

Chinese Elderly

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AND SOCIAL SUPPORTING RESOURCES

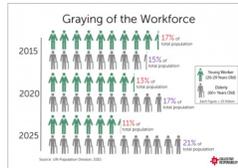
Jianjun Ji, Saffron O'Brien, Ciara Riley, and Zoya Lefler | Sociology Department



University of Wisconsin
Eau Claire

RELEVANCE

With an increasing population of elderly in China due to improved living conditions, increased health technology, and the former One Child Policy, understanding how social resources affect this population is increasingly important for both families and government. As the ratio of elderly to young workers continues to increase (Graying of the Workforce) new policies may have to be implemented to support this growing population.



THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

SOCIAL RESOURCES THEORY

This study uses Social Resources Theory to study the impact of social resources on psychological wellbeing. This theory argues that as people age their social resources will decline since they are no longer actively gaining resources or avoiding losses. Consequentially, the decline in social resources will have a negative impact on psychological well-being.

FRAMEWORK OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

The Framework of Psychological Wellbeing states that a person's wellbeing is developed over a lifetime based on their perception of their purpose in life. This study uses this theory to explain how the elderly's psychological wellbeing will be effected by changes in social resources.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do the Chinese Elderly perceive their psychological wellbeing?
- How do the Chinese elderly feel about their health status, loneliness, filial piety, and life happiness?
- What are the social resources currently available to the Chinese elderly?
- Is the psychological wellbeing of the Chinese elderly associated with their social resources?

HYPOTHESES

1. The perception on the psychological wellbeing varies among the Chinese elderly.
2. Social supporting resources vary among the Chinese elderly.
3. The health status of the Chinese elderly is associated with social supporting resources, after controlling for the effects of age.
4. The perception on filial piety of the Chinese elderly is associated with their family resources, after controlling for the effects of children.
5. The perception on feeling lonely of the Chinese elderly is associated with their social resources, after controlling for the effects of marital status.
6. The perception on happiness of the Chinese elderly is associated with their social resources, after controlling for the effects of family harmony.

METHODS

DATA SOURCE

- The data is based on a national survey collected by "the China Research Center on Aging" (CRCA) in 2006, covering 16 provinces
- The study is based on a sample size of 1980 respondents, a 10% of the total of respondents of 19,800 urban and rural elderly aged 60 years and above

MEASURES

Dependent Variables:

- Psychological Wellbeing
- Health Status
 - Feel Lonely
 - Filial Piety
 - Happiness

Control Variables:

- Age
- Children
- Marital Status
- Family Harmony

Independent Variables:

Social Supporting Resources

- Government Resources
 - State Stipend
 - Community Stipend
 - Social Welfare Stipend
- Family Resources
 - Children Support
 - Relative Support

Self Resources

- Personal Pension
- Monthly Income
- Total Savings

Other Resources

- Buying Medical Insurance
- Enterprise Stipend
- Other Stipend

STATISTICAL METHODS

Percentage Frequency Distribution

- to show variability of the perception on the health status, filial piety, feel lonely, and happiness

Chi-Square test

- to seek the significant relationship between psychological wellbeing's and social resources

Kendall's Tau-B & Tau-C

- to demonstrate the strength of association for ordinal variables

Cramer's V

- to show the strength of association for nominal variables

State Stipend	No	Yes	Total
Health Status			
Not Good	24.5 (444)	39.8 (66)	25.8 (510)
Average	49.1 (889)	42.8 (71)	48.6 (960)
Good	26.4 (477)	17.5 (29)	25.6 (506)
Total	100.0 (1810)	100.0 (166)	100.0 (1976)

Chi-Square=19.609, df=2, p<.001, Cramer's V=.10

State Stipend	No	Yes	Total
Feel Lonely			
Yes	25.7 (459)	49.7 (82)	27.7 (541)
Hard to Say	8.2 (146)	8.5 (14)	8.2 (160)
No	66.2 (1183)	41.8 (69)	64.1 (1252)
Total	100.0 (1788)	100.0 (165)	100.0 (1953)

Chi-Square=45.463, df=2, p<.001, Cramer's V=.153

FINDINGS

- Happiness, out of the four dependent variables, had the most statistically significant relationships with 7 of the 11 independent variables. The strongest relationship with Happiness was with the Self Resources specifically with Total Savings.
- Filial Piety was the second most statistically significant relationship with 5 of the 11 independent variables being associated. The strongest relationship with Filial Piety was the Social Welfare Stipend resource.
- Feel Lonely had 4 out of the 11 relationships showing significance. The strongest relationship with Feel Lonely was the Government Resource of State Stipend
- Health Status had 3 out of the 11 relationships showing significance. The strongest relationship with Health Status was Personal Pension
- 2 of the 11 independent variables representing social resources, State Stipend and Social well-fare, show the strongest association with the psychological well-being, followed by Relative Support and Other Stipend.

RESULTS

- Hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported by the data collected in this study
 - The psychological wellbeing varies among the Chinese elderly due to differences in health, feeling lonely, filial piety, and happiness
 - Social supporting resources in China were found to benefit some of the elderly but were not available to others
- Hypotheses 3 through 6 were partially supported by the data
 - Psychological wellbeing is associated with self, family, state, and other resources; however, there is a stronger association between psychological wellbeing and state resources as opposed to the other three social supporting resources

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

- Since state resources have the strongest association to psychological wellbeing there may be a need for policy change. As the Chinese population continues aging, we will see the continued lack of state resources such as social welfare, which will have an effect within China. Government policies involving social welfare programs, and stipends from the state and community, will need to be considered if they want to meet the demands of this ever growing aging society.
- The results stimulate further effort on the same topic for examination and confirmation
- More effort is needed to explore the concepts of the dependent variable in terms of psychological wellbeing in a Chinese social context
- Researchers might need to re-examine the re-coded variables, such as health status and feeling lonely, which might give a new light to the findings