



Modeling satisfaction amongst the elderly in different Chinese urban neighborhoods



Bingqiu Yan ^a, Xiaolu Gao ^{b,*}, Michael Lyon ^c

^a University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, China

^b Chinese Academy of Sciences, China

^c Arizona State University, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 2 January 2014

Received in revised form

26 June 2014

Accepted 6 August 2014

Available online 7 August 2014

Keywords:

Beijing

Aging

Senior satisfaction

Neighborhood differentiation

Social support

Senior service

Living environment

ABSTRACT

Rapidly aging populations constitute a critical issue for researchers and policymakers across the world; the challenges of a shifting demographic structure are particularly pertinent in the case of China. Population control strategies implemented in China in the late 1970s have substantially changed the social and demographic structure of Chinese cities and the traditional role of families in caring for elderly people. To meet the growing needs of elderly residents “aging in place,” age-friendly environments and new types of senior services are required and encouraged. This research examines the satisfaction of seniors in relation to the elderly services and living environments available to them, through empirical studies of six types of neighborhoods in Beijing. Using structural equation modeling (SEM), a satisfaction model under the Person-Environment Fit (P-E Fit) model framework was developed. This model considered the senior respondent's health status, economic attributes, family and social support networks, and neighborhood living environments. Social support was found to be the primary factor affecting satisfaction amongst the urban elderly in Beijing. The research also highlights the need to differentiate between different types of neighborhoods, which can differ significantly in terms of the socio-economic attributes (i.e., family structure, income, and education) of their senior residents. As such, based on the path coefficients revealed by different structural equation models of various neighborhoods, four types of neighborhoods were identified: in Type 1 neighborhoods, the neighborhood environment and the senior services provided by communities were primary factors in elderly satisfaction; in Type 2 neighborhoods, the satisfaction of inhabitants was strongly influenced by personal attributes such as health and income; Type 3 neighborhoods were residence of low-income people where the level of social support was the foremost factor; and in Type 4, social support and the environment were both essential.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

China is currently experiencing rapid demographic change in terms of both increasing life expectancy and declining fertility and mortality rates. Pursuant to the Sixth National Population Census of the People's Republic of China, which was conducted in 2010, 178 million Chinese citizens are now over the age of 60, a number which accounts for 13.3% of the total population in 2010 and which is predicted to rise to 221 million by 2015 and to double by 2030 (CPC Central Committee and State Council, 2011). This sharp

increase in the number of elderly Chinese has been accompanied by substantial changes in the social structure of Chinese cities and in the role of families in caring for the elderly, both of which are now exhibiting the effects of the one-child population control policy of the 1970s (See Note 1). The supply of existing institution-based services provided by nursing facilities and new types of social services – particularly home-based or community-based services for the elderly living in their own homes – is now being outstripped by rising demand, with the highest pressure on elderly care services being seen in megacities like Beijing (the city addressed by the present study) and in rural areas that are losing young populations (Gao, 2013). Since the Chinese government initiated the Starlight Program (See Note 2) in 2001, 13.4 billion RMB has been spent on community service facilities for community-living seniors. Despite this investment, a great gap still exists between seniors' needs and

* Corresponding author. Key Laboratory of Regional Sustainable Development Modeling, Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences, 11A Datun, Chaoyang, Beijing 100101, China.

E-mail address: gaoxl@igsnrr.ac.cn (X. Gao).

the amount and quality of community services currently being provided (Li et al., 2009). The provision of identical services across different communities thus constitutes a significant problem.

Beyond addressing the importance of elderly services, the existing body of literature emphasizes the significant influence that living environments exert upon elderly people who are “aging in place.” The World Health Organization’s (WHO) “age-friendly city” concept outlines a series of aspects of the daily lives of the elderly that the organization considers significant (WHO, 2007). These factors include: outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, and housing – key features of a city’s physical environment; and social participation and neighborhood communication – aspects of the social environment which affect the mental well being of seniors (WHO, 2007). Social geographers, urban planners and architects have also exhibited a strong interest in the study of living environments for the elderly, producing research that has addressed the creation of “enabling environments” and the importance of barrier-free environments, parks, and recreational settings (Carp and Christensen, 1986; Chong, 2003; Jirovec et al., 1985; Kaplan, 1985; Perez et al., 2001; Phillips et al., 2005; Rosenberg, 1998).

The notion of “satisfaction” is also of crucial relevance to the present study. Pursuant to a series of studies undertaken on the theme, “satisfaction” has been defined as a global judgment made by an individual in relation to a perceived discrepancy between aspiration and achievement (Campbell et al., 1976; Diener, 1994). Satisfaction among the elderly is here taken to refer to a self-assessment of their later life in relation to both achieved goals and their perceived ability to cope with daily life. Existing studies within sociology, psychology, and gerontology confirm that a variety of factors, including the physical, psychological, social, and economic status of elderly, are associated with the life satisfaction of elderly (Andersen, 1995; Atchley, 2000; Evans, 2009; Aureli and Baldazzi, 2002; Farquhar, 1995; Geron et al., 2000; Liu, 2007; Rabiner, 1992; Sun, 2007; Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman, 2009). Gerontologists and health geographers demonstrated that the level and breadth of available community services, as well as the living environment in a broad sense, significantly influenced elder person’s satisfaction (Fernández-Ballesteros, 2001; Mottus et al., 2012; Prieto-Flores et al., 2011). Lawton and Simon (1968), from the perspective of environmental gerontology, introduced the “Person-Environment Fit (P-E Fit)” model in order to understand the satisfaction amongst the elderly. This model has been applied in recent studies about elder people with regard to physical and social environments (Lawton, 1983; Rowles and Bernard, 2013).

Existing studies suggest that satisfaction amongst the elderly is relate to a variety of factors, including their physical, psychological, social, economic status, available community services and their living environment. So far, most of the previous discussions and analyses looked at the general trends and aspects of people’s satisfaction, but few efforts have been made to capture the specific and particular influences of different factors in different or different kinds of places. This has limited the application of existing research findings. For instance, whilst socioeconomic attributes and prominent differences across different neighborhoods (i.e., family structure, income, and education) are well documented (Somenahallia and Shiptonb, 2013; Temelová and Dvořáková, 2012; Cai, 2010), analyses of the differentiation of elderly satisfaction in relation to different residential neighborhoods are inadequate, even though such knowledge is indispensable for providing appropriate elderly living environments in cities.

A brief review of common neighborhood types in China reveals significant differences in living environments. Since China’s economic reform and the housing and land market liberalization of the 1970s and 1980s, the provision of housing has been rapidly commercialized, with traditional courtyard-housing blocks and

work unit compounds being increasingly disintegrated and subsequently populated by immigrants or relocated citizens; this constitutes a dramatic transformation of the urban spatial structure (Gao and Yan, 2014; Hu and Kaplan, 2001; Huang, 2006; Wu and Yeh, 1997; Zhang and Cai, 2014). The enclosed traditional courtyard-housing block is a common historical residential neighborhood type in China, which makes up for a substantial part of the inner city of Beijing. The work unit compound was once the basic gated residential block. Combining both a factory and a residential area, these compounds were constructed during the planned-economy period and have gradually undergone a transition whereby they have been ungated, and have become integrated, vigorous, mixed-use, flexible, mixed communities. Finally, low-income, or affordable, housing has also been constructed by both public and private actors with the aim of providing social support to urban low-income families. Seniors living in these different kinds of neighborhoods exhibit significant differences in their socioeconomic attributes and behaviors (Wu, 1992; Cai, 2010; Knox and Pinch, 2000). In turn, the neighborhood types themselves differ in terms of their location, their environmental quality, the level of access that they provide to services, the facilities that they offer, and their residential density. As a result of these differences, discrimination in the assessment seniors’ living environments forms an important issue for research and policymaking (Cunningham and Michael, 2004; State Advisory Council on Ageing, 2007).

With a view to filling this identified gap, this paper aims to clarify how a defined range of factors, including those relating to seniors’ living environments, affects elderly people’s quality of life. It also seeks to offer some understanding of elderly people’s life satisfaction in relation to their “aging in place” in various geographical settings in Beijing. Using survey data, the study tests whether elderly Chinese people’s level of satisfaction varies in relation to the neighborhood that they live in. Ultimately, the study aims to uncover the impact factors behind satisfaction amongst the elderly in various types of communities in the metropolitan areas of China. Finally, the study utilises SEM analysis to identify the impact routes of factors affecting elderly satisfaction in a defined range of different types of Chinese urban neighborhoods.

2. The satisfaction model for urban community-living seniors

2.1. Theoretical framework

The satisfaction model for community-living seniors set out in this study takes into account factors of health and economic status, dwelling style, and family and social relationships. The critical task lies in identifying the relationship between these factors – whether the factors work as independent interpreters of satisfaction, and whether (and how) they interact with each other. Further, as Lawton et al. (1982) point out, frequencies of deprivation in biological, psychological, or social spheres requires descriptive terms: in response to this requirement, the authors developed a predictive model for the behavior of senior citizens. The major predictive model in relation to behavior is referred to as the “press-competence” model (Rowles and Bernard, 2013):

$$B = f(P, E, P*E), \quad (1)$$

B is the behavior of the individual, which may be negative or positive and may take the form of either outwardly observable behavior or an inner affective response. Sustained levels of inner affective response are defined within the press-competence model as constituting either “morale” or “life satisfaction”. Here, P includes a number of evaluative variations (e.g., psychological or social characteristics) and non-evaluative personal attributes (such

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7334570>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7334570>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)