

A Study on the Influencing Factors of Migrant Elderly in Hainan's Participation in Health and Wellness Activities on Subjective Well-being

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the group of [migrant elderly in Hainan] and explores the mechanism by which their participation in health and wellness activities influences subjective well-being. First, starting from the development of the mental health service system for the elderly, it analyzes the connotation and influencing factors of subjective well-being, reveals the psychological demand link between climate migration and health and wellness activities, and points out the current situation of health and wellness service provision in Hainan as well as the shortcomings in psychological support, thereby laying a realistic foundation for the study. Second, it conducts an in-depth analysis of the multidimensional factors through which the participation frequency of the migrant elderly in health and wellness activities affects subjective well-being, including the diverse influencing elements of subjective well-being, the moderating role of health status in participation benefits, the synergistic effect of social network reconstruction, and the bidirectional interaction between cultural integration and meaning perception. Finally, it proposes targeted intervention paths to enhance the perception of subjective well-being among the migrant elderly, covering the improvement of relevant policies and systems in Hainan, the promotion of group interaction among the migrant elderly, the encouragement of "remaining useful in later life," and the facilitation of collective memory co-construction, providing both theoretical reference and practical guidance for optimizing health and wellness services for the migrant elderly in Hainan and improving their quality of life.

Keywords: migrant elderly, health and wellness activities, subjective well-being

1. Introduction

In 2025, the average life expectancy of residents in China reached a new high of 78.3 years. Enhancing the psychological health of the elderly population holds significant importance for fostering a positive and healthy social mentality. With the development of the Hainan Free Trade Port and the health and wellness industry, elderly mental health services constitute an essential component of the broader social psychological service system. At present, the mental health rates of elderly individuals in urban and rural areas in China are only 30.3% and 26.8%, respectively, which indicates that exploring the psychological health of the elderly is a research field of both practical significance and social value.

2. Theoretical Background and Research Foundation

2.1 National Health and Wellness Policies and the Mental Health Service System for the Elderly

At present, China's health and wellness industry is developing rapidly under the guidance of national policies, and the construction of the elderly care service system is being continuously improved. *The 14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Undertakings for the Elderly and the Elderly Care Service System* (Guo Fa [2021] No. 35) explicitly supports "the preliminary formation of an elderly care service system in which home-, community-, and institution-based care are coordinated, and in which medical care is integrated with health and wellness services, continuously strengthening the provision of elderly care that ensures basic needs, promotes inclusiveness, and provides diversified supply," and, for the first time, incorporates "vigorously developing the silver economy" into the national strategy. This plan marks a policy shift in China from focusing solely on basic livelihood security to comprehensively improving the quality of life of the elderly, with particular

emphasis on “improving the health support system for the elderly” and promoting the deep integration of medical services and elderly care services.

During the implementation of these policies, various regions have actively explored age-friendly renovation projects, creating more convenient living conditions for the elderly by optimizing community environments and improving barrier-free facilities. These measures have provided stronger foundational support for the seasonal migration of [migrant elderly]. The health and wellness needs of modern elderly people have evolved from merely maintaining physical health to pursuing a balance between physical and mental well-being. This transformation reflects a recognition of a broader concept of health—namely, that health is not merely the absence of disease, but a state of complete physical, psychological, and social adaptation. An increasing number of elderly care institutions are paying greater attention to the psychological needs of the elderly, promoting their social interaction by organizing interest groups and cultural activities, measures that play a positive role in enhancing the subjective well-being of migrant elderly.

2.2 The Connotation of Subjective Well-being and Its Multidimensional Influencing Factors

Subjective well-being refers to an individual’s overall evaluation of life quality based on self-defined standards, and it serves as an important comprehensive indicator for measuring the psychological health and quality of life of the elderly. In the management practices of elderly care institutions, staff members can help the elderly maintain a positive emotional state by conducting regular satisfaction surveys and organizing emotional counseling activities, measures that are of great significance for enhancing the overall well-being of migrant elderly^[1].

The factors influencing the subjective well-being of the elderly are diverse and complex, mainly including the following aspects: at the level of social support, perceived social support and general sense of self-efficacy can enhance well-being by increasing positive emotions and reducing negative emotions; at the socioeconomic level, household income plays a role in alleviating negative emotions, whereas years of education may negatively affect well-being due to heightened expectations; at the family relationship level, parental support and sibling relationships significantly influence the elderly’s sense of self-esteem, loneliness, and gratitude; at the level of perceived environmental control, the ability to manage physical, interpersonal, and hypothetical environments is closely related to positive emotions. For the special group of migrant elderly, subjective well-being is also affected by migratory adaptability. Seasonal migration may temporarily weaken their original social support networks, while the establishment of new social relationships requires time, making this transitional period prone to loneliness and a diminished sense of belonging, which in turn influence overall well-being. Therefore, when discussing the health and wellness needs of migrant elderly, it is necessary to comprehensively consider factors such as social support, environmental adaptation, and psychological adjustment, so as to develop more targeted intervention strategies. Elderly care institutions can facilitate faster adaptation to new environments and reduce the psychological stress caused by migration by organizing welcoming activities and establishing mutual aid groups.

2.3 The Psychological Demands of Climate Migration and the Relevance of Health and Wellness Activities

The core appeal of the migratory elderly care model lies in achieving the dual goals of health promotion and quality-of-life enhancement through climate migration. Elderly care institutions should fully understand the psychological demands of the migrant elderly and focus on meeting their aspiration for a better life in service design. By providing diversified health and wellness activities, these institutions can help the migrant elderly achieve physical and mental well-being. The design of modern health and wellness activities is gradually responding to such complex demands. At present, elderly care institutions in Sanya offer diversified services for the migrant elderly and foster a sense of belonging through cultural integration^[2].

The mechanisms by which climate factors affect the mental health of the elderly are complex and multifaceted. Suitable temperatures and adequate sunlight can improve emotional states, while beautiful natural environments help relieve stress. These practices indicate that high-quality health and wellness services should integrate both climate adaptation and social adaptation in order to fully meet the psychological demands of the migrant elderly. In the process of specific implementation, elderly care institutions can incorporate local cultural features and organize activities with regional characteristics to strengthen the migrant elderly’s sense of cultural identity and belonging.

2.4 The Current Supply of Health and Wellness Services in Hainan and the Shortcomings in Psychological Support

Health and wellness tourism activities in Hainan Province have significantly enhanced the safety and living comfort of the migrant elderly, providing institutional guarantees for the material foundation of their subjective well-being. However, compared with the rapidly developing hardware standards, the psychological support system within Hainan's residential elderly care services still shows obvious shortcomings. At present, attention to the migrant elderly primarily focuses on physiological health data, with a lack of specific provisions for psychological health assessment and intervention. Service content is also skewed toward activity organization and basic medical care, failing to systematically incorporate professional support such as psychological counseling and social skills training. This tendency to "emphasize the physical while neglecting the psychological" has resulted in many migrant elderly having their psychological needs neither promptly identified nor professionally addressed. In the future, it will be necessary to strengthen psychological health training for elderly care institution staff, improve their ability to identify and address psychological issues among the elderly, and at the same time refine relevant service standards to ensure the effective implementation of psychological support services.

From a governance perspective, the shortcomings in psychological support within Hainan's health and wellness services reflect gaps in policy implementation. Although national policy has explicitly required the incorporation of psychological health into the elderly health support system, local authorities in the process of implementation often prioritize visible and easily assessed hardware construction, while soft services—particularly the cultivation of professional psychological personnel—progress slowly. To address this issue, it is necessary to establish and improve assessment and incentive mechanisms, integrate psychological health services into the evaluation system of elderly care institutions, and promote the standardized and regularized development of psychological support services^[3].

3. The Mechanism by Which Participation in Health and Wellness Activities Affects Subjective Well-being

3.1 The Moderating Role of Health Status: Chronic Disease Management and Activity Adaptation

According to practical surveys, 34.8% of the elderly respondents had certain chronic diseases before migrating to Hainan, primarily cardiovascular, rheumatic, tracheal, and respiratory conditions. After relocating to Hainan, 48.2% of the elderly reported a significant improvement in their health levels, 3.57% indicated that some pre-existing ailments were almost completely healed, while 0.89% reported maladaptation or discomfort. This indicates that Hainan's unique climate produces a "winter health buffering effect" that alleviates many common elderly health conditions.

Individual health heterogeneity leads to differentiated benefits from participation. An elderly respondent with hypertension mentioned, "The doctor advised me to participate in Tai Chi during the cool morning hours and avoid high-temperature periods; after following this schedule, my blood pressure fluctuations decreased significantly." This highlights the importance of personalized activity design for elderly groups with chronic diseases. Research by Zhang Fen and other scholars on intergenerational support, elderly labor participation, and mental health shows that intergenerational support generally alleviates negative psychological stress, while labor participation not only mitigates negative psychological stress in the elderly but also provides positive and constructive emotional experiences.

3.2 The Synergistic Effect of Social Network Reconstruction: Cross-Regional Relationships and Sense of Belonging

Social networks influence the subjective well-being of middle-aged and elderly groups and can increase their participation in social activities while strengthening trust in others. In survey interviews, 50.89% of the elderly reported living in the same or adjacent communities as their relatives and friends, while 17.86% indicated that their nearest relatives or friends, although not in the same community, lived within 15 kilometers, making visits very convenient. This close-knit relationship represents a form of emerging community-based mutual aid elderly care, which significantly alleviates the loneliness of empty-nest elderly. The "Migrant Elderly Square Dance Alliance" integrates elements of

Northeast Yangge and Li ethnic firewood dance, with an interprovincial friendship formation rate among members reaching 81%. Experience sharing within homogeneous groups generates an “emotional resonance amplification effect”—when more than 60% of members have experience with out-of-area elderly care, individual adaptation speed increases by 2.3 times.

3.3 The Bidirectional Interaction of Cultural Integration and Meaning Perception

Cultural adaptation models indicate that adopting an “integration strategy,” which preserves original habits while absorbing local culture, results in the highest levels of well-being, 22 points higher than groups adopting a “separation strategy.” A Beijing elderly participant in the Betel Nut Valley folk experience described, “When learning to weave Li brocade, I taught the locals how to make northern-style noodles; this kind of two-way exchange is far more meaningful than simple tourism.” Retired migrant elderly generally possess high cultural literacy and a love for life, while Hainan offers local customs, cultural practices, and activities such as the Li ethnic “March Third” festival that facilitate interaction between the migrant elderly and local residents. Driven by novelty, such interactions not only allow the migrant elderly to engage with and integrate into Hainanese culture, enhancing their sense of life meaning, but also promote the exchange and flourishing of Hainanese culture with that of other provinces. Many migrant elderly previously worked as professionals in education, healthcare, science, and technology; their knowledge and experience represent an important resource for Hainan. Numerous migrant elderly also wish to remain active in later life, seeking to contribute while receiving self-recognition and achieving renewed value^[4].

3.4 The Indirect Influence of Economic Security and Policy Support

As an increasing number of elderly individuals choose out-of-area retirement, ensuring that they can access comprehensive social services and protections, and thereby experience higher levels of well-being, becomes increasingly important. In interviews, more than 23% of the elderly reported, “Compared with my hometown, community staff and neighbors in Hainan are more proactive in offering help,” and this perceived social support significantly alleviates the psychological stress of living away from home. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory indicates that once individuals are freed from the constraints of physiological needs, higher-level and more socially oriented needs may emerge. The emergence of the migratory elderly care model signifies that the migrant elderly are no longer limited to the fulfillment of basic living needs, and their need for self-actualization becomes more pronounced. Research data show that the migrant elderly population in Hainan largely consists of retired individuals with stable income and strong financial capacity, who also possess considerable consumption power for tourism-based retirement.

4. Pathways to Enhancing Subjective Well-being

4.1 Institutional Optimization: Cross-Regional Medical Insurance and Age-Friendly Environment Construction

In the field of cross-regional medical insurance, systematic policies can effectively address the difficulties migrant elderly face in accessing medical care and reimbursement. A comprehensive out-of-area medical insurance settlement system allows the migrant elderly not only to receive direct reimbursement for outpatient and inpatient services across provinces in Hainan, but also, by expanding the interoperability of multiple regional medical insurance catalogs, to enjoy the same level of medical protection in Hainan as in their original place of residence. This institutional guarantee eliminates uncertainties in medical expenses, thereby reducing health-related survival anxiety and feelings of helplessness among the migrant elderly in Hainan, which in turn helps relieve psychological stress and enhances subjective well-being^[5].

An ecological age-friendly environment system is created through two dimensions: physical space and social environment. Community “hard environments,” such as outdoor barrier-free designs with non-slip paving and rest pavilions, reflect life-oriented adaptation. Social and cultural “soft environments,” including the integration of local culture into senior centers, elderly associations, and community mutual aid systems supported by neighbors, address the social interaction dimension. When the basic needs of the migrant elderly—especially medical care, elderly care, and safety—are effectively met, they gain a stronger perception of the social support system that the Hainan community

provides for daily life. This perceived social support translates into a positive evaluation of life quality, thereby contributing to the enhancement of subjective well-being.

4.2 Strengthening Social Support: Group Interaction and Psychological Intervention

Group counseling interventions emphasize interaction within the group and constitute a primary strategy for effectively enhancing optimism. Their main purpose is to address common developmental issues or shared psychological obstacles among members. For the migrant elderly, group interaction can both improve individual optimistic emotions through collective support and enhance social perception abilities, thereby helping individuals establish new life goals and gradually reevaluate their current lifestyles. This form of intervention represents a particularly needed approach for the migrant elderly, a special group whose long-term community ties are disrupted by migration, resulting in challenges such as altered daily rhythms, environmental changes, and shifts in interpersonal relationships, which can easily lead to loneliness and diminished sense of presence. By sharing experiences of the migration process and discussing post-retirement life plans within the group, the migrant elderly can reconstruct their perspectives on elderly life. Practical activities and their outcome assessments demonstrate that marital status, coping strategies, and social support positively influence the subjective well-being of the elderly.

In group activities, a series of group psychological counseling techniques and small-group work methods can be employed, designing activities around key influencing factors. For example, cooperative-themed activities such as “Building Together” can initially strengthen group belonging among members, followed by one-on-one psychological counseling sessions that focus on resolving individual issues. Discussion-based methods further promote experience sharing and help participants envision the multidimensional possibilities of retirement life. According to Erikson’s life-span development theory, the core task of old age is achieving a sense of integrity, and group interaction provides a supportive environment for accomplishing this task, helping the elderly find life goals and meaning within diverse living contexts. The integrated application of these methods can effectively enhance overall optimism among the migrant elderly, enabling them, based on a clear understanding of their current life quality, to proactively establish life expectations aligned with their personal conditions, ultimately achieving a psychological state of high life satisfaction.

4.3 Value Realization: “Active Aging” and Role Reaffirmation

Participation in physical exercise interventions and meaningful activities has a positive effect on improving and enhancing the subjective well-being of the elderly. The frequency of activity participation is significantly positively correlated with the subjective well-being of the migrant elderly; the more frequently they engage in “active aging” activities, the stronger their sense of subjective well-being. “Active aging” represents a way for the migrant elderly to continue contributing and realizing their value during retirement, allowing them to exercise their roles and personal worth. Activity theory suggests that sustained social participation and engagement in social roles enhance positive self-image and emotions. Empirical evidence aligns with practices among the migrant elderly. For example, the Sanya Migrant Elderly “Silver Age Volunteer Medical Team” enables retired doctors to continue applying their professional expertise, providing voluntary medical services to 3,200 residents in remote Li villages in 2024. This not only addresses the shortage of medical resources in rural areas but also allows the migrant elderly to regain a sense of professional self-worth within doctor–patient interactions, fostering a positive perspective on life during retirement^[6].

4.4 Cultural Identity: Co-Construction of Collective Memory and Regional Emotional Connection

The co-construction of shared collective memory provides psychological and emotional support for group members and is an important factor in helping the migrant elderly adapt to unfamiliar environments. Shared stories constructed within collective memory foster a common sense of group belonging and help individuals readjust to new surroundings. Previous studies indicate that elderly participants in the experimental group showed significant differences in scores on the Newfoundland Happiness Scale before and after nostalgia therapy interventions. For migrant elderly relocating from Northeast China to Hainan, recounting shared stories of the War of Resistance, collective memories of national development in their youth, and recollections of past lives can bridge regional distances, alleviate loneliness in unfamiliar settings, and gradually cultivate emotional connections with their second homeland.

From a historical cognition perspective, Northeast builders recall the construction of the old industrial bases while sharing narratives of Hainan's development with the pioneering settlers there, allowing people from both regions to experience insights from different spatial processes in historical development, achieving complementary historical memory. Emotionally, whether it is the deep-seated memories of state-owned enterprises among Northeastern residents or the recollection of establishing Hainan as a special economic zone, shared reflection on the era of reform and the rapid changes in the nation acts as an emotional adhesive. In terms of local identity, participation in the co-construction of collective memory links individuals to their second homeland. According to interviews, 73% of the migrant elderly stated, "By attending these exchanges, I gained a deeper understanding of Sanya's history. Living here for a long time has left me with many feelings, and I hope I can contribute more to my second homeland." The deeper value lies in enabling the migrant elderly to transition from being mere tourists to becoming co-responsible cultural participants in health and wellness tourism activities, thereby deriving social value through constructing shared memory and enhancing their sense of happiness. Therefore, in the practice of health and wellness tourism for the migrant elderly, cultural exchange activities should be actively designed, such as discussions on regional culture or jointly creating regional memory journals, serving as vehicles to shorten psychological distance and enhance subjective well-being.

Fund Projects

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