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Determinants of Successful Aging: A Systematic Literature Review of Physical, Psychological, Social, and Spiritual Dimensions of Well-Being in Older Adults

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ABSTRACT

Global population aging is accelerating rapidly, posing significant public health challenges. As life expectancy increases, the concept of successful aging has become central in gerontology and public health research. Successful aging refers to maintaining physical health, psychological well-being, and social engagement in later life. This study aims to synthesize evidence regarding determinants influencing successful aging among older adults. Methods: A systematic literature review was conducted following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Electronic databases including PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar were searched for studies published between 1985 and 2026 using keywords related to successful aging and elderly well-being. Studies examining determinants of well-being among adults aged ≥ 60 years were included. A total of 23 studies met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed using narrative synthesis. Results: The review identified several key determinants of successful aging including physical activity, psychological resilience, social support, environmental quality, socioeconomic status, and spiritual well-being. Physical activity and social engagement were the most consistently reported predictors of improved well-being among older adults. Psychological resources such as self-esteem, resilience, and mindfulness were also associated with reduced depressive symptoms and increased life satisfaction. Spiritual well-being contributed to emotional stability and coping with aging-related challenges. Conclusion : Successful aging is a multidimensional process shaped by biological, psychological, social, and spiritual factors. Public health policies should promote integrated strategies supporting active lifestyles, social participation, and supportive environments for aging populations

INTRODUCTION

Population aging represents one of the most significant demographic transitions of the twenty-first century. Advances in medicine, improved living conditions, and public health interventions have contributed to increased life expectancy worldwide. According to the World

Health Organization, the number of individuals aged 60 years and older is projected to reach approximately two billion by 2050.

While increased longevity reflects progress in healthcare systems, it also presents substantial challenges for societies and health systems. Aging is often associated with chronic

diseases, functional decline, and increased healthcare utilization. However, aging does not inevitably lead to poor health or diminished quality of life.

The concept of successful aging emerged to describe older adults who maintain high levels of functioning and well-being despite advancing age. Early theoretical frameworks proposed that successful aging includes low probability of disease, high cognitive and physical functioning, and active engagement with life.

More recent research has expanded this concept to include psychological resilience, social relationships, environmental influences, and spiritual well-being. These factors interact dynamically to shape the aging experience.

Understanding the determinants of successful aging is essential for developing effective public health interventions aimed at improving quality of life among older adults. Therefore, this study aims to synthesize current evidence regarding factors associated with successful aging through a systematic literature review

METHODS

Study Design

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology following PRISMA guidelines.

Search Strategy

Literature searches were conducted in the following databases:

PubMed

Scopus

Google Scholar

Search keywords included combinations of :

Successful aging

Healthy aging

Elderly well-being

Aging determinants

Psychological well-being elderly

Social support elderly

The search covered studies published between 1985 and 2026.

Inclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they met the following criteria:

Peer-reviewed journal articles

Studies examining determinants of well-being in older adults

Participants aged ≥ 60 years

Quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods studies

Articles written in English

Exclusion Criteria

Studies were excluded if they:

Were editorials or commentary articles

Did not focus on elderly populations

Lacked clear methodological descriptions

Study Selection

The database search identified 186 records.

After removing duplicates and screening titles and abstracts:

154 articles remained

100 articles were excluded

Full-text screening of 54 articles resulted in 23 studies included in the final synthesis.

Methods

Study Design included cross-sectional ($n \approx 13$), observational cohort/analytical ($n \approx 5$), intervention/randomized controlled trials ($n \approx 2$), mixed-methods ($n \approx 1$), narrative/scoping reviews ($n \approx 2$). The most frequently investigated determinants of successful aging were physical activity, psychological resilience, social support and social networks, spirituality, environmental conditions, and socioeconomic status, with outcomes primarily focusing on subjective well-being, life satisfaction, functional health, cognitive performance, and quality of life. The studies examined various determinants influencing successful aging such as: physical activity, psychological resilience, social relationships, spirituality, environmental conditions, socioeconomic factors

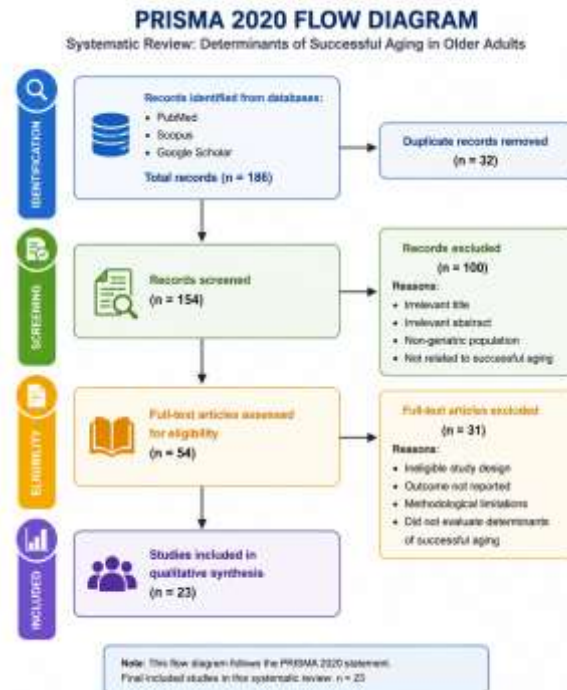


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram illustrating the study selection process, including identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages. A total of 186 records were identified, with 23 studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Study Characteristics

The 23 included studies were conducted across multiple regions including Asia, Europe, North America, and the Middle East. The 23 studies

were conducted across Asia (China, Iran, India, Taiwan, Türkiye), Europe (Germany, France, Spain, Netherlands, Greece), North America (United States and Canada), and the Middle East, reflecting broad geographic representation. Study.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Included Studies (n = 23)

No	First Author	Year	Country/Region	Study Design	Population/Sample	Main Determinant Investigated	Main Outcome
1	Cordes	2019	Germany	Randomized Controlled Trial	Nursing home residents	Physical activity	Physical function, cognition, psychosocial well-being
2	Zorn	1997	USA	Cross-sectional	Elderly women	Spiritual well-being	Psychological well-being
3	Vaillant-Ciszewicz	2022	France	Narrative review	Older adults	Psychological support	Mental well-being

No	First Author	Year	Country/Region	Study Design	Population/Sample	Main Determinant Investigated	Main Outcome
4	Ouyang	2019	China	Observational	Informal caregivers of older adults	Social support	Subjective well-being
5	Liu	2024	China	Cross-sectional	Community-dwelling elderly	Socioeconomic status	Subjective well-being
6	Zafari	2023	Iran	Cross-sectional	Older adults	Spirituality & resilience	Depression, resilience
7	Mesa-Fernández	2019	Spain	Cross-sectional	Active older adults	Self-esteem, self-efficacy	Psychological well-being
8	Wang	2024	China	Cross-sectional	Older adults	Family relationships	Well-being
9	Velasco-González	2014	France	Cross-sectional	Community elderly	Spiritual well-being	Life satisfaction
10	Li	2023	China	Cross-sectional	Urban elderly	Environmental quality	Subjective well-being
11	Wang	2016	China	Cross-sectional	Community elderly	Social network	Subjective well-being
12	Nagana ndini	2025	India	Mixed-methods	Rural older adults	Mindfulness	Mental well-being
13	Zheng	2020	China	Cross-sectional	Urban & rural elderly	Social network	Well-being
14	Garatachea	2009	Spain	Observational	Community older adults	Physical activity	Well-being
15	Lee	2011	Taiwan	Cross-sectional	Retired elderly	Exercise participation	Well-being
16	Rius-Ottenheim	2012	Netherlands & Greece	Observational	Elderly men	Mental well-being	Telomere length

No	First Author	Year	Country/Region	Study Design	Population/Sample	Main Determinant Investigated	Main Outcome
17	Pormehr	2024	Iran	Intervention study	Elderly with diabetes	Healthy lifestyle	Mental well-being, vitality
18	Jeste	2019	USA	Observational	Older adults	Frailty	Cognition, sleep, well-being
19	Zyzanski	1989	USA	Cross-sectional	Community elderly	Living arrangements	Well-being
20	Zhong	2026	China	Cross-sectional	Home-care elderly	Home-care environment	Well-being
21	Bigras	2024	Canada	Scoping review	Adults >60 years	Sexual well-being	Quality of life
22	Wolinsky	1985	USA	Longitudinal observational	Community elderly	Multiple correlates	Subjective well-being
23	Sarpdağ	2025	Türkiye	Cross-sectional	Older adults	Spirituality	Attitudes toward death via psychological well-being



Figure 2. Conceptual Frame work

Figure 2. illustrates the conceptual framework synthesized from the 23 included studies. The evidence indicates that successful aging is a multidimensional construct influenced by five major domains: physical health, psychological resources, social relationships, spiritual well-being, and environmental/socioeconomic conditions. These determinants interact synergistically rather than independently. Regular physical activity maintains functional capacity, psychological resilience enhances adaptation to age-related changes, social support reduces loneliness and promotes participation, spirituality provides existential meaning and emotional stability, while supportive environments and socioeconomic resources facilitate healthy behaviors. Collectively, these determinants contribute to successful aging, characterized by preserved physical and cognitive functioning, psychological well-being, social engagement, and life satisfaction, ultimately leading to healthy aging and improved quality of life among older adults. This framework is consistent with the WHO Healthy Ageing model and the multidimensional concept of successful aging proposed by Rowe and Kahn.

Physical Activity and Functional Health

Physical activity emerged as one of the most consistently reported determinants of successful aging across the included studies. Regular engagement in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity contributes to the preservation of muscle strength, cardiorespiratory fitness, balance, flexibility, and mobility, thereby enabling older adults to maintain functional independence and reduce the risk of disability. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines healthy aging as maintaining functional ability that enables well-being in older age, emphasizing that physical capacity is one of its central components (WHO, 2020).

Several studies included in this review demonstrated that older adults participating in structured exercise programs exhibited significantly better physical functioning, higher gait speed, improved balance performance, and lower incidence

of frailty compared with sedentary individuals. Multicomponent exercise interventions combining aerobic exercise, resistance training, flexibility, and balance exercises were particularly effective because they simultaneously target multiple physiological systems affected by aging. Cordes et al. (2019), for example, reported that multicomponent exercise interventions implemented among nursing-home residents significantly improved physical performance, cognitive function, and psychosocial well-being.

Beyond improving physical functioning, regular exercise also exerts profound neurobiological effects. Physical activity stimulates neurogenesis, enhances cerebral blood flow, increases brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), and reduces systemic inflammation, all of which contribute to preserving cognitive performance and delaying age-related cognitive decline. Emerging evidence further suggests that regular exercise improves executive function, memory, and processing speed while reducing the risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

Physical activity also influences psychological well-being through multiple mechanisms. Participation in exercise increases endorphin secretion, improves sleep quality, reduces anxiety symptoms, and enhances self-confidence. Lee and Hung (2011) demonstrated that retired older adults engaging in regular exercise reported significantly greater life satisfaction than physically inactive peers. Likewise, Garatachea et al. (2009) found that better physical function was strongly associated with improved subjective well-being among community-dwelling elderly populations.

Recent longitudinal evidence indicates that adherence to WHO physical activity recommendations (at least 150–300 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week) is associated with lower all-cause mortality, reduced hospitalization, and prolonged disability-free life expectancy. Therefore, promoting age-friendly physical activity programs should remain a cornerstone of healthy aging policies worldwide

Physical activity emerged as one of the most important determinants of successful aging. Studies consistently reported that older adults who engage in regular physical activity experience improved physical functioning, mobility, and life satisfaction. Exercise interventions targeting strength, balance, and endurance also showed improvements in cognitive functioning and psychosocial well-being.

Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being emerged as another fundamental determinant of successful aging. The reviewed studies consistently identified psychological resilience, self-esteem, emotional regulation, optimism, self-efficacy, and mindfulness as protective factors that enable older adults to adapt successfully to biological, psychological, and social changes accompanying aging.

Resilience refers to an individual's capacity to recover from adversity and maintain psychological equilibrium despite experiencing stressful life events such as retirement, chronic illness, bereavement, or declining physical function. Older adults with higher resilience consistently reported lower levels of depressive symptoms, greater life satisfaction, and better quality of life. Zafari et al. (2023) demonstrated that spiritual well-being significantly strengthened resilience while simultaneously reducing depressive symptoms among older adults.

Self-esteem and self-efficacy further contribute to successful aging by enhancing confidence in managing daily activities and health-related challenges. Mesa-Fernández et al. (2019) observed strong positive associations between self-esteem, self-efficacy, and psychological well-being in active older adults.

Mindfulness-based interventions have recently received increasing attention in gerontology because they improve emotional regulation, reduce perceived stress, and enhance cognitive flexibility. Naganandini (2025) reported that mindfulness training significantly improved mental well-being among rural elderly populations. Similar findings from randomized clinical trials indicate that mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR)

decreases anxiety, loneliness, and depressive symptoms while increasing positive affect and emotional acceptance.

From a neuropsychological perspective, psychological well-being influences successful aging through reduced activation of chronic stress pathways, particularly the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis. Lower cortisol exposure contributes to healthier immune function, better cardiovascular health, and preservation of hippocampal volume, thereby reducing cognitive decline.

Consequently, successful aging should not merely be defined by the absence of disease but also by the ability to maintain positive psychological functioning throughout later life. Psychological resilience, self-esteem, and emotional regulation were identified as key contributors to successful aging. Older adults with higher psychological resilience were less likely to experience depression and more likely to report higher life satisfaction. Mindfulness-based interventions were also associated with improved mental health outcomes.

Social Support

Strong social relationships consistently emerged as one of the strongest predictors of successful aging across the included studies. Social support encompasses emotional support, instrumental assistance, companionship, family cohesion, community participation, and social integration. Collectively, these resources protect older adults from loneliness, depression, cognitive decline, and social isolation.

Several studies demonstrated that larger social networks were associated with significantly higher subjective well-being. Wang (2016) and Zheng and Chen (2020) found that elderly individuals with stronger family and community connections experienced greater psychological well-being and lower loneliness.

Family relationships remain particularly important within collectivist societies where intergenerational support provides emotional security, caregiving assistance, and meaningful

social roles. Community engagement—including volunteering, religious participation, neighborhood organizations, and recreational groups—also promotes active aging by increasing social participation and cognitive stimulation.

Loneliness has increasingly been recognized as an independent risk factor for mortality, cardiovascular disease, dementia, and depression. Recent evidence published in *The Lancet Healthy Longevity* indicates that social isolation produces health risks comparable to smoking and obesity. Consequently, WHO has identified social connectedness as a priority area for healthy aging initiatives.

Social support additionally influences successful aging indirectly through healthier behaviors, increased healthcare utilization, enhanced medication adherence, and greater motivation to remain physically active. Strong social networks were consistently associated with higher levels of well-being. Family relationships and community participation were found to reduce loneliness and enhance emotional well-being among older adults.

Environmental Factors

Environmental conditions substantially shape the aging experience by either facilitating or restricting functional ability. The WHO Healthy Ageing framework emphasizes that healthy aging results from continuous interactions between intrinsic capacity and supportive environments.

Green spaces, safe neighborhoods, accessible public transportation, age-friendly housing, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, and proximity to healthcare services encourage physical activity, social participation, and psychological restoration. Li et al. (2023) demonstrated that access to natural environments significantly improved subjective well-being among community-dwelling elderly populations.

Environmental exposure also affects biological health through reduced air pollution, lower noise exposure, improved thermal comfort, and opportunities for outdoor exercise. Numerous epidemiological studies have shown that greener

residential environments reduce stress, improve sleep quality, decrease cardiovascular risk, and promote healthier aging trajectories.

Socioeconomic conditions similarly influence successful aging by determining access to healthcare, nutritious food, educational opportunities, financial security, and social resources. Liu et al. (2024) reported that income influenced subjective well-being indirectly through improved self-rated health and psychological capital.

The concept of Age-Friendly Cities promoted by WHO therefore represents an important public health strategy to optimize functional ability throughout older adulthood. Environmental conditions such as green spaces and safe residential environments contribute to improved well-being among older adults. Access to supportive living environments encourages physical activity and social interaction.

Spiritual Well-being

Spiritual well-being emerged as one of the distinctive multidimensional determinants identified in this review. Unlike traditional biomedical models that focus primarily on physical functioning, contemporary healthy aging frameworks increasingly recognize spirituality as an essential contributor to emotional resilience, meaning in life, and existential well-being.

Several included studies consistently demonstrated that older adults with stronger spiritual engagement reported greater life satisfaction, lower depression, better emotional adjustment, and higher acceptance of aging. Zorn and Johnson (1997), Velasco-González and Rioux (2014), Zafari et al. (2023), and Sarpdaği et al. (2025) all reported positive associations between spirituality and psychological well-being among older populations.

Spirituality provides individuals with meaning, hope, gratitude, forgiveness, and acceptance of life's transitions. These psychological resources become increasingly important during aging, when individuals frequently encounter chronic illness, retirement, bereavement, and awareness of mortality. Sarpdaği et al. (2025) further demonstrated that psychological well-being mediated the relationship

between spirituality and positive attitudes toward death, suggesting that spirituality indirectly promotes successful aging through improved mental health.

From a psychoneuroimmunological perspective, spiritual practices—including prayer, meditation, gratitude, and religious participation—may reduce sympathetic nervous system activation, decrease inflammatory biomarkers, improve autonomic regulation, and enhance emotional stability.

Recent gerontology literature increasingly supports integrating spiritual assessment into comprehensive geriatric care because addressing existential concerns complements physical, psychological, and social interventions. Consequently, successful aging should be conceptualized as a holistic process encompassing biological, psychological, social, environmental, and spiritual dimensions. Spirituality was identified as an important source of emotional resilience among elderly individuals. Older adults with stronger spiritual engagement reported greater life satisfaction and acceptance of aging.

Discussion

Multidimensional Nature of Successful Aging

The findings of this systematic review demonstrate that successful aging is a multidimensional construct influenced by biological, psychological, social, and environmental factors. Across the 23 included studies, several determinants consistently emerged as significant contributors to well-being among older adults, including physical activity, psychological resilience, social relationships, environmental conditions, and spirituality.

These findings align with contemporary gerontological frameworks emphasizing that aging is not solely defined by disease or disability but by the ability of individuals to maintain functional capacity and life satisfaction. The concept of successful aging therefore represents a shift from a deficit-based perspective of aging toward a more holistic model of health and well-being.

The theoretical foundations of successful aging were initially proposed by Rowe and Kahn, who suggested that successful aging involves three key components: avoidance of disease and disability, maintenance of high cognitive and physical functioning, and active engagement with life. However, more recent frameworks, particularly those developed by the World Health Organization, emphasize the broader concept of healthy aging defined as maintaining functional ability that enables well-being in older age.

The findings of this review suggest that both models remain relevant and complementary. While Rowe and Kahn's framework emphasizes individual functioning, the WHO framework highlights environmental and social determinants that enable older adults to maintain independence and quality of life.

Psychological Resilience and Mental Well-being

Psychological well-being emerged as another critical determinant of successful aging. Several studies included in this review reported strong associations between psychological resources such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, resilience, and life satisfaction.

Older adults with higher psychological resilience were less likely to experience depressive symptoms and more likely to report positive emotional states. Mindfulness-based interventions and psychological training programs have also been shown to improve mental well-being among elderly populations.

Psychological resilience may play a particularly important role in helping older adults cope with life transitions commonly associated with aging, including retirement, loss of loved ones, declining health, and changes in social roles.

Interestingly, research in gerontology suggests that emotional regulation often improves with age. Older adults tend to prioritize emotionally meaningful experiences and relationships, which may contribute to higher levels of emotional stability compared with younger populations.

These findings highlight the importance of integrating mental health support into aging policies and healthcare systems.

Social Engagement and Interpersonal Relationships

Social engagement represents another fundamental component of successful aging. Studies included in this review consistently found that strong social networks and supportive relationships are associated with improved well-being among older adults.

Older individuals with larger social networks reported higher levels of subjective well-being and lower levels of loneliness. Family relationships and community participation were also identified as key sources of emotional support.

Social engagement may influence successful aging through several pathways. First, social relationships provide emotional support that helps individuals cope with stress and adversity. Second, social participation encourages active lifestyles and cognitive stimulation. Third, interpersonal connections contribute to a sense of belonging and purpose in life.

In many cultures, family relationships play a central role in supporting elderly well-being. Intergenerational relationships, including interactions with children and grandchildren, may enhance emotional fulfillment and reduce feelings of social isolation.

Public health initiatives aimed at promoting social participation among older adults may therefore play an important role in improving quality of life in aging populations.

Environmental and Socioeconomic Influences

Beyond individual behaviors and psychological factors, environmental and socioeconomic conditions also influence successful aging outcomes. Access to safe residential environments, green spaces, and supportive community infrastructure has been associated with improved physical and psychological well-being among older adults. Natural environments may encourage physical activity, social interaction, and psychological relaxation.

Socioeconomic status also influences aging outcomes. Studies examining income and financial

resources found that economic security contributes to well-being by improving access to healthcare services, nutritious food, and social opportunities.

The WHO healthy aging framework emphasizes the importance of age-friendly environments that support functional ability among older adults. Such environments include accessible public spaces, safe housing, transportation systems, and community services.

Spiritual Well-being and Existential Meaning

An important theme emerging from the included studies is the role of spirituality in successful aging. Spiritual well-being was associated with increased resilience, improved psychological health, and greater life satisfaction.

Spiritual beliefs may help older adults cope with existential challenges related to aging, including awareness of mortality and declining physical health. Religious practices, meditation, and spiritual reflection may provide emotional comfort and a sense of meaning in life.

Several studies also reported that spirituality influences attitudes toward death and acceptance of aging. Older adults with stronger spiritual engagement often demonstrate greater emotional stability and reduced fear of mortality.

These findings suggest that successful aging is not limited to physical and psychological dimensions but also includes existential and spiritual aspects of life.

Integration with Public Health Policy

The findings of this systematic literature review provide important implications for public health policy, highlighting that successful aging is a multidimensional phenomenon requiring integrated strategies across healthcare systems, communities, and policy environments. Rather than focusing solely on disease prevention, modern public health frameworks increasingly emphasize maintaining functional ability, promoting well-being, and supporting older adults in living meaningful and independent lives. This perspective aligns closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021–2030, which defines

healthy aging as the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age (WHO, 2020).

Multidimensional Interventions for Successful Aging

The evidence synthesized in this review indicates that interventions promoting successful aging should adopt a multidimensional approach addressing physical, psychological, social, environmental, and spiritual determinants simultaneously. The reviewed studies consistently demonstrated that no single determinant independently explains successful aging; rather, successful aging results from dynamic interactions among multiple domains throughout the life course. This finding supports the WHO Healthy Ageing Framework, which emphasizes that functional ability emerges from the interaction between an individual's intrinsic capacity and the surrounding environment (WHO, 2020).

Integrated intervention programs should therefore combine regular physical activity, nutritional counseling, mental health promotion, chronic disease management, social participation, environmental modification, and spiritual support within comprehensive geriatric care. Such multidisciplinary approaches have been shown to improve functional independence, cognitive performance, emotional well-being, and quality of life more effectively than isolated interventions targeting only one health domain. Likewise, Rowe and Kahn's model of successful aging, although originally emphasizing physical and cognitive functioning, has evolved toward a broader biopsychosocial perspective that recognizes environmental and psychosocial influences as equally important determinants of healthy aging.

Recent evidence also supports implementing person-centered care models that recognize individual preferences, cultural values, and social contexts while integrating preventive, promotive, curative, rehabilitative, and palliative services across the continuum of care. Consequently, national healthy aging strategies should encourage

multisectoral collaboration among healthcare providers, public health agencies, social services, urban planners, and community organizations.

Community-Based Programs Promoting Active and Healthy Aging

The present review further suggests that community-based interventions constitute one of the most effective public health strategies for promoting successful aging. Across the included studies, programs encouraging physical activity, community participation, psychological support, and social engagement consistently improved physical functioning, mental health, and life satisfaction among older adults.

Community exercise programs, senior activity centers, volunteer initiatives, intergenerational programs, walking groups, recreational clubs, and lifelong learning opportunities provide accessible platforms for maintaining both physical and social functioning. Such interventions reduce social isolation while simultaneously promoting healthy behaviors, cognitive stimulation, and emotional resilience.

The WHO Age-Friendly Communities initiative emphasizes that healthy aging should occur within supportive communities where older adults can remain socially connected and physically active. Community health workers, primary healthcare centers, and local governments therefore play essential roles in facilitating preventive screening, health education, chronic disease management, and social support services.

Economic evaluations further demonstrate that community-based healthy aging programs reduce hospitalization rates, delay institutionalization, and decrease healthcare expenditures by preventing frailty and disability. Consequently, investments in preventive community services represent highly cost-effective public health interventions in rapidly aging societies.

Age-Friendly Urban Planning and Supportive Environments

The findings also highlight the critical importance of supportive physical environments in facilitating successful aging. Environmental determinants—including accessible housing, safe neighborhoods, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure,

green spaces, public transportation, and proximity to healthcare services—directly influence older adults' ability to remain physically active, socially engaged, and functionally independent.

Urban planning policies should therefore incorporate universal design principles that accommodate age-related physical limitations while encouraging mobility and community participation. Age-friendly neighborhoods characterized by barrier-free sidewalks, adequate lighting, accessible transportation systems, and safe recreational facilities enable older adults to maintain independence and reduce the risk of falls and disability.

Green spaces provide additional psychological and physiological benefits by encouraging outdoor physical activity, facilitating social interaction, reducing stress, improving sleep quality, and enhancing cognitive restoration. Li et al. (2023) demonstrated that residential natural environments significantly improved subjective well-being among older adults, while WHO recognizes age-friendly cities as essential components of healthy aging policies.

Beyond physical infrastructure, supportive social environments—including inclusive communities, social protection systems, and equitable access to healthcare—also contribute substantially to healthy aging by reducing inequalities and promoting social participation throughout later life.

Integrating Spiritual and Psychological Well-being into Healthcare Systems

Finally, healthcare systems should recognize spiritual and psychological well-being as essential components of holistic geriatric care. Although traditional healthcare models have primarily focused on diagnosing and treating physical diseases, contemporary gerontology increasingly acknowledges that emotional resilience, psychological adaptation, existential meaning, and spiritual well-being substantially influence health outcomes during later life.

The studies included in this review consistently demonstrated that spirituality contributes to greater emotional stability, improved coping strategies, reduced depressive symptoms, and higher life satisfaction. Spiritual well-being enables older adults to interpret aging positively, cope with chronic

illness, accept functional decline, and maintain hope despite increasing health challenges. Sarpdağlı et al. (2025) further demonstrated that psychological well-being mediates the beneficial effects of spirituality on attitudes toward death, highlighting the interconnectedness between spiritual and mental health.

Healthcare providers should therefore incorporate routine assessments of psychological distress, loneliness, social isolation, and spiritual needs into comprehensive geriatric assessment (CGA). Multidisciplinary teams—including physicians, nurses, psychologists, social workers, rehabilitation specialists, and spiritual care providers—can collaboratively develop individualized care plans addressing biological, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of health.

Integrating spiritual care into primary healthcare and geriatric medicine does not necessarily imply religious interventions but rather recognizing patients' sources of meaning, values, beliefs, hope, and existential concerns. Such person-centered approaches align with WHO recommendations emphasizing dignity, autonomy, and well-being throughout the aging process.

Overall, translating these findings into public health policy requires coordinated action across healthcare systems, community organizations, and governmental sectors. Comprehensive healthy aging policies should extend beyond disease management toward creating supportive environments that enable older adults to maintain functional ability, social participation, psychological resilience, spiritual well-being, and quality of life throughout older adulthood.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review synthesized evidence from 23 studies investigating the determinants of successful aging among older adults. The major conclusions are as follows:

- a. Successful aging is a multidimensional construct influenced by the interaction of physical, psychological, social, environmental, socioeconomic, and spiritual factors rather than by physical health alone.

- b. Regular physical activity consistently emerged as one of the strongest determinants of successful aging, contributing to improved functional capacity, mobility, cognitive performance, frailty prevention, and overall quality of life.
- c. Psychological well-being, particularly resilience, self-esteem, emotional regulation, self-efficacy, and mindfulness, plays a critical role in enhancing life satisfaction and reducing depression and psychological distress among older adults.
- d. Social support and community engagement significantly promote healthy aging by reducing loneliness, strengthening emotional well-being, encouraging active participation, and maintaining social connectedness.
- e. Supportive environmental and socioeconomic conditions, including age-friendly neighborhoods, green spaces, safe housing, financial security, and access to healthcare services, facilitate functional independence and healthy aging.
- f. Spiritual well-being represents an important dimension of successful aging by enhancing emotional resilience, providing meaning and purpose in life, improving coping capacity, and fostering positive acceptance of aging.
- g. The evidence supports the WHO Healthy Ageing Framework, demonstrating that healthy aging results from the interaction between intrinsic capacity and supportive physical and social environments.
- h. Integrated multidisciplinary interventions that simultaneously address physical, psychological, social, environmental, and spiritual determinants are likely to produce greater improvements in successful aging than single-component interventions.
- i. Public health policies should prioritize community-based healthy aging programs, age-friendly environments, preventive healthcare services, and person-centered care models to optimize functional ability and quality of life among older adults.
- j. Future research should emphasize longitudinal and intervention studies, incorporate standardized measurements of successful aging, and further investigate the interactions among biological, psychosocial, environmental, and spiritual determinants across diverse cultural settings.

Practical Implications

- a. Develop comprehensive healthy aging programs integrating exercise, mental health promotion, social participation, and spiritual support.
- b. Strengthen age-friendly community and urban planning initiatives.
- c. Integrate psychological and spiritual assessment into routine geriatric care.
- d. Promote multidisciplinary collaboration among healthcare providers, social services, public health professionals, and policymakers.
- e. Encourage evidence-based public health strategies that support independence, active aging, and healthy longevity throughout the life course.

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