

## BACKGROUND

Social support is among key resources affecting satisfaction with life and enabling people to deal with challenging situations (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

While there is evidence that people use the Internet to sustain and extend their social networks and receive social support, the question whether the Internet provides beneficial outcomes still remains controversial and researchers present inconsistent findings (e.g., Sanders et al., 2000; Walther & Boyd, 2002; Young, 2011). Still, little is known about the effect the Internet and social media have on social support provided offline.

The study examines relationships between the size of network of Facebook friends, online support and the social support provided in real life. It also investigates how different kinds of support affect the satisfaction with life of undergraduate students.

## WHAT WE TESTED?

(1) What is the relationship between the number of Facebook friends and perceived social support from friends? Is this relationship mediated by the time spend on online communication and online support?

(2) What is the relationship between support from family and satisfaction with life? Does online support moderate this relationship?

## METHOD

### Inclusion criteria

- Age  $\geq$  18 years

### Participants

- N = 125
- Mean age: 23.88 (SD = 1.82)
- Living arrangements: 45.8% - with parents; 25.7% - rented flat/room; 11.7% - dormitory; 3.9% - with other relatives; 12.8% - other.

### Measures

- Self-report on the use of Internet, social media, recent stressful events, and their appraisal
- Self-report on online social support
- Perceived Social Support from Family and Friends (Procidano, 1992)
- Positive and Negative Affect (PANAS-X; Watson & Clark, 1994)
- Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985)

### Procedures

- Internet survey; cross-sectional design

## RESULTS

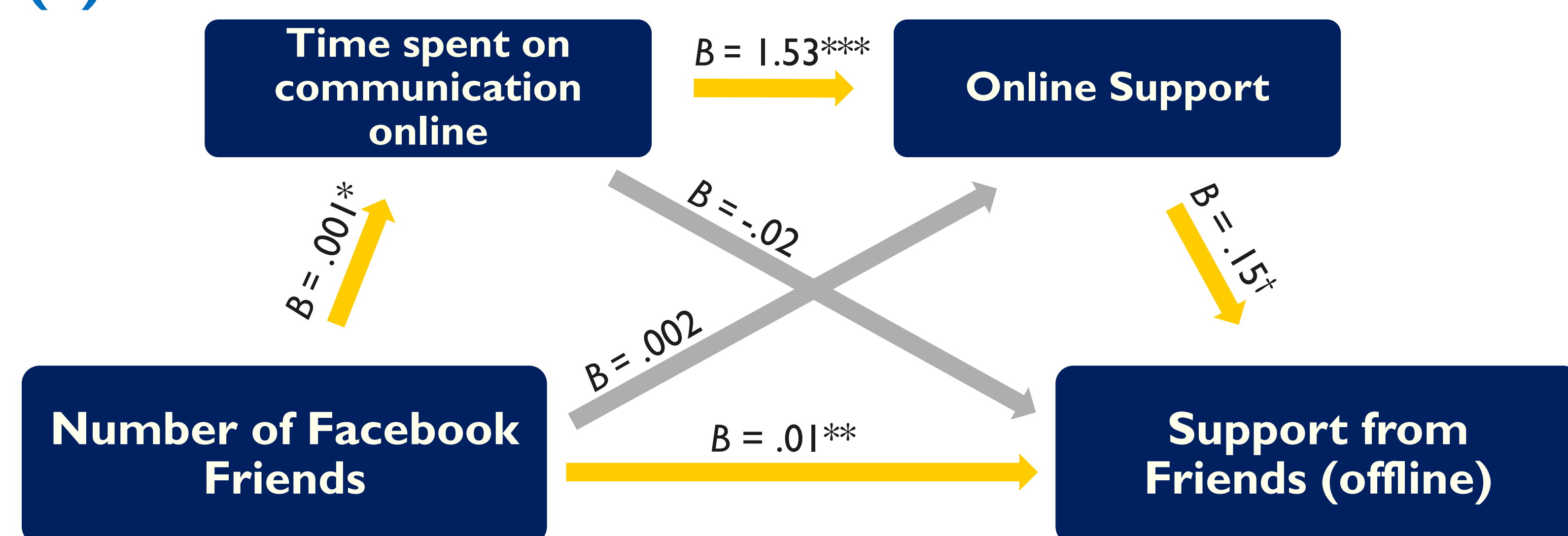
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1) Support from Family	43.14	6.27	-					
2) Support from Friends	46.75	3.96	.37**	-				
3) Online Support	14.58	4.55	.15	.25**	-			
4) Satisfaction with Life	20.22	6.27	.37**	.14	.01	-		
5) Communication Online (hours)	3.60	1.14	.00	.05	.24**	.04	-	
6) Number of Facebook Friends	293	190.55	.25**	.34**	.22*	.12	.09	-

Note. \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01.

## RESULTS

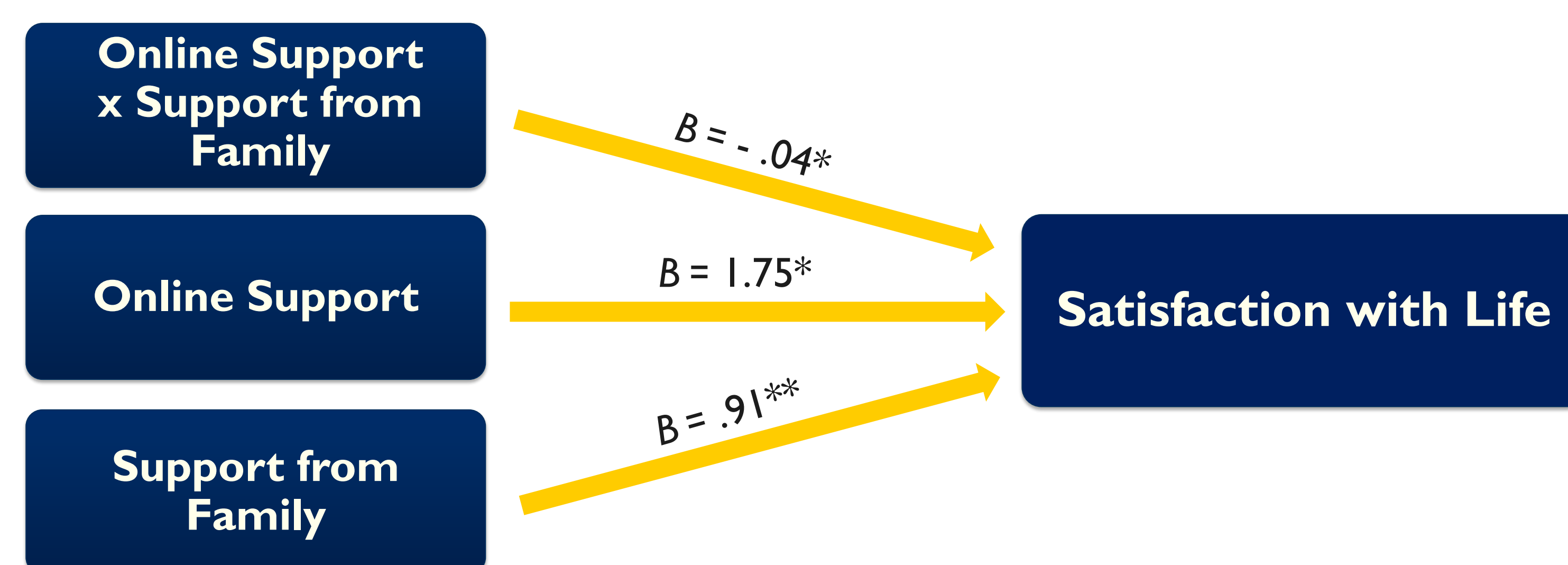
(1)



Note. \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001, †p < .10

Figure 1. Results of multiple mediation analysis: The effect of number of Facebook friends on support from friends provided offline is mediated by time spent on communication via the Internet, and by online support.

(2)



Note. \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001

Figure 2. Results of moderation analysis: The effect of social support from family on satisfaction with life is moderated by online support (controlling for the level of stress).

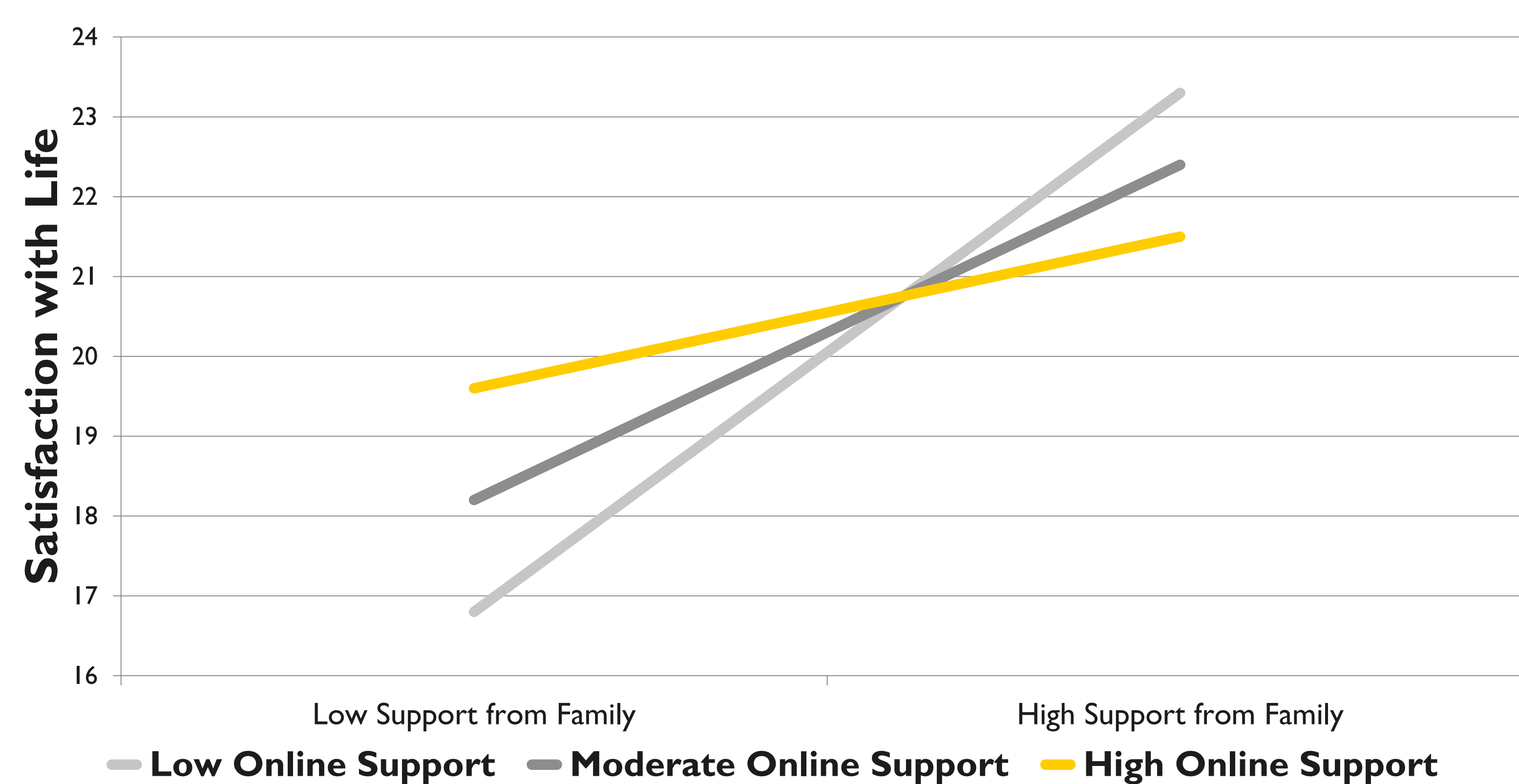


Figure 3. The effect of support from family on satisfaction with life is moderated by online support.

Table 2. Bootstrapped Effect of Support from Family on Satisfaction with Life for Different Levels of Online Support.

Online Support	B	SE	95% LL BCA	95% UL BCA
- 1 SD	.51	.12	.270	.755
Mean	.33	.08	.168	.500
+ 1 SD	.16	.11	-.069	.381

Note. BCA = bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval; LL = lower level; UL = upper level.

## CONCLUSIONS

- The number of Facebook friends is related to support from friends offline: this association is mediated by time spent on communicating and online support.
- There is a direct effect of support from family on general satisfaction with life (controlling for a level of stress reported by participants). However, this effect becomes nonsignificant at high levels of online support.
- The study underlines the usefulness of social media for procuring online support among undergraduates.