

Social and Psychological Determinants of Positive Ageing: A Narrative Review

¹Aastha Singh, ²Dr Pankaj Tripathi

¹Research Scholar, University of Allahabad

²Asst. Professor, University of Allahabad

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100800967>

Received: 04 September 2026; Accepted: 09 September 2026; Published: 22 September 2026

ABSTRACT

Background: Positive Ageing has emerged as a multidimensional concept in gerontology that encompasses not only physical health but also psychological well-being and social engagement. Although related concepts such as successful ageing, healthy ageing, and positive ageing have been widely explored, there is limited integration of social and psychological determinants associated with Positive Ageing, which have rarely been synthesized within a single framework. This review addressed that gap by integrating the existing Positive Ageing frameworks and identifying the social and psychological factors that facilitate Positive Ageing in later life.

Objective: This narrative review aimed to collect empirical evidence regarding the social and psychological factors influencing Positive Ageing and to examine their effects on important ageing outcomes.

Methods: A narrative review was conducted using a comprehensive literature search across electronic databases including PsycINFO, PubMed, Scopus, ScienceDirect, BMC, and Google Scholar, utilizing keywords such as "positive ageing," "successful ageing," "healthy ageing," "active ageing," and "social and psychological determinants." Peer-reviewed articles published between 2011 and 2026 were included to ensure the incorporation of recent and relevant evidence.

The review focused on studies involving adults aged 45 years and older that examined Positive Ageing or related ageing frameworks from social or psychological perspectives. Following the application of predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, 33 studies were selected and synthesized using a thematic approach.

Results: The review identified three primary domains. Social determinants encompassed social relationships, social participation, and social support. Psychological determinants included resilience, self-efficacy, self-perception of ageing, and psychological well-being. These determinants consistently interacted to facilitate favourable outcomes, such as improved quality of life, productive ageing, life satisfaction, and longevity. Despite consistent findings, the existing literature remains constrained by the predominance of cross-sectional designs, reliance on self-reported measures, and limited representation of culturally diverse and low-resource populations.

Conclusion: Positive Ageing depends on the complex interaction of social and psychological resources, not just physical health. The results support a holistic approach that considers how relationships, psychological strengths, and social conditions together influence ageing outcomes. Future studies should use long-term, culturally broad methods to strengthen the evidence and guide interventions and policies that promote Positive Ageing in diverse groups. This review presents a detailed framework of factors that support Positive Ageing at the individual level; gerontologists and policymakers should recognise and enhance these elements in appropriate contexts for each person.

Keywords: Positive Ageing, Successful Ageing, Healthy Ageing, Active Ageing, Well-being, Narrative Review

INTRODUCTION

The process of ageing is a natural, lifelong, and multidimensional phenomenon encompassing biological, psychological, and social facets throughout an individual's lifespan. Biological ageing pertains to gradual physiological alterations; psychological ageing involves cognitive and emotional adaptation, and social ageing relates to transitions in social roles, relationships, and participation. Nevertheless, the experience of ageing is highly individualized, with variations in health, lifestyle, social support, personal resources, and subjective perceptions of ageing. Contemporary ageing research has consequently shifted from solely focusing on life expectancy towards understanding factors that contribute to well-being, resilience, meaningful engagement, and a positive ageing experience. The global population is ageing at an unprecedented rate, marking one of the most significant demographic shifts of the twenty-first century. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2024) projects that by the year 2050, the population aged 60 years and above will reach 2.1 billion. According to WHO, ageing can be categorized into three stages: old age (from 60 to 74 years), late old age (from 75 to 90 years), and very old age (90 years and above). India is experiencing a rapid increase in its elderly population, a trend attributed to declining fertility rates and increasing life expectancy. This demographic transition bears important implications for healthcare systems, social policies, and economic development, emphasizing the importance of promoting not merely longevity but also positive ageing, quality of life, and overall well-being among older adults.

Traditionally, gerontological research primarily depicted ageing as a period marked by decline, dependency, social withdrawal, and vulnerability. An early and influential model of ageing highlighted the absence of disease and high levels of physical and cognitive functioning (Rowe & Kahn, 1987). Currently, researchers are adopting a more positive perspective on ageing, emphasizing resilience, and growth. The concept of Positive Ageing pertains to individuals' experiences and their ageing process. While these models have significantly contributed to understanding ageing outcomes, they have been criticized for their biomedical emphasis and limited inclusivity, often excluding individuals living with chronic conditions who nonetheless demonstrate resilience, psychological well-being, and life satisfaction.

In response to these limitations, contemporary gerontological researchers adopted a more holistic and multidimensional approach. The Selective Optimization with Compensation (SOC) model was proposed by Baltes & Baltes (1990), emphasizing lifespan theories of development that highlight adaptation, resilience, and ongoing psychological growth as fundamental to successful ageing. From this perspective, successful ageing is characterized not only by the absence of illness but also by individuals' capacity to regulate emotions, adapt to age-related changes, and sustain meaningful engagement with life (Moore et al., 2015). These developments align with the principles of positive psychology, which focus on strengths, resources, and opportunities for growth rather than deficits and decline.

Healthy Ageing, Successful Ageing, and Positive Ageing are closely related concepts, but they represent different perspectives of the ageing process. Healthy Ageing is defined by the World Health Organization in terms of functional ability and well-being in later life. Rowe & Kahn's model of Successful Ageing is mainly about the absence of disease, high levels of physical and cognitive functioning, and active engagement with life. Positive Ageing, in contrast, is a broader and more holistic view, recognising ageing as a dynamic process shaped not only by physical health, but also by social relationships, psychological resources, resilience, self-perceptions of ageing and meaningful participation. This view recognizes that older people can experience fulfilment, purpose, and psychological well-being even in the presence of chronic illness or functional limitations. Positive Ageing thus offers a more holistic perspective on the understanding of ageing within a social and cultural context. Within this evolving viewpoint, Positive Ageing has emerged as a more inclusive way to understand how people see and interpret their ageing process. It goes beyond just preventing illness and maintaining functional ability to include psychological health, resilience, self-efficacy, social participation, life satisfaction, a sense of purpose, and independence.

Research indicates that ageing can represent a period of growth and development rather than merely decline. Older adults frequently exhibit emotional maturity, enhanced coping skills, wisdom, and a deeper sense of

purpose, thereby challenging deficit-oriented perspectives on ageing (Levy et al., 2002). Empirical evidence demonstrates that social support and care from others are crucial determinants of happiness and life satisfaction among older individuals. Social support and engagement are thus vital for well-being and contentment in this demographic (Diener, 1984; Smith & Victor, 2024). Moreover, psychological resources such as motivation, resilience, self-efficacy, and emotional regulation play a significant role in enabling individuals to address the challenges associated with ageing and to adapt to age-related difficulties (Fang et al., 2023; Cosco et al., 2017). Recent scholarly investigations suggest that psychological traits, lifestyle choices, social relationships, and environmental factors interact dynamically throughout the lifespan to influence ageing trajectories. A comprehensive review conducted in 2024 identified social support, psychological resilience, and healthy behaviours as fundamental components of Successful Ageing (Yustanti et al., 2024). Correspondingly, longitudinal research indicates that psychological factors such as resilience and mental well-being are critically important; they contribute to the reduction of distress and the enhancement of quality of life among older adults (Takashi Oshio; Geschke et al., 2024).

Emerging research indicates that participation in community activities and social interactions facilitates emotional regulation; maintaining connections and engaging in pleasurable pursuits markedly enhances individuals' self-perception. Social integration and engagement during old age are vital for healthy ageing, particularly among populations from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Social participation in later life is essential for a meaningful and rewarding ageing process (J. K. Oduro, 2024). Resilience and adaptive capabilities are fundamental to successful ageing; consequently, considering these attributes is pivotal for achieving positive outcomes. These competencies are particularly pertinent within comprehensive ageing frameworks (Jacob et al., 2025).

Despite the increasing research on ageing, current reviews have mainly looked at individual factors or focused on Healthy Ageing and Successful Ageing as separate ideas. There has been relatively little attention given to combining both social and psychological factors within the overall framework of Positive Ageing. Additionally, studies from various cultural contexts have seldom been brought together to show how these factors interact to influence key outcomes such as life satisfaction, productive ageing, quality of life, and longevity. Filling this gap is crucial for building a clear understanding of Positive Ageing and for guiding future research, practice, and policy. Most existing studies have focused on Western nations, particularly in North America and Europe, potentially limiting their applicability to developing countries such as India, where family structures and societal norms differ substantially. The exclusion of rural older adults, individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and diverse cultural groups results in an incomplete understanding of ageing, given disparities in resources, healthcare access, and social support systems. Moreover, many investigations examine social or psychological factors in isolation, with limited exploration of their interrelations. Both social bonds and mental health are essential components of Positive Ageing; however, current comprehension of their reciprocal influence remains limited. Furthermore, the predominance of cross-sectional studies constrains the ability to ascertain causal relationships between variables and ageing outcomes. There is a pressing need for longitudinal research that traces individuals over time to elucidate how social and psychological factors influence ageing trajectories. The period of midlife (ages 45-59) represents a critical phase for establishing health-related behaviours, psychological resources, and social roles that impact ageing; nonetheless, this stage remains underrepresented within the realm of ageing research. Even India's growing older population, rising socio-demographic inequalities, and unique cultural context underscore the importance of understanding the factors that contribute to and result from positive ageing, which is particularly vital for advancing research, practice, and policy.

This review aims to fill existing gaps by identifying and synthesizing social and psychological factors that influence a positive Ageing experience. It examines how these factors impact key ageing outcomes and proposes an integrated framework illustrating how supportive social environments and psychological resources collaboratively foster positive Ageing across various populations and cultures. By combining evidence from diverse research methods and cultural backgrounds, the review seeks to deepen understanding and create a comprehensive framework to inform future research, interventions, and policies supporting positive ageing throughout the lifespan.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The present study employed a narrative review design to synthesize existing evidence on the social and psychological determinants associated with the Positive Ageing construct. A narrative review approach was considered appropriate because the Positive Ageing concepts allow the integration of findings from diverse theoretical perspectives, methodologies, and cultural contexts. The rationale for using a narrative review approach was that the purpose of the current research was to synthesise and qualitatively assess prior empirical research on social and psychological factors for Positive Ageing, rather than to quantitatively analyse and integrate data. Narrative reviews lend themselves to synthesizing empirical results from sources that vary in their methodologies, sample compositions, and cultural settings to achieve a rich, overarching view of a complex, multifaceted concept such as Positive Ageing.

Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was done using Scopus, PsycINFO, PubMed, ScienceDirect, BMC and Google Scholar. The search focused on research that looked at Positive Ageing and similar ideas the social and psychological things that connect to how people age. The search looked at articles from January 2011 to 2026. The search terms were built around three areas: ageing-related ideas, social factors and psychological factors. The main search terms included combinations of: "positive ageing," "successful ageing," "healthy ageing," "active ageing," "social support " "social participation " "social relationships " "social connectedness " "psychological well-being," "resilience," "self-efficacy " "self-perception of ageing " and "life satisfaction." The words AND and OR were used to connect ideas and make the search wider or more specific. The search also used truncation and special rules, from each database when needed. The search structure was (" ageing" OR "successful ageing" OR "healthy ageing" OR "active ageing") AND ("social support" OR "social participation" OR "social relationships" OR "social connectedness" OR resilience OR "self-efficacy" OR "psychological well-being" OR "self-perception of ageing" OR "life satisfaction"). For databases that had search options the search was changed to fit the correct title, abstract, keyword or subject-heading fields. Google Scholar was also used to find studies and extra reading material.

Inclusion Criteria

Studies were selected if they were peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2011 and 2026 to synthesize the most contemporary evidence on Positive Ageing and to capture recent developments in social and psychological research related to ageing. The year 2011 was chosen to get 15 years of recent studies while not depending too much on old ideas. The year 2026 was picked to include the possible studies that fit the review. The emphasis was placed on the social and psychological facets of ageing. Participants included human subjects aged 45 and above, spanning midlife to older adulthood. The research methodologies employed encompassed quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods.

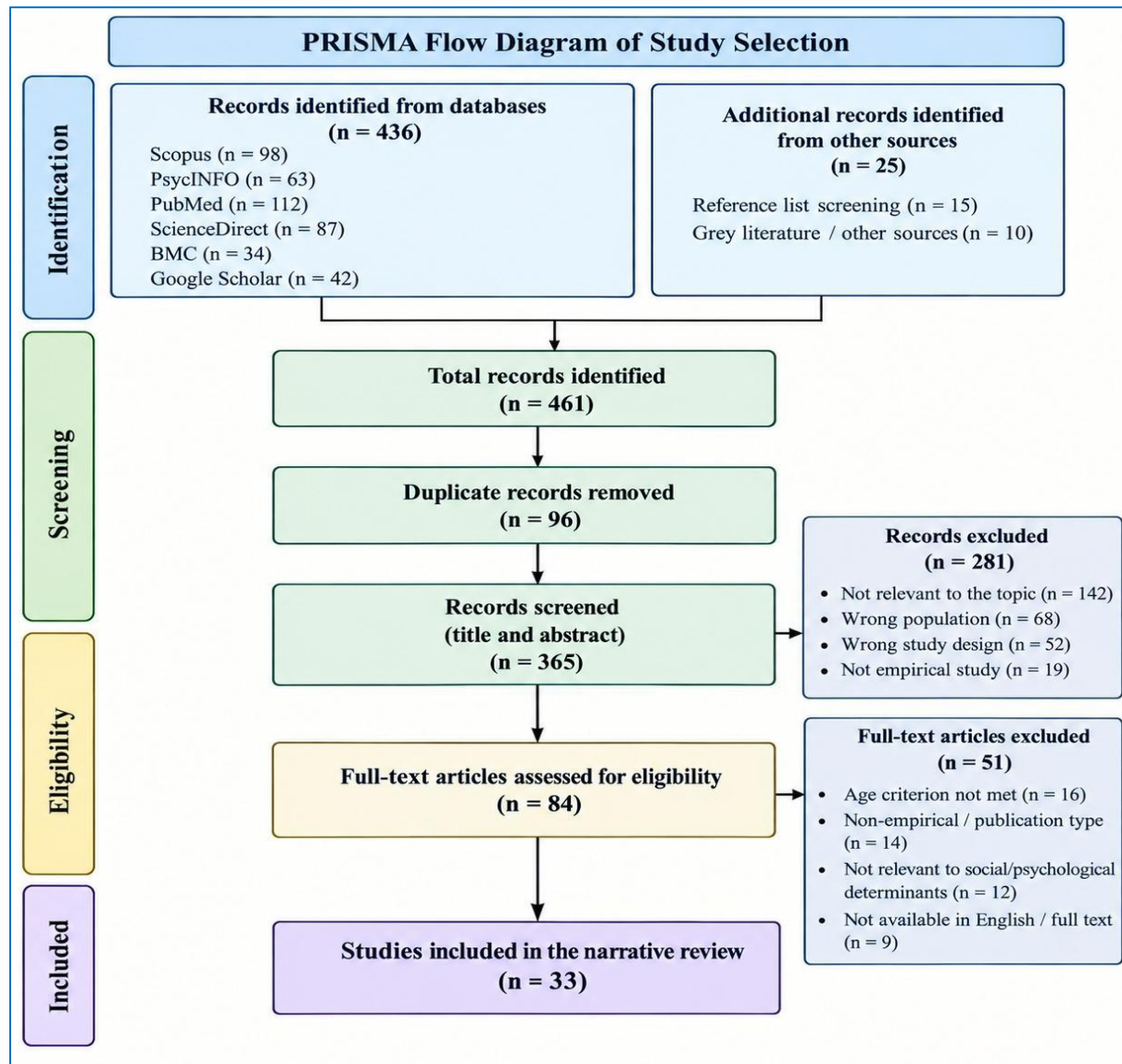
Exclusion Criteria

Non-empirical publications, such as editorials, commentaries, conference abstracts, or dissertations, were excluded. Attention was given to studies focusing primarily on clinical or diagnostic measures, such as MRI scans and blood biomarkers, without a psychological framework. Additionally, studies not available in full text or not published in English were excluded.

Study Selection Process

The initial screening involved reviewing titles and abstracts to assess relevance to the review objectives. Subsequently, full-text articles were examined according to predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies that met these criteria and aligned with the research objectives were selected. Duplicate records and

studies lacking direct relevance to the research questions were omitted. Consequently, 33 studies were deemed suitable for inclusion in the final review.



Quality Appraisal

The methodological quality of the studies was assessed using JBI appraisal tools that matched the design of each study. Most quantitative studies showed methodological quality, especially with clear sample definition, reliable measurement, proper outcome assessment, and solid statistical analysis. Some cross-sectional studies raised uncertainty about how potential confounding factors were identified and managed. Qualitative studies generally matched their methodology, data collection, analysis, and interpretation though the positioning of the researcher and reflexivity were not always reported consistently. Overall, the appraisal supported including the studies, in the narrative synthesis, but the methodological limitations were kept in mind when interpreting the findings. Detailed item level appraisal results appear in Supplementary Table S1.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Relevant data from the selected studies were extracted systematically. The data included author names, publication year, country of origin, sample characteristics, study design, major determinants examined, and key findings related to Positive Ageing. A thematic synthesis approach was employed to analyze and integrate the findings across studies. The results were categorized into three principal themes: Social determinants (such as social relationships, participation, and social support), psychological determinants (including psychological

well-being, self-perception of ageing, self-efficacy, and resilience), and positive ageing outcomes (such as life satisfaction, quality of life, productive ageing, and longevity). Rather than conducting statistical aggregation, the review aimed to identify recurring patterns, areas of consensus and divergence, methodological strengths and limitations, and research gaps. The findings were interpreted within broader frameworks of Positive Ageing, Healthy Ageing, and Successful Ageing to foster a comprehensive understanding of ageing experiences and their associated determinants across diverse cultural and social contexts.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social Determinants of Positive Ageing

Positive Ageing is influenced by social determinants, which play a key role in the physical, psychological, and social well-being of older adults. Social relationships, social participation, social support, community engagement, and economic security are opportunities for older adults to remain independent, resilient, and have a higher quality of life. There is strong evidence that supportive social environments promote healthy and positive ageing, and that social isolation and limited support can inhibit successful adaptation to later life.

Social relationships consistently stand out as key factors promoting Positive Ageing across different cultures by offering older adults emotional security, belonging, and psychological stability. Strong bonds with family, friends, and peers help reduce loneliness, improve emotional health, and reinforce a sense of community as people age. Numerous studies show that meaningful interpersonal connections boost self-esteem, cognitive function, mental health, and overall life satisfaction in later life. Fernández- Ballesteros et al. (2011) found that supportive social networks are linked to better emotional and cognitive health among seniors. Similarly, Viljanen et al. (2024) demonstrated that staying socially connected benefits health and decreases loneliness. Research by Manzi et al. (2024) and Thampi et al. (2023) also highlighted that relationship quality is vital for successful ageing. Studies by Killen (2020) and Park et al. (2024) reveal that cultural differences significantly shape the role of social ties. Overall, these findings emphasize the crucial role of social connections in positive ageing. Despite varying countries and cultural contexts, the evidence consistently shows that relationship quality matters more than the number of social contacts. In collectivistic societies like India, intergenerational bonds and family support are especially central to ageing experiences. Older adults who receive emotional and practical support from families tend to feel more secure, supported, and psychologically healthy. While these cultural differences exist, the overarching evidence indicates that supportive relationships reduce loneliness, enhance resilience, and help older adults adapt to age-related changes. Most evidence comes from cross-sectional studies, which make it difficult to establish causality between social relationships and Positive Ageing. Additionally, few studies explore how changing family structures, migration, urbanization, and digital communication impact social connectedness among the elderly. Future longitudinal and cross- cultural research is essential to better understand how social relationships evolve and support Positive Ageing.

Social participation encompasses engagement in community activities, volunteering, and recreational programs. It plays a fundamental role in encouraging active involvement among older adults, fostering a sense of connection, and promoting well-being. Participation in social, recreational, cultural, and voluntary activities enhances feelings of vitality and strengthens social bonds, contributing positively to mental health and emotional stability. Older adults who maintain high levels of social engagement tend to demonstrate greater independence. Paul et al. (2012) identified active engagement in social, physical, and community activities as an essential aspect of active and positive ageing. Killen and Macaskill (2020) reported that participation in enjoyable and meaningful activities enhances psychological well-being and cultivates positive perceptions in later life. Similarly, Muhammad et al. (2022) observed that older Indian adults who remained socially engaged and cognitively active were more likely to experience successful ageing, although rural-urban differences influenced these outcomes. Chen et al. (2023) further demonstrated that motivation and active participation in community volunteering are positively associated with improved health outcomes and reduced loneliness. Qualitative evidence also supports the significance of social participation. Lowe et al. (2023) noted that involvement in community leisure activities strengthens social bonds, personal identity, emotional well-being, and a sense of purpose among ageing individuals. Likewise, Park et al. (2024) identified engagement in

meaningful activities as a central component of subjective Positive Ageing, indicating that active participation contributes not only to physical activity but also to psychological fulfilment. Bansod (2024) reported that social engagement, coupled with psychological well-being, plays a pivotal role in promoting Positive Ageing among older adults in India. Recent research by Paniagua-Grandos et al. (2026) demonstrated that eudemonic psychological well-being significantly enhances participation, even among older adults with moderate health status, suggesting that psychological resources may motivate continued social involvement despite physical limitations. Lee et al. (2026) further emphasized the increasing importance of digital technologies, showing that digital inclusion facilitates social participation, improves communication, and enhances overall well-being among older adults in Hong Kong.

Overall, these results indicate that social participation supports Positive Ageing through various pathways. It strengthens social bonds, enhances psychological well-being, increases self-esteem, and fosters ongoing involvement in meaningful family and community roles. Instead of being an isolated activity, social participation interacts with motivation, resilience, and social support to lead to positive ageing outcomes. However, important limitations persist. Most research uses cross-sectional studies, making it difficult to determine if social participation actively encourages Positive Ageing or if healthier, more resilient individuals are simply more inclined to participate. Additionally, opportunities for engagement differ across cultures, socioeconomic statuses, and regions. Future studies with longitudinal designs and diverse cultural samples are necessary to identify the most effective forms of participation and to investigate how digital engagement, community initiatives, and age-friendly environments can enhance Positive Ageing in later life.

Social support includes emotional, informational, and practical help from family, friends, caregivers, and community networks, offering notable benefits. Having adequate social support is essential for maintaining psychological health and helping older adults cope with stress, illness, and age-related issues. Research consistently shows that individuals with stronger support systems are less likely to experience depression, emotional distress, and social isolation. Wu & Sheng (2019) found that social support directly promotes healthy ageing by boosting self-efficacy and health-promoting behaviors, while Kong et al. (2021) linked social support to resilience and self-health efficacy in migrant older adults, highlighting its role in overcoming social and environmental challenges during ageing. Thampi & Mathew (2023) explored the experiences of community-dwelling older adults in India, noting that ageing in place is supported by close family ties, familiar neighborhoods, social relationships, and independence. These results emphasize the importance of culturally rooted family support systems in fostering Positive Ageing, especially in collectivist societies like India. Similarly, Fang et al. (2026) found that positive social interactions, adaptability, and peer support are strongly associated with higher life satisfaction and well-being among older adults from various cultures. Supportive relationships with loved ones are vital for maintaining happiness and health throughout ageing. Goktas & Cevik (2026) demonstrated that perceived social support significantly correlates with quality of life, psychological well-being, and successful ageing in community-dwelling elders. Ren et al. (2026) indicated that active ageing behaviours mediate the impact of social support on subjective well-being, suggesting social support fosters Positive Ageing through active engagement and mental adaptation. Overall, these findings reveal that social support affects Positive Ageing through several pathways. Emotional support reduces psychological distress and builds resilience amid illness, loss, and major life changes. Informational support helps older adults make informed health and lifestyle choices, while practical help supports independence in daily tasks. Together, these supports enhance confidence, emotional stability, and quality of life. Despite strong evidence of social support benefits, current research faces limitations, mainly reliance on qualitative or cross-sectional methods, which restrict causal conclusions. Little is known about how changing family structures, urbanization, migration, and rising social isolation affect support availability in later life. Future long-term and cross-cultural studies are needed to develop sustainable strategies for strengthening support networks and promoting Positive Ageing across diverse groups.

Psychological Determinants of Positive Ageing

Besides social factors, psychological resources significantly influence Positive Ageing and adaptation in later life. While physical health is important, psychological strengths help older adults cope with stress, stay

independent, and maintain emotional health despite age-related challenges. Literature consistently highlights psychological well-being, motivation, self-efficacy, and resilience as key psychological factors that, together with social resources, shape Positive Ageing outcomes.

Psychological well-being is vital for older adults as it helps them maintain emotional balance, a sense of purpose, self- acceptance, and personal growth. Those with higher psychological well-being tend to adapt better, form meaningful social relationships, and stay independent despite physical and social changes. It acts as an internal resource that supports positive adaptation. A study by Bryant et al. (2016) showed that personality traits and psychological well-being are key factors influencing positive attitudes toward ageing, indicating that emotional development earlier in life significantly aids successful ageing. Bansod et al. (2025) emphasised psychological well- being crucial for positive ageing, with higher levels linked to greater resilience, positive attitudes, and better adaptation. Similarly, Paniagua- Granados et al. (2025) found that eudaimonic well- being encourages social participation, even with health issues, by fostering purpose, autonomy, and personal growth. Fang et al. (2026) highlighted that cultural diversity in older adults' psychological well-being is strengthened through supportive relationships and social interactions, emphasising the link between well-being and social resources. Overall, research suggests that psychological well-being is a complex, multifaceted resource that supports emotional regulation, resilience, active engagement, and constructive responses to challenges. It interacts with social support, participation, and self-efficacy to promote a more positive ageing experience. However, most evidence comes from cross-sectional studies, limiting causal inferences. Different definitions and measurement methods across studies also reduce comparability. There is a pressing need for longitudinal and cross-cultural research to better understand its development and the influence of cultural, socioeconomic, and environmental factors. Future studies should use mixed methods to explore causal pathways and guide tailored interventions for diverse ageing populations.

Self-perception of ageing indicates that this aspect is emerging as a significant psychological determinant of positive ageing. Multiple studies have shown that older adults who maintain a positive view of ageing consistently report higher levels of life satisfaction, improved psychological well-being, greater resilience, and better adaptation to later life stages. Zhao et al. (2023) demonstrated that positive self-perceptions of ageing enhance life satisfaction through the mediating effects of resilience and social support, suggesting that perceptions of ageing impact positive ageing indirectly via psychosocial resources. Similarly, Park et al. (2025) found that seniors who view ageing as a period marked by ongoing growth, purpose, and opportunity exhibit increased confidence, adaptability, and psychological health. Moreover, Park et al. (2024) developed and validated the Positive Ageing Scale, providing empirical evidence for the reliable assessment of positive ageing perceptions. Despite these promising findings, the current body of evidence remains limited. Most research has been conducted within a few cultural contexts, notably China, the United Kingdom, and Europe, which limits the generalizability of these findings to broader populations.

Furthermore, most studies are cross-sectional and qualitative, which limits the ability to determine causality. There is a shortage of longitudinal or intervention-based research. Few studies have explored how self-perception of ageing interacts with psychological factors like self-efficacy, resilience, and psychological well-being in promoting positive ageing. Overall, the evidence suggests that self-perception of ageing is a promising psychological factor for positive ageing. Nonetheless, more longitudinal, cross-cultural, and intervention studies are urgently needed- especially in developing countries like India- to clarify causal links and better understand their long-term effects on positive ageing.

Self-efficacy is a significant psychological determinant of Positive Ageing, as it reflects an individual's confidence in their capacity to manage daily challenges, make autonomous decisions, and adapt to age-related changes. Older adults possessing higher levels of self-efficacy are generally more inclined to sustain functional independence, adopt beneficial health behaviours, and remain socially engaged despite physical or environmental limitations. Consequently, self-efficacy plays a vital role in psychological adjustment, emotional well-being, and successful adaptation during later life. According to Wu & Sheng (2019), self-efficacy was positively associated with healthy ageing and acted as an important mechanism for how social support influenced health behaviors. In addition, Kong et al. (2021) observed that resilience reinforced the

correlation between social support perception and self-rated health, suggesting that these confident individuals could be better adapted to age transitions. Xin et al. (2026) also showed that digital health literacy enhanced self-efficacy through mediation by social support and life satisfaction. The need to be digitally literate in Positive Ageing is becoming increasingly evident. These findings support the perspective that self-efficacy is not only linked to behavioural competence but also influences individuals' perceptions and responses to ageing. The importance of self-efficacy aligns with the Selective Optimization with Compensation (SOC) model proposed by Baltes and Baltes (1990), which posits that older adults can sustain successful functioning by adapting to age-related changes through effective utilization of available resources. Individuals with greater self-efficacy are more likely to develop adaptive coping strategies, manage their emotions effectively, and remain engaged in meaningful activities despite functional decline. Thus, self-efficacy constitutes a crucial psychological resource that fosters autonomy, resilience, and overall Positive Ageing. Although existing evidence consistently underscores the positive role of self-efficacy, certain limitations warrant acknowledgement. Most studies are cross-sectional and rely on self-reported data, which constrains the ability to infer causal relationships. Moreover, there is relatively limited research examining how cultural values, socioeconomic status, educational background, and family environments influence the development and sustenance of self-efficacy in later life. Future longitudinal and cross-cultural research is necessary to better understand the evolution of self-efficacy throughout the ageing process and to identify interventions capable of enhancing this psychological resource to promote Positive Ageing.

Resilience is widely recognized as a crucial psychological determinant of Positive Ageing, as it enables older adults to adapt effectively to age-related challenges, sustain emotional stability, and recover from adversity. As individuals age, they often face multiple stressors, including declining physical health, the loss of loved ones, reduced mobility, retirement, and changes in social roles. Resilience facilitates constructive responses to these challenges, preserves psychological well-being, and allows older adults to lead meaningful lives despite adverse circumstances. Siltanen et al. (2021) reported that psychological resilience was significantly associated with active ageing among older adults with mobility limitations. Their findings indicated that resilient individuals remained actively engaged in daily life despite physical impairments, suggesting that resilience can mitigate the negative impact of functional decline on overall well-being. This study emphasized resilience as an important protective factor that enabled individuals to maintain emotional well-being amidst periods of uncertainty and social disruption. Further evidence was provided by Shi et al. (2025), who observed that higher levels of psychological resilience were significantly associated with healthier ageing among empty-nest older adults in China. Resilient individuals demonstrated better psychological adjustment, enhanced emotional stability, and more effective coping with age-related challenges. The study also suggested that resilience promotes healthy ageing by strengthening adaptive coping mechanisms and reducing susceptibility to psychological distress. In conclusion, these studies collectively affirm that resilience is a fundamental psychological resource facilitating Positive Ageing. Resilient older adults are more likely to sustain optimism, regulate emotions effectively, adapt to evolving life circumstances, and continue participating in meaningful social and daily activities. Rather than eliminating adversity, resilience enables individuals to respond constructively to age-related challenges, thereby enhancing psychological well-being, independence, and overall quality of life. Despite the consistent findings, notable methodological limitations remain. Most existing studies are cross-sectional and primarily rely on self-reported measures, which hinder establishing causal relationships between resilience and Positive Ageing. Furthermore, limited research has investigated how resilience develops throughout the life course or how cultural values, family support, and socioeconomic factors influence resilience in later life. Future longitudinal and cross-cultural studies are necessary to examine resilience as a dynamic process and to develop interventions that can strengthen this vital psychological resource within ageing populations.

Positive Ageing outcomes

The interaction of social and psychological factors plays a crucial role in achieving positive ageing outcomes among older adults. Literature highlights that social connectedness, resilience, participation, and mental well-being together influence quality of life, productive ageing, longevity and life satisfaction.

Life satisfaction has emerged as one of the most consistent outcomes associated with Positive Ageing across the reviewed scholarly studies. Empirical evidence indicates that older adults who maintain stronger social relationships, participate more actively in social activities, possess positive self-perceptions of ageing, exhibit higher resilience, and demonstrate enhanced self-efficacy tend to report greater levels of life satisfaction. Ailshire & Crimmins (2011) demonstrated that higher life satisfaction correlates with increased longevity among elderly populations. Chen et al. (2023) found that motivation and active engagement substantially improved life satisfaction among middle-aged and older community volunteers. Park et al. (2025) further emphasised that attributes such as confidence, autonomy, meaningful relationships, and adaptability contribute significantly to positive ageing experiences and elevated life satisfaction. Similarly, Gonzalez-Garcia et al. (2026) identified resilience and perceived social support as significant predictors of life satisfaction, whereas Pham et al. (2026) observed that self-efficacy mitigates the adverse effects of stressors on life satisfaction. Xin et al. (2026) illustrated that social support and life satisfaction serve as mediators in the relationship between digital health literacy and self-efficacy. Moreover, Zhao et al. (2026) reported that positive self-perceptions of ageing exert a significant influence on life satisfaction through psychological mechanisms. Collectively, these findings suggest that life satisfaction is not solely an emotional outcome but also reflects the cumulative impact of favourable social environments and psychological resources throughout the ageing process.

Quality of life constitutes a fundamental outcome of Positive Ageing, encapsulating an individual's physical, psychological, social, and functional well-being. Its objectives extend beyond mere longevity to encompass the maintenance of independence, meaningful relationships, emotional health, and daily satisfaction among older adults. Consequently, quality of life serves as a comprehensive metric of successful ageing and overall well-being during later years. Fernández-Ballesteros et al. (2011) established that Positive Ageing is associated with improved physical health, mental functioning, social engagement, and life quality. Evidence suggests that seniors who are physically active, socially connected, and resilient experience enhanced well-being. Lee (2015) observed that health issues and restrictions adversely affect older adults, implying that addressing psychological and environmental barriers may contribute to improved quality of life in old age. Lee et al. (2025) demonstrated that digital technologies augment the quality of life for older adults by strengthening social ties, facilitating access to information, fostering independence, and supporting psychological health, thereby promoting active ageing in rapidly expanding populations. Fang et al. (2026) highlighted that supportive relationships, cultural adaptability, and community engagement significantly enhance mental health and life quality among diverse senior populations. These findings indicate that quality of life hinges on social and psychological resources, in addition to physical health. Overall, research indicates that quality of life is a multidimensional outcome of Positive Ageing, driven by social support, participation, resilience, motivation, and self-efficacy, which collectively enhance physical, emotional, and social functioning in later life. It remains a crucial indicator of the success of Positive Ageing. Nevertheless, certain limitations are apparent: most studies are cross-sectional, thereby constraining causal inferences, and the heterogeneity of measurement tools complicates comparisons. Future research should focus on longitudinal and cross-cultural studies to better understand how social and psychological factors influence quality of life.

Productive ageing constitutes a crucial facet of positive ageing, illustrating that older adults can continue to make meaningful contributions to their families, communities, and society through paid employment, unpaid caregiving, volunteering, household responsibilities, and community engagement. It promotes ongoing activity, independence, and social participation among older individuals, thereby supporting societal productivity and benefit. Visaria and Dommaraju (2019) identified that factors influencing productive ageing in India include health, education, and opportunities for economic, caregiving, and social involvement. Their research indicated that remaining active in meaningful roles correlates with healthier and more engaged ageing. Ortega-Galarza et al. (2024) reported that active participation in family and community life, bolstered by strong social relationships, encourages active and productive ageing. The findings also demonstrate that social engagement and communication enhance overall well-being in later life. Irshad et al. (2025) explored the time use patterns of older adults in India and found that even retirees from formal employment contribute significantly through unpaid household chores, caregiving, and community involvement. Their study emphasizes that productive ageing transcends economic activity to include meaningful social and familial

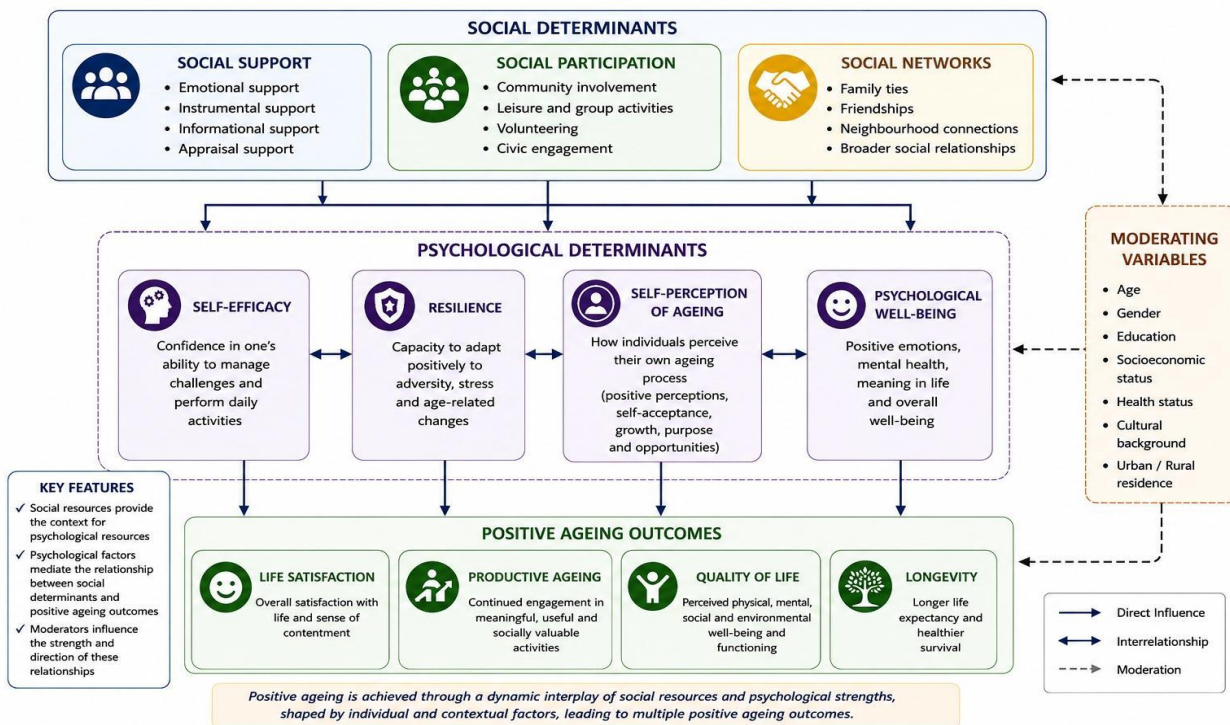
roles that support individual well-being and social integration. Su (2025) identified various patterns of productive ageing among older adults in urban China, revealing that those more engaged in productive, social, caregiving, and leisure activities report better health, greater functional capacity, and fewer symptoms of depression. This underscores that active engagement is a key factor in positive ageing. Consequently, productive ageing reflects a successful adaptation in later life rather than solely ongoing employment. The findings highlight that older adults remain valuable members of society when afforded opportunities for active involvement. Evidence suggests that productive ageing is influenced by the interplay of social and psychological resources, with older individuals maintaining productivity and engagement through supportive social relationships, active participation in community activities, enhanced psychological well-being, resilience, and self-efficacy. Therefore, productive ageing is a vital component of successful ageing, extending beyond mere employment continuity. Notwithstanding its growing importance, scholarly discourse on productive ageing remains limited, particularly within low- and middle-income countries. Most existing research is cross-sectional and primarily concentrates on economic productivity, often neglecting unpaid caregiving, volunteering, and household contributions that constitute substantial components of older adults' productive roles. Thus, future longitudinal and cross-cultural studies are imperative for developing a comprehensive understanding of productive ageing and for informing policies and interventions that promote meaningful engagement among older adults across diverse social and cultural contexts. The current evidence base remains limited; although longitudinal studies provide more robust insights than cross-sectional analyses, few have directly examined longevity as an outcome of positive ageing. Variations in follow-up periods, definitions of longevity, and measurement methodologies further hinder comparability across studies. Consequently, additional longitudinal and cross-cultural research is necessary to elucidate the mechanisms through which social and psychological determinants influence longevity and to develop interventions that promote longer, healthier lives among older populations.

Longevity is considered one of the primary outcomes of positive ageing, reflecting both an extension of lifespan and the capacity to maintain healthy social, psychological, and physical functioning into old age. Positive Ageing emphasizes that independence, active participation, and a high standard of living should coincide with increased longevity. Consequently, longevity is viewed as the culmination of favourable social and psychological factors that operate throughout an individual's life. Ailshire & Crimmins (2011) identified a correlation between enhanced psychological assets, such as increased social support, lower levels of loneliness, higher life satisfaction, and an increased likelihood of prolonged survival. Viljanen et al. (2024) demonstrated that the combined influence of social, psychological, and physical resources could predict successful ageing trajectories over nearly two decades. The long-term findings suggest that individuals with superior health-related resources, supportive social networks, and greater psychological well-being are more likely to age successfully. These insights imply that longevity is not solely dictated by biological health but results from the long-term interplay of various protective factors. Wang et al. (2024) indicated that maintaining functional ability, good health, and active engagement in daily activities are associated with longer life expectancy and healthier ageing pathways. The results underscore the importance of preserving physical function alongside psychological and social resources to enable older adults to sustain their independence and well-being, thereby promoting longer and healthier lives. Collectively, the reviewed literature suggests that longevity is a multifaceted outcome of positive ageing. In combination, supportive social connections, active engagement, social support, psychological well-being, resilience, motivation, and self-efficacy foster healthier ageing trajectories, reduce vulnerability, and enhance the likelihood of extended lifespan while maintaining functional independence and overall well-being. Therefore, rather than being solely a biological outcome, longevity should be regarded as the cumulative effect of numerous interrelated social and psychological factors, despite these consistent findings.

The reviewed literature indicates that a variety of social and psychological factors influence Positive Ageing. Principal contributors to positive ageing and adaptation in older adults include social relationships, participation, support, psychological well-being, self-perception of ageing, self-efficacy and resilience, which are consistently identified as significant. However, current research encounters limitations such as methodological inconsistencies, dependence on cross-sectional and self-report data, cultural variations, and a

lack of longitudinal studies. These gaps highlight the necessity for a more comprehensive and multidimensional approach to understanding Positive Ageing across diverse populations and cultural contexts.

Conceptual Framework: Social and Psychological Determinants of Positive Ageing



Note: The conceptual framework was developed by the authors from the synthesis of evidence from the 33 empirical studies included in this narrative review. It shows the proposed association between social determinants (social relationships, social participation and social support), psychological determinants (self-perception of ageing, psychological well-being, self-efficacy and resilience) and Positive Ageing outcomes (life satisfaction, productive ageing, quality of life and longevity). The framework is a conceptual interpretation of the reviewed literature and has not been empirically tested. The conceptual framework proposes that psychological resources and social determinants are interrelated and may influence each other in shaping Ageing. Psychological resources, including resilience, self-efficacy psychological well-being and positive self-perceptions of ageing may help participation, social connectedness and the effective use of social support. Conversely supportive social relationships and meaningful social participation may strengthen resources and promote positive perceptions and well-being. These relationships are therefore seen as reciprocal rather than strictly one-way. Contextual factors may further affect how strong or how visible these psychological resources and social participation connections are, in social and cultural settings.

Table 1: Summary of all included Studies

Author, Year	Country	Sample	Study Title	Study design	Domains	Key findings	Positive Ageing Dimension
--------------	---------	--------	-------------	--------------	---------	--------------	---------------------------

Fernández - Ballesteros et al. 2011	Spain	55-75 years, N=458 (M=170, F=288)	Positive Ageing: Objective, subjective and combined outcomes	Longitudinal	Lifestyle, Personality, Cognition, Social Networks	Positive ageing resulted from an interaction of lifestyle, personality, social networks, and emotional-cognitive functioning.	Social Relationships
Ailshire & Crimmins, 2011	USA	70-79 years, N=4187, 90-104 years, N=281	Psychological factors associated with longevity in the United States: age differences between the old and oldest-old in the Health and Retirement Study	Cross-sectional	Longevity	Psychological factors, including strong social support, lower loneliness, and greater life satisfaction, were associated with longevity among older adults	Longevity
Paul et al. 2012	Portugal	≥ 65 years, N=1322 (M= 383, F=939)	Active ageing: An empirical approach to the WHO model	Cross-sectional	Active ageing, Positive Ageing	Findings support the need for an integrated approach to promote positive ageing	Active ageing, Positive ageing
Lee, 2015	Europe	65-103 years, N=7757 (M=3845, F=3912)	Antecedents of Positive Affect in the Elderly: A Cross-Sectional Study	Cross-sectional	Health problems, life constraints	Poor health and greater perceived life constraints reduced positive affect among older adults.	Quality of Life
Moore et al., 2015	USA	50-99 years, N=1006 (M= 369, F=637)	Complex interplay between health and successful aging: role of perceived stress, resilience, and social support	Cross-sectional	Health, stress, resilience, social support	The study found that perceived stress acts as a crucial intermediary between health and successful ageing	Resilience and social support
Bryant et al., 2016	Australia	≥60years, N=421 (M=161, F=258)	Antecedents of attitudes to aging: A study of the roles of personality and well-being	Longitudinal	Positive attitude towards ageing, Well-being, psychological resources	Personality traits and psychological well-being were significant antecedents of positive attitudes towards ageing	Positive self-perception, Well-being
Visaria & Dommara ju, 2019	India	≥60 years, N=9852 (M=3613, F=4224)	Productive aging in India	Cross-sectional	Productive ageing, participation, caregiving, social	Older adults who remained engaged in economic, caregiving, and social activities experienced	Productive Ageing, Social Participation

					engagement	better productive ageing	
Wu & Sheng, 2019	China	≥ 60 years, N=485 (M=170, F= 315)	Social support network, social support, self-efficacy, health-promoting behavior, and healthy aging among older adults: A pathway analysis	Cross-sectional	Social support, self-efficacy, healthy behaviour	Self-efficacy and social network are positively associated with healthy ageing	Social Support, Self-Efficacy
Killen, 2020	UK	≥60 years, N=88 (M=23, F=65)	Positive Ageing: To What Extent Can Current Models of Well-being Categorise Life Events Perceived as Positive by Older Adults?	Qualitative dairy-based study	Social Interaction, Physical Environment	Enjoyable activities, social interaction, and engagement with the physical environment enhanced perceptions of positive ageing.	Social Participation
Kong et al., 2021	China	≥60 years, N=184 (M= 64, F=120)	Perceived social support, resilience, and health self-efficacy among migrant older adults: A moderated mediation analysis	Cross-sectional	Social support, resilience, self-efficacy, migrant older adults	The study highlights the psychological pathway that enables migrant older adults to maintain their health self-efficacy despite the challenges of relocation and urban adjustment	Social Support, Self-Efficacy, Resilience
Siltanen et al., 2021	Finland	75 to 85 years, N=961 (M=404, F=557)	Psychological resilience and active aging among older people with mobility limitations.	Cross-sectional	Resilience , Mobility limitation	Higher psychological resilience was associated with greater active ageing among older adults, even in the presence of mobility limitations	Resilience
Muhammad et al., 2022	India	≥60 years, N=31,464 (M=14,880, F=16584)	Decomposing rural-urban differences in successful aging among Indian adults.	Cross-sectional	Health Status, Cognitive Function, Social Engagement	Successful ageing was higher among individuals free from chronic illness and disability, with strong cognitive ability and social engagement, showing rural-	Social Participation

						urban disparities.	
Irshad et al., 2023	India	≥45 years, N=7,837, (M=3613, F=4224)	Active and Productive ageing in India: evidence from the time use pattern of ageing adults.	Cross-sectional	Health-related activities, socio-demographic factors, and psychological factors	Engagement in productive and health-related activities, along with favourable socio-economic conditions, significantly promoted active and productive ageing among older adults.	Productive Ageing
Chen et al., 2023	Taiwan	≥45 years, N=498 (M=136, F=362)	Empirical study on the factors influencing the successful aging of the middle-aged and older adult community volunteers.	Cross-sectional	Motivation, Satisfaction, Participation	Motivation and active participation positively influenced successful ageing and overall life satisfaction.	Motivation, Life Satisfaction
Lowe, et al., 2023	UK	≥65 years, N=26 (M=7, F=12)	‘Getting old is not all bingo and knitting.’ An exploration of positive ageing and occupational Participation through engagement with community leisure activities: a qualitative study.	Qualitative	Community Participation, Leisure Activities, and Psychological Well-being	Engagement in community leisure activities promotes positive ageing by enhancing social connection, identity, and sense of purpose among older adults.	Social Participation
Mandi et al., 2023	India	≥45 years, N=29223 (M=14114, F=15109)	Exploring the association of lifestyle behaviours and healthy ageing among the older adults in India: evidence from the LASI survey.	Cross-sectional	Health Lifestyle, Cognitive Function	Healthy lifestyle behaviours significantly enhanced cognitive functioning and psychological well-being.	Healthy Ageing

Thampi & Mathew, 2023	India	≥65 years, N=15 (M=9, F=6)	Aging in Place for Community-Dwelling Older Adults in India: A Qualitative Exploration of Prospects and Challenges	Qualitative	Social support, Independence	Ageing in place was facilitated by social attachment, familiarity, independence, and supportive environments, despite structural and health-related challenges	Social support
Park et al., 2024	UK	≥60 years, N=500 (M=134, F=366)	Exploring Older Adults' Subjective Views on Ageing Positively: Development and Validation of the Positive Ageing Scale.	Cross-sectional	Meaningful Activities, Social Relationships, Positive Attitudes	Engagement in meaningful activities and strong social connections were central to the subjective experiences of ageing positively.	Social Relationships, Psychological Well-being
Viljanen et al., 2024	Finland	≥64 years, N=1260 (M=533, F=727)	Predicting Successful Ageing among older adults seems possible even as far as two decades ahead	Longitudinal	Physical, Psychological, and Social Resources	Successful Ageing could be predicted decades in advance through combined physical, psychological, and social indicators	Longevity
Wang et al., 2024	India	≥60 years, N=31345 (M=15030, F=16315)	Successful Ageing is associated with falls among older adults in India: a large population-based cross-sectional study based on LASI.	Cross-sectional	Health Status, Functional Ability	Poor functional status and unhealthy lifestyles increased fall risk, which negatively affected successful ageing outcomes.	Quality of Life, Longevity
Bansod, 2025	India	≥ 60 years, N=29179 (M=14097, F=15082)	Thriving in Golden Years: Promoting psychological well-being for healthy ageing in India	Cross-sectional	Physical, cognitive, mental health, and social engagement	Psychological well-being and social engagement played a central role in promoting healthy ageing alongside physical and cognitive health	Psychological Well-being, Social Participation, Healthy Ageing

Lee et al., 2025	Hong Kong	≥ 60 years, N=46	Active aging in the digital era: the role of new technologies in promoting the well-being of older people in Hong Kong	Qualitative	Digital inclusion, psychological well-being, and social participation	Digital technology enhances active ageing by improving social connection and access to health information, thereby increasing overall well-being	Social Participation, Psychological Well-being
Park et al., 2025	UK	55-90 years, N=15 (M=5, F=10)	“I’m more confident now than I used to be”: a preliminary qualitative study of British older adults' perception and experience of ageing positively.	Qualitative	Meaningful, autonomy	Positive ageing involves confidence, autonomy, meaningful relationships, adaptability, and self-acceptance.	Psychological Well-being, Social Participation, Life Satisfaction
Su, 2025	China	60 years, N=1258 (M=583, F=675)	Productive aging patterns and associations with health outcomes among Chinese urban older adults	Cross-sectional	Productive Ageing, Social participation, Caregiving, Leisure activities, Health outcomes	Three productive ageing patterns were identified—particularly informal, social and leisure participation	Productive Ageing, Social Participation
Shi et al., 2025	China	≥ 60 years, N= 266 (M=167, F=99)	Healthy ageing and psychological resilience among the empty-nest older adults: a cross-sectional survey in China	Cross-sectional	Resilience, healthy ageing, community ageing	Higher psychological resilience was significantly associated with better healthy ageing	Resilience
Paniagua-Grandos et al., 2025	Spain	65-90 years, N=289 (M=125, F=164)	Participation as a Pillar of Active Ageing: The Role of Eudaimonic Psychological and Health Factors.	Cross-sectional	Participation, eudaimonic well-being, health	Eudaimonic psychological factors significantly enhance participation in older adults, even when health is moderate.	Social Participation, Psychological Well-being

Fang et al., 2026	Australia	≥60 years, N=17	Mental Wellbeing from the Perspective of Older People from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds.	Qualitative	Mental well-being, cultural diversity, and social support	Mental well-being is shaped by positivity, adaptability, and peer support, but is negatively affected by migration-related social disconnection	Psychological Well-being
Goktas & Cevik, 2026	Turkey	≥60 years, N=535 (M=262, F=273)	The relationship between perceived social support, quality of life, well-being, successful ageing, and social health in older adults living in the community	Cross-sectional	Social support, QOL, well-being, successful ageing	Perceived social support was positively associated with quality of life, well-being, successful ageing, and social health among community-dwelling older adults	Social Support, Well-being, Quality of Life
Gonzalez-Garcia et al. 2026	Spain	57-83 years, N=42	Resilience and Social Support as Predictors of Life Satisfaction in Healthy Older Adults: A Moderation Analysis	Cross-sectional	Resilience, social support, life satisfaction	Resilience and perceived social support were significant positive predictors of life satisfaction among healthy older adults	Resilience, Social Support, Life Satisfaction
Pham et al., 2026	Australia	≥60 years, N= 176 (M=43, F=131)	Stressors and Life Satisfaction in Older Adults: The Moderating Role of Self-Efficacy	Cross-sectional	Stressors, life satisfaction, self-efficacy	Self-efficacy moderated the relationship between stressors and life satisfaction	Life Satisfaction, Self-efficacy
Ren et al., 2026	China	≥60 years, N=435 (M=136, F=299)	Active aging profiles mediate the effect of social support on subjective well-being among community-dwelling older adults: a latent profile mediation analysis	Cross-sectional	Social support, subjective well-being, and community-dwelling older adults	Active ageing profiles mediated the relationship between social support and subjective well-being among community-dwelling older adults	Social Support, Well-being

Xin et al., 2026	China	≥60 years, N=405	Digital health literacy and self-efficacy among older adults: Mediating roles of social support and life satisfaction and the moderating role of health consciousness	Mixed-method	Digital health, self-efficacy, social support	Digital health literacy was positively associated with self-efficacy. Social support and life satisfaction mediated this relationship	Self-efficacy, Social support
Zhao et al., 2026	China	≥60 years, N=1252	How positive self-perceptions of ageing affect older adults' life satisfaction in China: A chain-mediating model.	Cross-sectional	Self-Perception of Ageing, Life Satisfaction	Positive self-perceptions of ageing significantly improved life satisfaction and overall well-being in later life	Life Satisfaction, Psychological Well-being

Note: This table summarizes the characteristics and key findings of 33 empirical studies included in the narrative review.

Overall Synthesis and Analysis

The findings from the 33 studies reviewed indicate that Positive Ageing constitutes a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by the interplay of social and psychological factors. Across diverse cultural contexts—including India, China, Spain, Finland, Australia, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Italy, Turkey, Ecuador, Vietnam, Taiwan, Portugal, and the United States—there exists consistent evidence linking improved ageing outcomes with maintaining robust social connections, participating in meaningful activities, obtaining adequate social support, and possessing psychological resources such as self-perception of ageing, psychological well-being, self-efficacy, and resilience. Although the strength of these associations varies according to cultural and socioeconomic conditions, the overarching pattern demonstrates notable consistency across different settings.

Among social determinants, social relationships, social participation, and perceived social support emerge as the most reliably identified predictors of Positive Ageing. Studies conducted in various countries show that older adults who sustain social engagement and participate actively in family, community, volunteering, leisure, or productive endeavors tend to report enhanced psychological well-being, improved health, greater independence, and increased life satisfaction. Research from India further highlights productive engagement and family involvement, whereas studies from Europe and Australia emphasize meaningful participation and subjective experiences of ageing. Recent evidence also indicates that digital participation and the use of technology can strengthen social connectedness and support active ageing in contemporary societies.

Psychological determinants also demonstrated robust and consistent correlations with Positive Ageing. Resilience emerged as one of the most potent psychological resources, facilitating older adults in effectively adapting to health deterioration, stressful life events, and environmental changes. Similarly, self-efficacy reliably enhances confidence in managing age-related challenges and fostered active engagement in health-related behaviours. Positive self-perceptions of ageing and psychological well-being were uniformly associated with healthier lifestyles, greater emotional adjustment, and improved adaptation in later life. Individuals who held positive views of ageing exhibited greater resilience, heightened confidence, and overall better well-being, indicating that these psychological resources serve as protective mechanisms through which social environments influence Positive Ageing.

The review further suggests that Positive Ageing manifests through multiple interconnected outcomes rather than a singular endpoint. Among the 33 cited studies, life satisfaction, quality of life, productive ageing, and longevity were the most frequently reported outcomes. Older adults with more robust social relationships, higher participation levels, sufficient social support, greater resilience, self-efficacy, and positive self-perceptions of ageing consistently reported increased life satisfaction and enhanced quality of life. These findings imply that Positive Ageing should be regarded not merely as the absence of disease but as a comprehensive process involving physical, psychological, and social well-being.

Methodologically, the evidence base was predominantly composed of cross-sectional studies, with relatively few longitudinal, qualitative, and mixed-method studies identified. Although cross-sectional investigations consistently revealed significant correlations between determinants and Positive Ageing outcomes, they were unable to establish causal relationships. Longitudinal studies offered more robust evidence concerning predictors of successful ageing over time, while qualitative studies provided valuable insights into the lived experiences of older adults, emphasizing autonomy, self-acceptance, identity, purpose, and meaningful social relationships. Mixed-method research further enhanced understanding by integrating statistical evidence with participants' subjective experiences. The findings were interpreted by looking at how study design differed and how strong the evidence was. Cross-sectional studies were good at spotting links between psychological factors and Positive Ageing, but they could not prove that one thing happened before the other or caused the other. Longitudinal studies give proof about timing and how things change, yet they were not as common, in the papers we looked at. Qualitative studies added context and personal stories that helped explain the numbers. So, the researcher did not treat all designs as equal; she gave weight to evidence that showed clear timing or deep context for the links we saw.

DISCUSSION

This review analyzed 33 empirical studies to explore the social and psychological factors affecting Positive Ageing and their influence on ageing outcomes. Results show that Positive Ageing is a complex, evolving process shaped by interactions between social environments and psychological strengths. It is not solely dependent on physical health or absence of disease; rather, it reflects an individual's capacity to maintain meaningful social connections, engage actively in society, develop positive psychological traits, and adapt to age-related changes. Key social factors such as relationships, participation, and support were consistently linked with Positive Ageing across various cultures. Older adults with strong family ties, friendships, and community involvement reported better physical and mental health, greater independence, and improved well-being.

Despite cultural differences, the positive impact of these social factors was evident- Indian studies emphasised family support and engagement, while European and Australian research highlighted autonomy and social connectivity. Digital technology is also becoming a part of Positive Ageing especially because it can help people stay involved in social activities, talk with others, get information and connect with things in their community. New studies show that being able to use tools can help older people stay connected with others and take part in things that matter to them. It also helps them get health-related and community information. The good things from using digital tools might depend on how well people know how to use them, how easy the tools are to use their money situation and if they have places that support them. So digital technology should be seen not to talk to others but also as something that can affect how much people take part in society and how happy they are as they get older. Furthermore, psychological factors play an equally crucial role in promoting Positive Ageing. Self-perception of ageing, psychological well-being, self-efficacy, and resilience consistently influence how individuals adapt in later life. Those with a positive outlook tend to stay socially active, adopt healthier lifestyles, and report better emotional health. Psychological well-being boosts independence and overall functioning, while self-efficacy instils confidence in managing age-related challenges and promotes adaptive coping. Resilience acts as a critical safeguard, helping manage health issues, functional decline, and stress while maintaining psychological stability. These factors collectively impact key outcomes like life satisfaction, productive ageing, quality of life, and longevity. Evidence indicates these outcomes are interconnected: older adults with strong social support, active participation, high self-efficacy,

resilience, positive self-views on ageing, and good psychological health consistently experience higher life satisfaction and better quality of life. Continued engagement in productive, family, and community activities is linked to healthier ageing and greater independence. Additionally, positive psychological resources foster adaptive functioning, ultimately contributing to increased longevity in later life.

However, the results have also shown significant cultural differences in the determinants of Positive Ageing. While both the social and psychological variables were shown to be significantly associated with Positive Ageing outcomes across all countries, the importance of each type of variable varied in accordance with the cultural setting. Research carried out in collectivist societies, such as India and China, found the importance of family support and intergenerational connections as one of the main factors in Positive Ageing. However, research carried out in Western countries, such as the UK, Australia, and Spain, found more importance in the need for autonomy and independence, as well as psychological resources of self-efficacy and positive perception of ageing. Although the overall evidence points to links between psychosocial determinants and Positive Ageing, the results were not the same in every study. There were differences, in how strong or how the relationships appeared across groups, measurement methods, and outcomes. For example, some studies found that social support and psychological resources were connected to well-being and higher life satisfaction. The impact of these factors changed depending on someone's health, their social environment and the culture they live in. These differences suggest that psychosocial determinants may not work the way in all populations. They may not act alone either. Also, most of the studies were cross-sectional, meaning they looked at data at one point in time. That makes it hard to know if these factors actually cause ageing or if better outcomes just lead to stronger psychological and social resources. Because of this, the results should be seen as showing associations, not causal effects.

The connection between these determinants and Positive Ageing can be influenced by larger contextual forces such as socioeconomic conditions, access to healthcare, and the overall policy environment. Economic resources can affect how people engage in activities to keep up healthy habits and get help from support services. When individuals have access to healthcare, they are more likely to manage health issues and stay well. Policies and social systems also play a role by ensuring that health services are easy to reach that social protections are in place, and that communities offer programs and chances for older adults to stay active and involved. However, the studies reviewed did not look at these elements in the same way. Researchers should take status access to healthcare and the policy context into account, as possible factors that change how psychosocial determinants relate to Positive Ageing. This should be done in different cultures and economic settings where conditions vary widely.

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings support various multidimensional models of ageing, such as the WHO Healthy Ageing framework, Rowe and Kahn's Successful Ageing, and Baltes and Baltes's Selection, Optimization, and Compensation model. However, this review improves these by combining social and psychological factors into a unified framework. The WHO framework highlights functional ability, while Rowe and Kahn's model focuses on disease prevention, maintaining high physical and cognitive function, and active engagement. The SOC model also describes adaptive strategies in later life, suggesting that supportive social environments bolster psychological resources, which then foster Positive Ageing. This comprehensive view offers a broader understanding of ageing beyond just biological or functional aspects. The proposed model posits that Positive Ageing results from the dynamic interplay between social and psychological factors. External resources, like social relationships, participation, and support, are linked to psychological assets such as positive self-perception of ageing, wellbeing, self-efficacy, and resilience. These psychological resources enhance the ability to manage age-related challenges, sustain independence, and stay involved in meaningful activities. Consequently, social and psychological determinants directly and indirectly influence Positive Ageing outcomes, including life satisfaction, productive ageing, quality of life, and longevity, working together to promote successful adaptation in later life.

LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations associated with the current literature review. Firstly, most of the studies included were of cross-sectional nature and thus did not allow making any causative conclusions about the relationships between the determinants and Positive Ageing. Secondly, many of the included studies used self-report methods, which could have introduced recall and social desirability biases. Thirdly, different ways of defining and measuring Positive Ageing in various studies hampered direct comparison of results. Fourthly, although the methodological quality of the included studies was assessed using JBI appraisal tools some studies showed limitations related to the identification and management of confounding factors self-reported measures and reporting of researcher reflexivity, in qualitative research. These methodological limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of the review. This review only looked at studies that were peer-reviewed and written in English. Because of these other types of writings that are not peer-reviewed, materials in languages and other possible sources were not part of the review. This could have made it harder to see the picture of what is known from some groups of people and different cultures. Also, some groups of people and places are not well represented in the studies that're available especially when it comes to the Indian situation. More research in the future should try to include a range of people and look at information from many different cultures, economic backgrounds, and local communities.

Practical Implications

This review highlights important implications for researchers, healthcare providers, policymakers, and community organisations dedicated to promoting Positive Ageing. Since Positive Ageing relies on social and psychological elements, interventions should adopt a holistic approach rather than focusing solely on illness. Programmes that strengthen social connections, encourage community participation, and reinforce social networks can improve older adults' mental health and their overall ageing experience. Community-based programs include peer-support groups, neighborhood activities, volunteering opportunities, and intergenerational activities that encourage regular social interaction. Digital-literacy programmes help older adults use smartphones and online platforms to communicate with family members, access health information, and participate in community activities. At the level activities that promote resilience, self-efficacy and psychological well-being such, as structured peer-support or skill-building programmes may further support positive outcomes.

Moreover, strategies that enhance self-perception of ageing, self-efficacy, resilience, and mental well-being may help individuals better manage age-related changes and maintain independence. At the policy level, governments should create age-friendly communities that support lifelong learning, volunteering, active participation, and digital inclusion for seniors. Community mental health services, social engagement activities, and family support programs can further increase life satisfaction, quality of life, and productive ageing. In countries such as India, culturally sensitive interventions considering family dynamics, socioeconomic diversity, and local resources are crucial for advancing Positive Ageing.

Future Research Directions

While the existing literature offers considerable evidence on the factors influencing Positive Ageing, several key research gaps remain. Future studies should incorporate longitudinal and intervention designs to better determine causal links between social and psychological factors and Positive Ageing outcomes. Additionally, more focus is needed on middle-aged adults, as the social behaviours and psychological resources they develop can greatly impact their ageing process later in life. Researchers should also explore underrepresented determinants like financial stability, digital inclusion, health literacy, and personal perceptions of ageing within comprehensive theoretical models. Cross-cultural studies are essential to analyse how cultural values, family dynamics, and socioeconomic factors shape Positive Ageing in diverse populations. Furthermore, increased use of mixed-method and qualitative research can enrich quantitative data by providing a deeper understanding of older adults' experiences. Lastly, future intervention research should assess programmes aimed at enhancing social engagement, resilience, psychological health, and positive self-view of ageing to improve overall life satisfaction, productive ageing, quality of life, and lifespan.

CONCLUSION

Positive Ageing represents a multidimensional and dynamic process that transcends merely the absence of disease and functional decline. This comprehensive review, synthesizing evidence from thirty-three empirical studies, illustrates that Positive Ageing is influenced by an interplay of social and psychological determinants. Social relationships, participation, and support consistently emerge as crucial social resources, while self-perception of ageing, psychological well-being, self-efficacy, and resilience are identified as vital psychological factors fostering adaptive ageing. Collectively, these elements contribute to enhanced life satisfaction, productive ageing, improved quality of life, and increased longevity. The review underscores that Positive Ageing is most accurately understood through an integrated perspective, wherein supportive social environments reinforce psychological resources, allowing older adults to adapt effectively to the physical, emotional, and social challenges of later life.

Although the evidence remains largely consistent across various countries and cultural contexts, the predominance of cross-sectional studies and the limited availability of longitudinal and intervention-based research highlight the necessity for more robust empirical data. Overall, this review advances the existing literature by unifying social and psychological determinants within a single conceptual framework and emphasising their collective importance in fostering Positive Ageing. The findings offer a valuable foundation for future research, evidence-based interventions, and public health policies geared towards promoting healthier, more active, and meaningful ageing experiences across diverse populations. Additionally, recognising the moderating roles of demographic, cultural, and socioeconomic factors may facilitate the development of more tailored, context-specific strategies and policies for advancing Positive Ageing in varied settings.

Declarations

Conflict of interest: No

Ethical approval: An ethics statement was not required for this study type as it is based on secondary data.

Statement of human and animal rights: Not applicable

Informed consent: Not applicable

Funding: None

REFERENCES

1. Abud, T., Koundis, G., Martin, K.R., Werth, M., Cooper, K., & Kyaw, M. P. (2022). Determinants of healthy ageing: A systematic review of contemporary literature. *Aging Clinical and Experimental Research*, 34, 1212-1223. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40520-022-02062-7>
2. Ailshire, J. A., & Crimmins, E. M. (2011). Psychological factors associated with longevity in the United States: Age differences between the old and oldest-old in the Health and Retirement Study. *Journal of Aging Research*, 2011, Article 530534. <https://doi.org/10.4061/2011/530534>
3. Baltes, P.B., & Baltes, M.M. (1990). Psychological perspectives on successful aging. *Journal of Gerontology*, 45 (1), 1-9.
4. Bansod, D.W., & Mandi, R. (2025). Thriving in golden years: Promoting psychological well-being for healthy ageing in India. *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics Plus*, 2, 100127. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aggp.2025.100127>
5. Bryant, C., Bei, B., Gilson, K., Komiti, A., Jackson, H., & Judd, F. (2016). Antecedents of attitudes to aging: A study of the roles of personality and well-being. *The Gerontologist*, 56(2), 256-265. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnu041>

6. Chen, C.-C., Lan, Y.-L., & Huang, Y.-H. (2023). Empirical study on the factors influencing the successful ageing of the middle-aged and older adult community volunteers. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 11, Article 1140965. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1140965>
7. Cornelian, P., Popp, J., & Popp, D. (2021). The power of personality in successful ageing: A comprehensive review of larger quantitative studies. *European Journal of Ageing*, 18(2), 269-285. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-020-00575-6>
8. Di Fabio, A. (2017). The psychology of sustainability and sustainable development for well-being in organisations. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, Article 1534. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01534>
9. Dziechciaz, M., & Filip, R. (2014). Biological, psychological, and social determinants of old age: Bio-psycho-social aspects of human aging. *Annals of Agricultural and Environmental Medicine*, 21(4), 835-838. <https://doi.org/10.5604/12321966.1129943>
10. Fang, Q., Fisher, K.R., Liu, S., & Gatt, J.M. (2026). Mental wellbeing from the perspective of older people from culturally diverse backgrounds. *Journal of Population Ageing*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12062-025-09522-8>
11. Fernández-Ballesteros, R. (2011). Positive ageing: Objective, subjective, and combined outcomes. *Electronic Journal of Applied Psychology*, 7(1), 22-30. <https://doi.org/10.7790/ejap.v7i1.238>
12. Fernández-López, S., Otero-González, L., Rodeiro-Pazos, D., & Vivel-Bua, M. (2026). Age and financial vulnerability dimensions. *The Journal of Adult Protection*, 28(2), 145-161. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JAP-11-2025-0054>
13. Goktas, A., & Cevik, C. (2026). The relationship between perceived social support, quality of life, well-being, successful aging, and social health in older adults living in the community. *Geriatric Nursing*, 70, 104049. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gerinurse.2026.104049>
15. Gonzalez-Garcia, L., Duque, A., Molins, M., Alino, M., Molins, F., & Mesa-Gresa, P. (2026). Resilience and social support as predictors of life satisfaction in healthy older adults: A moderation analysis. *Actas Españolas de Psiquiatría*, 54(3), 854-866. <https://doi.org/10.62641/aep.v54i3.2218>
16. Irshad, C. V., Lekha, P. P. S., Azeez, E. P. A., & Rajan, S. I. (2023). Active and productive ageing in India: Evidence from the time use pattern of ageing adults. *BMC Geriatrics*, 23(1), Article 718. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12877-023-04247-6>
17. Joanna Briggs Institute. (2017). Critical appraisal checklist for analytical cross-sectional studies. The Joanna Briggs Institute.
18. Joanna Briggs Institute. (2017). Critical appraisal checklist for cohort studies. The Joanna Briggs Institute
19. Joanna Briggs Institute. (2017). Critical appraisal checklist for qualitative research. The Joanna Briggs Institute.
20. Killen, A., & Macaskill, A. (2020). Positive ageing: To what extent can current models of wellbeing categorise the life events perceived as positive by older adults? *International Journal of Applied Positive Psychology*, 5, 99-119. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41042-020-00028-6>
21. Lee, S. (2015). An exploration of antecedents of positive affect among the elderly: A cross-sectional study. *European Journal of Public Health*, 26(1):187-191. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckv067>
22. Lee, V., Cheng, D. Y.Y., Lit, K.K.D., Buaton, H., & Lam, E. (2025). Active ageing in the digital era: The role of new technologies in promoting the well-being of older people in Hong Kong. *Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work and Development*, 35(4), 360-379. <https://doi.org/10.1080/29949769.2025.2457363>
23. Lowe, J., Collins, T., & Sallis, P. (2023). ‘Getting old is not all bingo and knitting’: An exploration of positive ageing and occupational participation through engagement with community leisure activities: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, 30(9), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.12968/ijtr.2022.0170>
24. Manzi, C., Adoni, R., Amata, G.V., & Steca, P. (2024). How to age more positively? Analysing determinants that shape attitudes towards ageing. *Journal of Adult Development*, 31(1), 53-64. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10804-023-09447-6>
25. Muhammad, T., Srivastava, S., Hossain, B., Paul, R., & Sekher, T.V. (2022). Decomposing rural-urban differences in successful aging among older Indian adults. *Scientific Reports*, 12, Article 6430. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-09958-4>

26. Park, M. S. -A., Badham, S., Vickers, S.V., & Fino, E. (2024). Exploring older adults' subjective views on aging positively: Development and validation of the positive aging scale. *The Gerontologist*, 64(3), gnae088. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnae088>
27. Park, M. S.-A., Lo, C., Lee, H.-J., Moon, S., Webber, B., Badham, S., & Paterson, J. (2025). "I'm more confident now than I ever used to be": A preliminary qualitative study of British older adults' perception and experience of ageing positively. *The Gerontologist*, 65(8), gnafl49. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnafl49>
28. Paniagua-Grandos, T., Oliva-Moreno, J., Fernández-Ballesteros, R., & Molina-Martínez, M.A. (2025). Participation as a pillar of active ageing: The role of eudaimonic psychological and health factors. *Geriatrics*, 10(1), 11. <https://doi.org/10.3390/geriatrics10010011>
29. Paul, C., Ribeiro, O., & Teixeira, L. (2012). Active ageing: An empirical approach to the WHO model. *Current Gerontology and Geriatrics Research*, 2012, Article 382972. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2012/382972>
30. Pham, M.N., & Bhar, S. (2026). Stressors and life satisfaction in older adults: The moderating role of self-efficacy. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 102(2), 223-239. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009141502511317441>
31. Reichstadt, J., Sengupta, G., Depp, C. A., Palinkas, L. A., & Jeste, D. V. (2010). Older adults' perspectives on successful aging: Qualitative interviews. *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 18(7), 567-575. <https://doi.org/10.1097/JGP.0b013e3181e040bb>
32. Ren, L., Pan, H., Chen, A., Ahn, S., & Miao, M. (2026). Active aging profiles mediate the effect of social support on subjective well-being among community-dwelling older adults: A latent profile of mediation analysis. *BMC Geriatrics*, 26, Article 558. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12877-026-07342>
33. Rowe, J.W., & Kahn, R. L. (1997). Successful aging. *The Gerontologist*, 37(4), 433-440. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/37.4.433>
34. Shi, C., Long, X., Xia, S., Zhao, H., Wu, C., Zhang, Y, Tang, X., & Li, C. (2025). Healthy ageing and psychological resilience among the empty-nest older adults: A cross-sectional survey in China. *BMC Geriatrics*, 25(1), 421. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12877-025-06081-7>
35. Siltanen, S., Tourunen, A., Saajanaho, M., Palmberg, L., Portegijs, E., & Rantanen, T. (2021). Psychological resilience and active aging among older people with mobility limitations. *European Journal of Ageing*, 18(1), 65-74. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-020-00569-4>
36. Su, Z., et al. (2025). Productive aging patterns and associations with health outcomes among Chinese urban older adults. *BMC Public Health*, 25, 2487. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-025-23688-y>
37. Thampi, K., & Mathew, L.M. (2023). Aging in place for community-dwelling older adults in India: A qualitative exploration of prospects and challenges. *Gerontology & Geriatric Medicine*, 10, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23337214231223636>
38. Viljanen, A., Salminen, M., Irjala, K., Lopponen, M., Tuori, H., Vahlberg, T., Viltanen, M., & Viikari, L. (2024). Predicting successful ageing among older adults seems possible even as far as two decades ahead. *BMC Geriatrics*, 24(1), 481. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12877-024-05109-8>
39. Visaria, A., & Dommaraju, P. (2019). Productive aging in India. *Social Science & Medicine*, 229, 14-21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2018.07.029>
40. Wang, Y., Leng, S., Jin, Y., Tang, X., Zhu, X., & An, L. (2024). Successful ageing is associated with falls among older adults in India: A large population-based cross-sectional study based on LASI. *BMC Public Health*, 24, Article 1682. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-19181-7>
41. World Health Organization. (2020). Decade of healthy ageing 2021-2030. <https://www.who.int/initiatives/decade-of-healthy-ageing>
42. Xin, Y., & Luo, M. (2026). Digital health literacy and self-efficacy among older adults: Mediating roles of social support and life satisfaction and the moderating role of health consciousness. *Digital Health*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20552076261415930>
43. Zhao, T., Wei, S., Huang, E., Li, Y., & Gao, J. (2026). How positive self-perceptions of aging affect older adults' life satisfaction in China: A chain mediating model. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 251, 113557. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2025.113557>