collective communication - has evolved distinct interaction logics and support mechanisms worthy of dedicated examination. Systematic investigation of public WeChat groups could yield critical insights into how interface architectures shape support network formation and maintenance.

5.3 Relational Dimension Expansion

Current scholarship exhibits disproportionate emphasis on weak-tie networks within stranger-based communities (e.g., disease support groups, academic assistance networks), while neglecting strong-tie dynamics in kin-based or friendship networks. This imbalance persists despite Granovetter's seminal work establishing strong ties' psychological significance through four-dimensional reinforcement: temporal investment, emotional intensity, reciprocal trust, and mutual service provision (Xia, Y., & Zhou, Z., 1999).

Future research should prioritize examination of naturally occurring strong-tie networks, including family support groups and real-world friendship clusters. Such investigations could elucidate how pre-existing relational capital interacts with digital mediation to produce distinctive support patterns. Particularly, longitudinal studies of persistent communication units like "intimate friend circles" may reveal maintenance mechanisms for established relationships in hybridized social environments.

This tripartite conceptual framework - encompassing subject diversification, functional specificity, and relational balance - proposes a structured approach to address existing research gaps while advancing theoretical understanding of computer-mediated social support systems.

References

- [1] Barrera Jr, M., & Ainlay, S. L. (1983). *The structure of social support: A Conceptual and empirical analysis*. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 11(2), 133–143. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6629\(198304\)11:2<133::AID-JCOP2290110207>3.0.CO; 2-L](https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6629(198304)11:2<133::AID-JCOP2290110207>3.0.CO; 2-L)
- [2] Behar, J. (1986). *Social support: Theory, research and applications* [Review of *Social support: Theory, research and applications*]. *Social Science & Medicine* (1982), 22(12), 1369–1370. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536\(86\)90104-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(86)90104-8)
- [3] Bryant, C. M. (1998). *Handbook of Personal Relationships: Theory, Research and Interventions* [Review of *Handbook of Personal Relationships: Theory, Research and Interventions*]. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 60(1), 259–260. *National Council on Family Relations*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/353456>
- [4] Burleson, B. R., Albrecht, T. L., & Sarason, I. G. (Eds.). (1994). *Communication of social support: Messages, interactions, relationships, and community*. Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483372084>
- [5] Castells, M. (2006). *The Power of Identity* (translated by Cao Rongxiang) *Social Science Literature Publishing House*. 59
- [6] Cheng, Q., & Vicera, C. (2022). *Online Peer-Support Group's Role in Addressing Filipino Domestic Workers' Social Support Needs: Content and Social Media Metrics Analysis*. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(15), 96. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19159665>
- [7] Chun, J. W., & Lee, M. J. (2017). *When does individuals' willingness to speak out increase on social media? Perceived social support and perceived power/control*. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 74, 120–129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.04.010>
- [8] Cobb, S. (1976). *Social support as a moderator of life stress*. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 38(4), 300–314.

- [9] Cutrona, C. E., Shaffer, P. A., Wesner, K. A., & Gardner, K. A. (2007). *Optimally Matching Support and Perceived Spousal Sensitivity*. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 21(4), 754–758. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.21.4.754>
- [10] Deng Yana (2019). *A study on the relationship between social media use, online social support, and loneliness among "empty nest youth"* Xiamen University. 125-128
- [11] Dong Shuyan (2022). *Emotional Comfort and Desire for Identity: A Social Support Study of the "Home Squatting Self Help Alliance" Group on Douban* Xi'an International Studies University. 103-104
- [12] Gottlieb, B. H. (1983). *Social support as a focus for integrative research in psychology*. *The American Psychologist*, 38(3), 278–287. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.38.3.278>
- [13] Granovetter, M. S. (1973). *The strength of weak ties*. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380. <https://doi.org/10.1086/225469>
- [14] Hall, S., & du Gay, P. (2010). *Research on Cultural Identity Issues* Pang Li (translated) Henan University Press 35-37
- [15] Hayes, R. A., Carr, C. T., & Wohn, D. Y. (2016). *It's the Audience: Differences in Social Support Across Social Media*. *Social Media + Society*, 2(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116678894>
- [16] Jiang Junjie, Chen Junyi, & Yu Jing (2023). *The relationship between WeChat usage and sense of achievement among elderly people: understanding the chain mediating role of social support and sense of meaning in life* *Psychological and Behavioral Research*, 21 (3), 367-373 <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1672-0628.2023.03.011>
- [17] Li Ziyi (2022). *Online social support acquisition for cancer patients - a deep interview study based on 50 cancer patients* Chongqing University. 89-90
- [18] Liang Haixia (2021). *The impact of mother group WeChat self disclosure on life satisfaction* Northeast Normal University 123
- [19] Liang Xiaoyan (2008). *Research on the Mechanism of the Impact of Online Social Support on the Psychological Health of Adolescents* Huazhong Normal University. 95-100
- [20] Liu Xiao and Huang Xiting (2010). *Social support and its mechanism of impact on mental health* *Psychological Research*, 3 (1), 3-8
- [21] MacGeorge, E. L., Samter, W., Feng, B., Gillihan, S. J., & Graves, A. R. (2004). *Stress, Social Support, and Health Among College Students After September 11, 2001*. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45(6), 655–670. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2004.0069>
- [22] Meshi, D., & Ellithorpe, M. E. (2021). *Problematic social media use and social support received in real-life versus on social media: Associations with depression, anxiety and social isolation*. *Addictive Behaviors*, 119, 106949–106949. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2021.106949>
- [23] Ndasauka, Y., Hou Juan, Wang Ying, Yang Lizhong, Zhang Yongjun, & Zhang Xiaochu (2015). *A WeChat Overuse Scale for Chinese College Students* Paper presented at the National Conference on Psychology
- [24] Pan, X., & Luo, Y. (2022). *Exploring the multidimensional relationships between social media support, social confidence, perceived media credibility and life attitude during the COVID-19 pandemic*. *Current Psychology* (New Brunswick, N.J.), 41(6), 3388–3400. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03238->
- [25] Politte-Corn, M., Nick, E. A., & Kujawa, A. (2023). *Age-related differences in social media use, online social support, and depressive symptoms in adolescents and emerging adults*. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 28(4), 497–503. <https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12640>
- [26] Sarason, B. R., Sarason, I. G., & Pierce, G. R. (1990). *Traditional views of social support and their impact on assessment*. In B. R. Sarason & I. G. Sarason (Eds.), *Social support: An interactional view* (pp. 9-25). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118619127>
- [27] Sarason, B. R., Sarason, I. G., & Pierce, G. R. (1990). *Social support: An interactional view*. John Wiley & Sons.
- [28] Sarason, I. G., Levine, H. M., Basham, R. B., & Sarason, B. R. (1983). *Assessing social support: The Social Support Questionnaire*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44(1), 127–139. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.44.1.127>
- [29] Selkie, E. M., Adkins, V., Masters, E., Bajpai, A., & Shumer, D. (2020). *Transgender adolescents uses of social media for social support*. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 66(3), 275-280. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2019.08.011>
- [30] Shanock, L. R., Baran, B. E., Gentry, W. A., Pattison, S. C., & Heggstad, E. D. (2010). *Polynomial Regression with Response Surface Analysis: A Powerful Approach for Examining Moderation and Overcoming Limitations of Difference Scores*. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25(4), 543–554. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-010-9183-4>
- [31] Shi, J. F., & Ma, J. H. (2003). *Discussion on Issues Related to Social Support Research*

Ergonomics, 9 (1), 58-61

- [32] Stronge, S., Greaves, L. M., Milojev, P., West-Newman, T., Barlow, F. K., & Sibley, C. G. (2015). Facebook is Linked to Body Dissatisfaction: Comparing Users and Non-Users. *Sex Roles*, 73(5-6), 200-213. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-015-0517-6>
- [33] Sun Shaojing, & Kang Jingshi (2022). Health Communication from the Perspective of Social Support: An Empirical Study of Patient Network Communities *Journal of Shanxi University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 45 (1), 66-73 [https://doi.org/10.13451/j.cnki.shanxi.univ\(phil.soc.\)](https://doi.org/10.13451/j.cnki.shanxi.univ(phil.soc.)).2022.01.008
- [34] Sun Wei (2015). Zhixin: Chinese "Living Existence." *Academic Monthly*, 47 (12), 5 – 18
- [35] Thoits, P. A. . (1982). Conceptual, methodological, and theoretical problems in studying social support as a buffer against life stress. *J Health Soc Behav*, 23(2), 145-159.
- [36] Tracy, E. M. (1990). Identifying social support resources of at-risk families. *Social Work*, 35(3), 252-258. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/35.3.252>
- [37] Turner, J. B. (1995). Economic Context and the Health Effects of Unemployment. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 36(3), 213-229. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2137339>
- [38] Wang Xiangdong, Wang Xilin, Ma Hong, etc (1999). *Handbook of Mental Health Assessment Scales (Revised Edition)* Beijing: Chinese Journal of Mental Health. 56
- [39] Wang Yixin (2019). Online communication and social support for primiparous women *Sichuan International Studies University* (99-101)
- [40] Wei Jingjing (2021). Research on the Social Media Use and Loneliness of Migrant Workers in the Construction Industry *Huazhong University of Science and Technology*. 132-134
- [41] Burleson, B. R. E. , Albrecht, T. L. E. , & Sarason, I. G. E. . (1994). Communication of social support: messages, interactions, relationships, and community. *PsycCRITIQUES*, 42(5).
- [42] Wilson, S., Mogan, S., & Kaur, K. (2020). Understanding the role of Facebook to support women with endometriosis: A Malaysian perspective. *International Journal of Nursing Practice*, 26(4), e12833-n/a. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijn.12833>
- [43] Wu, J. H. (2007). The impact of social support on internet addiction *Information Society Research*, 7 (7), 173-189
- [44] Xia, Y., & Zhou, Z. (1999). Towards a Chinese Conception of Social Support: A Study on the Social Support Networks of Chinese Working Mothers in Beijing [Review of Towards a Chinese Conception of Social Support: A Study on the Social Support Networks of Chinese Working Mothers in Beijing]. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 61(3), 815-815. National Council on Family Relations. <https://doi.org/10.2307/353585>
- [45] Xiao Shuiyuan (1994). The theoretical basis and research application of the Social Support Rating Scale *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 4 (2), 3.
- [46] Yang Xiaohui (2005). A study on the impact of social support on subjective well-being among high school students *Nanjing Normal University*. 34-36
- [47] Yang Yingxi & Yu Guoming (2020). WeChat usage affects happiness: the role of subjective social support and control points - based on an empirical survey of residents' media exposure and use in China in 2019 *Modern Audiovisual* (03), 38-44
- [48] Ye Weiming and Ding Ning (2021). Research on the Social Capital and Family Life Cycle of WeChat Business Mom Community *Journal of Minzu University of China: Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition*, 48 (5), 125-133.
- [49] Zeng Enyu (2020). Research on the Intervention Effect of Perceived Social Support on User Movement Behavior *Xiangtan University*. 102-104
- [50] Zhang Meng, Zhao Menghan, Dong Jiahui, & Gong Huoliang (2021). Preliminary development of a multidimensional social support scale *Psychological Research*, 14 (5), 418-427 <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.2095-1159.2021.05.005>
- [51] Zhang Wenhong; Ruan Danqing; Pan Yunkang (1999). The micro social network and macro social structure in rural China *Zhejiang Journal*, 5, 35-41
- [52] Zhu Wei (2018). The relationship between self presentation and subjective well-being in WeChat Moments: the mediating role of social support *Nanjing Normal University*. 78-80
- [53] Zuo Xiaohan (2022). Research on Internet social support for depression patients based on social media *Yunnan University of Finance and Economics* 76-78