

# The Relationship between Social Support and Happiness: The Moderating Effect of Marital Status

Yuan Wei

Department of Psychological and Behavioral Sciences, The London School of Economics and Political Science, London, Houston St, WC2A 2AE, UK

---

**Abstract:** Study explores social support-well-being interplay, assessing marital status's moderation. 1000 adults in diverse marital states surveyed via questionnaires. Scales measured social support & well-being. Analysis showed strong positive link, with marriage amplifying the benefit. Marital status is a key mediator. In contrast, the association was weaker among unmarried, divorced or widowed individuals. This suggests that marital status may further strengthen the positive effect of social support on well-being by consolidating emotional support and enhancing life security perception.

**Keywords:** Social Support; Happiness; Marital Status; Regulating Effect.

---

## 1. Introduction

Happiness, a new metric for life satisfaction & mental health, intrigues researchers. Social support, defined as spiritual, informational, & material aid from loved ones & networks, is vital for mental health & well-being. Although it is generally accepted that a strong social support system can effectively improve people's mental health and well-being [1], it is worth noting that different people who experience the same level of social support have different happiness feedback. This phenomenon may be attributed to individual divergent psychosocial characteristics, including marital status as a core adjustment variable. Marital status has a profound penetration to the individual's psychological well-being and social welfare [2]. On the one hand, a solid marriage bond can provide emotional shelter and life support, which is further conducive to increasing happiness. Unmarried, divorced, widowed individuals may lack stable partners, resulting in lower well-being & social support assessments. Thus, marital status's mediation in social support-well-being nexus merits deeper study.

Although there has been literature on the interaction between social support and well-being [3], an inadequate comprehension exists regarding the intricate mechanisms through which marital status influences this linkage. To bridge this knowledge void, this inquiry endeavors to uncover the blind spot, utilizing empirical analytical approaches to elucidate the dynamic interplay between social support and individual happiness. Additionally, it delves deeper into the modulating role that marital status plays in mediating this relationship, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding. [4].

## 2. Literature Review

The social support system, offering multi-faceted aid like material, emotional, and informational support, is crucial for enhancing individuals' psychological resilience, health, reducing stressors [5], curbing depression, and boosting life satisfaction. Strong support networks correlate with higher well-being. Marital status notably influences well-being perceptions, with married individuals typically reporting higher scores. Conversely, unmarried, divorced, or widowed

individuals show lower well-being indicators [7], possibly due to the lack of marital emotional support as a buffer against life's challenges. While the social support-well-being link is well-studied, research on how marital status moderates this relationship requires expansion. Marital status impacts social support accessibility and utilization [8], affecting well-being experiences. Married people may reap fuller benefits from social support due to partner support, while unmarried, divorced, or widowed individuals may miss out due to the absence of a stable partner.

Existing literature affirms the positive link between social support and well-being, yet overlooks in-depth analysis of marital status' role in modulating this relationship. This study aims to bridge this gap, exploring how marital status mediates the social support-well-being dynamic. It seeks to deepen our understanding of happiness across marital statuses and establish a scientific basis for mental health and social welfare interventions.

## 3. Design

Employing a cross-sectional study design via a comprehensive questionnaire, this investigation delved into the mediating role among social support, well-being, and marital status. The adopted approach unveiled concurrent associations and potential moderating effects, thereby enriching academic discourse. Its efficacy lied in the expedited data acquisition, enabling a sizeable sample, essential for in-depth scrutiny. To substantiate the validity and generalizability of findings, a representative cohort of 1,000 adults aged 18 to 65 was enlisted, encapsulating all youth-to-adulthood age brackets. This ensured demographic breadth. A gender equilibrium was maintained to mitigate bias. The study encompassed individuals in diverse marital and romantic contexts - married, single, divorced, and widowed - fostering a holistic perspective. Assessments were administered through the Social Support Rating Scale (SSRS), Life Satisfaction Scale (SWS), and a General Information Survey. Data collection ensued via online and offline platforms, preceded by divulging the study's objectives, methodology, and significance. Participants were assured of their right to opt-out at any stage without consequence. Upon comprehension, an informed consent form was mandated. Ethical principles guided our process, prioritizing

transparency, clarity, and fairness, with stringent confidentiality and privacy safeguards in place. Statistical excavations were conducted for data analysis. Initial explorations examined sample characteristics and variable dispersion. Pearson correlations illuminated the link between social support and well-being. Via multiple regression analyses, the marital status's interactive role emerged. Adhering to subject rights, data security, and privacy protocols, including anonymization and encryption, were strictly enforced.

## 4. Result

A cohort of 1,000 adults aged 18-65, with a mean age of 38.2 (SD 11.5), and balanced gender distribution, participated. Majority were married (55%), with 30% single, 10% divorced, and 5% widowed. Analysis showed a moderate-to-high level of social support (mean 32.5, SE 7.8) positively associated with well-being (scale 1-5, M 3.6, SE 0.8). Pearson correlation ( $r=0.56$ ,  $n=998$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) confirmed a strong positive link between social support and happiness. Baseline data revealed social support as a significant predictor of well-being ( $\beta=0.56$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), indicating marital status moderates this relationship.

The following detailed experimental procedures. At baseline, social support was a strong positive predictor of individual well-being ( $\beta = 0.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that social support is still the dominant factor of individual happiness after excluding the influence of other variables. Coupled with the adjustment effect of marital status, found that social support in deepening the configuration mode is still significant predictors of happiness ( $\beta = 0.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Marital status has a significant mediating effect on happiness ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In particular, the interaction effect between marital status and social support reached a significant level ( $\beta = 0.12$ ,  $p = .004$ ), and marital status was a dynamic moderator of the relationship between the two.

In the well-being study of married individuals, a strong positive correlation ( $\gamma = 0.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was found between social support and life satisfaction, indicating a symbiotic relationship where increased support drives happiness. This may stem from the emotional support and social capital provided by partners. For unmarried, divorced, and widowed, the correlation was weaker ( $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting limited support impact on well-being. These groups may need additional assistance due to challenges in maintaining partner connections and expanding social support networks.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Theoretical Significance

The research underscores a substantial positive correlation between social support and individual happiness, which aligns with previous studies by Smith & Jones (2020) and Wang et al. (2022). Social support is a key resilience factor, reducing life stress and bolstering mental health. Marital status moderates this, enhancing the positive link between support and well-being for married people and weakening it for unmarried, divorced, or widowed individuals. This underscores marriage's importance in fostering emotional stability and belonging, amplifying social support's benefits. This study provides novel perspectives on social support theory, emphasizing its differential effects based on marital status. Notably, individuals in non-traditional marital setups may find lesser benefits from social support, likely due

to the absence of consistent emotional anchor and social ties. By exploring the complex dynamics between marital status, social support, and well-being, this research deepens our understanding of the marriage-well-being nexus. Ultimately, the findings underscore marriage's dual role in fostering happiness – both directly and indirectly through facilitating access to social support.

### 5.2. Practical Significance

When examining the moderating impact of marital status on the relationship between social support and well-being, it is crucial for policymakers and mental health specialists to acknowledge the diverse needs across distinct marital categories. Individuals not bound in matrimony, divorcees, or widowers often exhibit weaker social networks, which could potentially be fortified through enhanced community engagement and targeted mental health provisions, thereby enhancing their quality of life. Consequently, mental health practitioners would be served well by devising tailored intervention strategies, tailored to specific marital contexts. For those who are married, emphasis should be placed on nurturing and preserving harmonious spousal connections, whereas for the unmarried, divorced, or bereaved individuals, efforts should predominantly focus on amplifying societal inclusion and emotional solace.

### 5.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The constraints to this search are clear. The cross-sectional structure used in this study cannot establish causal sequences among variables. In particular, the study relied on self-disclosure, which could potentially be influenced by social desirability bias or other types of bias.

To further deepen our understanding, future research should adopt a diachronous research framework to reveal the intricate and dynamic interactions among social support, marital status, and well-being. At the same time, it is worth exploring how marital status uniquely shapes the association between social support and well-being in multicultural soil. In addition, potential mediators such as economic status and personal characteristics should not be overlooked.

## 6. Conclusion

The present research validates the positive linkage between social support and personal well-being, while elucidating the intricate moderating influence of marital status on this connection. These revelations are pivotal for devising strategies and interventions tailored to enhance the well-being of individuals across various marital phases. Theoretically, the findings reinforce the significance of social support in enhancing individual well-being, underscoring its indispensability. Concurrently, they underscore the pivotal differential role of marital status, which distinguishes the reception of social support and its impact on well-being across different marital statuses. Practically, these insights are crucial for crafting strategies to optimize well-being experiences for individuals with diverse marital backgrounds. Community initiatives for singles, divorcees, and widows, such as bolstering social engagement and mental health services, can significantly enhance their well-being. Policy-wise, it is advised to fortify communication skills training for married couples, facilitating efficient utilization of social support resources and augmenting their happiness. For those

in non-traditional marital configurations, community-based activities and mental health interventions can provide necessary support. Moreover, public and NGO sectors should contemplate broadening support for mental health services and mutual aid groups, fostering social connections and support networks for those with atypical marital statuses. Future endeavors should delve deeper into this realm, exploring additional moderators like economic circumstances, educational attainment, and personality attributes, to enrich our comprehension of the intricate dynamics between social support, marital status, and well-being, particularly the cross-cultural impact of marital status on this nexus. This study presents fresh perspectives on the interplay between social support and well-being, emphasizing the central mediation of marital status, and its findings offer invaluable guidance for policy formulation, intervention development, and research trajectories.

## References

- [1] Israel-Cohen, Yael, and Oren Kaplan. "Traumatic stress during population-wide exposure to trauma in Israel: Gender as a moderator of the effects of marital status and social support." *Stress and Health* 32.5 (2016): 636-640.
- [2] Drummond, Suzie, et al. "The relationship of social support with well-being outcomes via work–family conflict: Moderating effects of gender, dependants and nationality." *Human Relations* 70.5 (2017): 544-565.
- [3] Abualrub, Raeda Fawzi, Ferdous Hasan Omari, and Ahmed Fawzi Abu Al Rub. "The moderating effect of social support on the stress–satisfaction relationship among Jordanian hospital nurses." *Journal of Nursing Management* 17.7 (2009): 870-878.
- [4] Soleimani, Mohammad Ali, et al. "Exploring the relationship between spiritual well-being and death anxiety in survivors of acute myocardial infarction: moderating role of sex, marital status and social support." *Journal of Religion and Health* 57 (2018): 683-703.
- [5] Huang, Chiung-Yu, and Mei-Chi Hsu. "Social support as a moderator between depressive symptoms and quality of life outcomes of breast cancer survivors." *European Journal of Oncology Nursing* 17.6 (2013): 767-774.
- [6] Matt, Georg E., and Alfred Dean. "Social support from friends and psychological distress among elderly persons: Moderator effects of age." *Journal of health and social behavior* (1993): 187-200.
- [7] Lu, Jiao, et al. "Moderating effect of social support on depression and health promoting lifestyle for Chinese empty nesters: a cross-sectional study." *Journal of Affective Disorders* 256 (2019): 495-508.
- [8] Zhang, Dan, et al. "The moderating effect of social support on the relationship between physical health and suicidal thoughts among Chinese rural elderly: A nursing home sample." *International journal of mental health nursing* 27.5 (2018): 1371-1382.