

**Meta analysis of the relationship between social support and depression among Chinese middle school students**

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**ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION****Support** - None.**Review Stage at time of this submission** - Preliminary searches.**Conflicts of interest** - None declared.**INPLASY registration number:** INPLASY202430118**Amendments** - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 27 March 2024 and was last updated on 27 March 2024.**INTRODUCTION**

**R** **Review question / Objective** P (Population): The target population of this study is Chinese middle school students, covering both middle and high school students. Middle school students are in their adolescence and face multiple challenges such as academic pressure, physical changes, and interpersonal relationships, which can easily lead to emotional fluctuations and psychological problems. Therefore, studying the relationship between social support and depression in this specific population has important practical significance.

**I** (Intervention): The intervention factors in this study are social support, including actual social support and perceived social support. Actual social support refers to the specific help and support individuals receive from their family, friends, school, and other environments; Understanding social support refers to an individual's perception and understanding of social support, that is, their belief and confidence in receiving support and assistance.

**C** (Comparison) : There is no control group.

**O** (Outcome): The main observation indicator of this study is depression status. Evaluate the level of depression among middle school students through standardized psychological assessment tools such as the Self Rating Depression Scale.

**S** (Study Design): This study adopts the method of meta-analysis to explore the relationship between social support and depression among Chinese middle school students, integrating relevant studies published at home and abroad. Meta analysis will collect literature that meets the inclusion criteria, extract relevant data, and conduct quality evaluation and heterogeneity testing. Finally, the overall effect estimate is obtained by combining statistical measures, and the reliability and generalizability of the results are discussed.

**Condition being studied** The condition being studied in this meta-analysis is the relationship between social support and depression among Chinese middle school students. This relationship involves two core elements: social support and depression.

Actual social support refers to the specific help and support that individuals receive from their

surrounding environment (such as family, friends, school, community, etc.). This kind of support can be material assistance, as well as emotional care and encouragement. Understanding social support is an individual's subjective perception and evaluation of social support. It refers to the degree to which an individual understands and identifies with the social support they can or have already received. This kind of comprehension ability affects the effectiveness of individuals in utilizing actual social support, as well as their psychological coping mechanisms when facing difficulties.

Secondly, depression is a common mental health problem, characterized by sustained emotional depression, loss of interest, decreased energy, and a decrease in self-worth. Due to multiple factors such as academic pressure, family expectations, and interpersonal relationships, the incidence of depression among Chinese middle school students has been increasing year by year, becoming an undeniable social problem.

The purpose of this study is to systematically collect and analyze existing research to explore the relationship between social support and depression among Chinese middle school students. Specifically, we will focus on the impact of different types of social support on depression among middle school students, as well as the differences in this relationship among different groups such as gender, age, and geography. At the same time, we will also analyze potential factors that affect the relationship between social support and depression, in order to provide scientific basis and practical guidance for the prevention and intervention of depression in middle school students.

## METHODS

**Participant or population** Chinese middle school students, including middle and high school students.

**Intervention** The intervention factors in this study are social support, including actual social support and perceived social support. Actual social support refers to the specific help and support individuals receive from their family, friends, school, and other environments; Understanding social support refers to an individual's perception and understanding of social support, that is, their belief and confidence in receiving support and assistance.

**Comparator** There is no control group.

**Study designs to be included** Mainly related cross-sectional studies.

**Eligibility criteria** Inclusion criteria: (1) Participants are Chinese middle school students; (2) The study reported statistical measures of the impact of social support on depression; (3) Quality assessment levels are A and B; (4) When repeating publications, only one article is used, and when publishing a thesis, only journal articles are included. Exclusion criteria: (1) Review or meta-analysis; (2) Unable to extract valid data; (3) The results obtained using non standardized scales.

**Information sources** China National Knowledge Infrastructure, VIP, Wanfang Data, ScienceDirect, Web of Science, Springer.

**Main outcome(s)** The correlation coefficient between depression and social support.

**Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis** Cochrane.

**Strategy of data synthesis** Use Meta Analysis 3.0 software for data analysis. According to I<sup>2</sup> Choose a fixed effects model or a random effects model for the test results. Use Q-test for heterogeneity analysis. Use funnel plots and Egger tests to evaluate publication bias.

**Subgroup analysis** Mainly including:

1. Subgroup analysis of social support types: We will conduct subgroup analysis based on different types of social support, especially considering actual social support separately from perceived social support.

2. Subgroup analysis of depression assessment tools: Given that depression is a broad concept, different assessment tools may focus on different aspects. We will conduct subgroup analysis based on the depression assessment tools used to explore the impact of different assessment methods on the relationship between social support and depression.

**Sensitivity analysis** Perform sensitivity analysis using Meta Analysis 3.0 software, exclude each included study one by one, and recalculate the combined effect size of the remaining studies. Translate the sensitive information of this article.

**Country(ies) involved** China.

**Keywords** Middle school students; depression; social support; meta-analysis.

**Contributions of each author**

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