

# *A Study on Social Participation of the Elderly in Tai'an City*

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**Abstract:** With the rapid acceleration of aging, social problems are becoming more and more prominent. How to let the elderly live a happy old age after their dedication to the society is a problem that the whole society cares about and needs to be solved sincerely. Taking the elderly in Tai'an City as the research object, this paper studies the relationship between social participation and satisfaction from four aspects: labor participation, interpersonal communication participation, social welfare participation and family participation under the background of healthy China strategy. The research shows that social participation can significantly improve the satisfaction of the elderly to life, and then puts forward countermeasures and suggestions to improve the initiative of social participation of the elderly from the aspects of promoting the health of the elderly, strengthening the participation of interpersonal communication, improving the salary level of the elderly, and detailing the implementation details of the law of children "go home often".

## 1. Introduction

In 2021, The State Council issued 《the 14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Cause for Aging and the Service System for the Aged》, which elevates the active response to aging as a national strategy and emphasizes the construction of a new development pattern featuring government-led development, social participation and action by the whole people with new development concepts to increase the social participation of the elderly. Since 2020, Tai'an City has started to build a professional brand for the aged -- "Tai'an for the aged • Tai Tai for the aged". It is expected that by the end of 2022, the matching rate and coverage rate of all residential pension facilities and community day pension centers will reach 100%. The pension infrastructure and the culture of caring for the aged are strong, and the concept of "respecting the aged and caring for the aged" is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people<sup>[1]</sup>.

## 2. Related Theoretical Research

### 2.1 The concept of social participation in old age

Social participation of the aged in a broad sense refers to all paid and free social activities that

the elderly participate in to satisfy their personal value or emotional needs under the condition of physical health. From the content of participation, it can be divided into material civilization construction and spiritual civilization construction<sup>[2]</sup>; From the form of participation, it can be divided into political participation, economic participation, cultural participation, family participation and so on. In the narrow sense, social participation of the elderly refers to the elderly making valuable contributions to others or society. This paper adopts the concept of "social participation of the aged" in a broad sense. Based on the above analysis, this paper divides the social participation of the elderly into four dimensions: labor participation, interpersonal interaction participation, public welfare participation and family participation. Each dimension is subdivided into different indicators, as shown in fig 1.

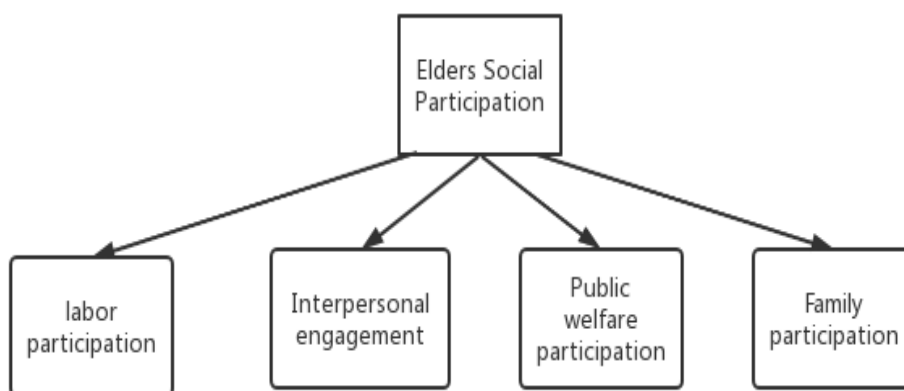


Figure 1: Dimension division of social participation of the elderly

## 2.2 Basic theory of social participation in old age

### 2.2.1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs

American psychologist Abraham Maslow (1943) used a pyramid structure to divide people's endless needs into five categories from low to high: physical needs, safety needs, emotional and belonging needs, needs to be respected, and needs to be self-actualized<sup>[3]</sup>. On the basis of this theory, this paper focuses on the spiritual needs of the elderly, that is, after meeting the physiological needs such as food, clothing, housing, wages and welfare, and the safety needs such as seeing a doctor and seeking medical treatment, through which channels to achieve a higher level of "self-realization" needs.

### 2.2.2 Theory of sustained activity in old age

Havighurst (1963) proposed the theory of continuous activity in old age. The theory suggests that the most important way for older people to enjoy higher levels of satisfaction in later life is to increase their social activity and participation by all means. This theory is also one of the important theories chosen in this paper to support the social participation of the elderly<sup>[4]</sup>. The significance of the theory of social participation for the elderly lies in reminding us to encourage the elderly to participate in all social activities within their power with a positive attitude and value orientation, and to provide more opportunities and conditions for the elderly to participate in social activities<sup>[5]</sup>.

### 3. Study design

#### 3.1 Sample Source and Variables Selection

##### 3.1.1 Sample Source

In this survey, 259 valid questionnaires were collected from the elderly aged 60 and above in Tai'an City, which could meet the needs of the study from the perspective of quantity and quality.

##### 3.1.2 Variables Selection

###### Dependent variable

The dependent variable chosen in this study is the life satisfaction of the elderly, which is measured by "whether you are satisfied with your life in general" and divided into (0= "dissatisfied", 1= "satisfied").

###### Independent variable

This study takes social participation as the core independent variable and measures it through four dimensions, namely labor participation, interpersonal interaction participation, public welfare participation and family participation. Among them, there are three questions about labor participation: (whether they engaged in paid labor after retirement, the amount of time they engaged in paid labor in the past six months, and the monthly income they engaged in paid labor participation). There are four questions about interpersonal skills participation: (the number of visits to relatives and friends in the past month (0= none, 1= yes); Frequency of participation in recreation and fitness activities (0= none, 1= yes); Types of recreation and fitness activities (1=1, 2= 2, 3= 3, 4= 4, 5= 5); Participate in learning and training (0= none, 1= yes). In addition, they also ask whether they participate in community public welfare and whether they participate in community public welfare. In order to study, these two questions need to be re-coded into a new independent variable "participation in social welfare" and included in the model (0= none, 1= yes). The independent variable of family participation mainly asks whether to take care of grandchildren and help children with housework (0= none ,1= yes).

###### Control Variables

Control variables include individual characteristics of the elderly and family structure, among which individual characteristics control variables include: gender (male = 1,0 = female), household registration (1= urban, 0= rural), health status of the elderly (1= healthy, 0= unhealthy), education background (0= lower than high school, 1= high school or above). Family structure control variables include: number of children (0= none, 1= yes), frequency of children's care for the elderly (1= yes, 0= no), and pension (1= pension, 0= no pension).

#### 3.2 Research hypotheses

Based on previous research results, this paper attempts to establish a difference model of individual and family characteristics of the elderly (Model 1) and a social participation model (Model 2), and uses binary logistics regression to verify whether there is a significant relationship between independent variable social participation and dependent variable satisfaction and the influencing factors. Therefore, the following research hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Older seniors are more satisfied than younger seniors.

Hypothesis 2: Older people in good health are more satisfied than those in poor health.

Hypothesis 3: Those whose children care more about the elderly are more satisfied than those whose children care less.

Hypothesis 4: The older people with more social participation have higher satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4a: The older people who are more involved in interpersonal communication are more satisfied.

Hypothesis 4b: The longer the labor participation after retirement, the lower the satisfaction of the elderly.

Hypothesis 4c: Older people with more income from labor participation have higher satisfaction

### 3.3 Model Construction

The inference statistical research method is mainly to study the life satisfaction of the elderly through logistics binary regression, which is mainly used to analyze the influence of social participation of the elderly on life satisfaction, so as to understand the current situation of life satisfaction of the elderly in Tai 'an city, and put forward reasonable conclusions and countermeasures. The equation of the model is:

$$\ln \frac{P}{(1-P)} = \beta_0 + \sum_{i=0}^n \beta_i X_i$$

$\beta_0$  is the constant term,  $X_i$  is the independent variable, and the independent variables in this paper include social participation (labor participation, interpersonal participation, public interest participation, family participation), and  $\beta_i$  is the regression coefficient.

## 4. Analysis of Empirical Results

### 4.1 Statistical model

Table 1: Relationship between social participation and satisfaction of the elderly

	Model1	Model2
	life satisfaction	life satisfaction
Sex	0.602 (0.766)	3.507 (2.510)
Age	0.206* (0.098)	0.742* (0.334)
Account	1.024 (1.622)	5.428+ (2.826)
Physical condition	1.687* (0.744)	2.587+ (1.401)
Education background	0.635 (0.855)	4.070 (2.529)
Number of children	-0.381 (1.074)	0.682 (1.992)
The frequency of caring for the elderly	2.069** (0.749)	4.539* (1.905)
Pension or not	-1.369 (1.452)	-7.819 (4.970)
Whether to engage in paid labor after retirement		1.571 (1.907)
Paid labor hours		-9.774* (4.495)
Monthly income from labor		7.164* (3.127)
Number of visits to relatives and friends		7.919* (3.292)
Frequency of recreation/fitness activities		4.623 (3.421)
Types of recreation/fitness activities		0.053 (0.891)

Participate in training and learning		0.144
		(1.611)
Participate in social welfare		0.212
		(1.585)
Family participation		-0.841
		(1.556)
_cons	-11.478*	-59.423*
	(5.832)	(26.095)
<i>N</i>	259	259
pseudo $R^2$	0.243	0.599

Standard errors in parentheses <sup>+</sup>  $p < 0.1$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

This paper adopted the binary logistics regression model to estimate the impact of social participation on life satisfaction of the elderly in Tai 'an city, and tested how different types of social participation affected the outcome variables. Two models were built in total, Model 1 and Model 2. Model 1 describes the influence of individual characteristics and family structure on satisfaction of the elderly. Model 2 takes individual characteristics and family structure in Model 1 as control variables, and on this basis adds the core independent variable of social participation. It focuses on analyzing whether labor participation, interpersonal interaction participation, social welfare participation and family participation as sub-independent variables have a significant impact on satisfaction. Table 1 reports the evaluation results of the model.

## 4.2 Correlation Analysis

Model 1 shows that individual characteristics and family structure of the elderly have a significant impact on satisfaction, which supports hypothesis 1, 2 and 3. To summarize Model 1, the conclusion is that the satisfaction of the elderly is significantly related to their age, health status and whether their children care for them, which is consistent with previous studies of scholars.

In Model 2, after controlling variables reflecting body characteristics such as gender, age, household registration category, health status and number of children, the core independent variable of social participation is added, and the impact of social participation on dependent variable life satisfaction is analyzed. As can be seen from the evaluation results reported by the model, at the significance level of 0.05, the variable of visiting relatives and friends is significantly positively correlated with satisfaction, so this conclusion can support hypothesis 4a. In addition, the paid working hours variable of the elderly has a significant negative correlation with their satisfaction, indicating that the longer the elderly work, the lower their satisfaction. This conclusion supports hypothesis 4b. We can also see that the variable of monthly income of paid labor participation has a significant positive correlation with satisfaction, indicating that the older people with higher monthly income of labor participation have higher life satisfaction. Therefore, the conclusion supports hypothesis 4c. Other variables in the model: frequency of participation in entertainment and fitness activities, type of participation in entertainment and fitness activities, participation in social welfare, family participation and other independent variables have no impact on satisfaction. Model 2 is summarized, and the conclusion is that there is a significant positive correlation between elderly satisfaction and social participation, so hypothesis 4 is accepted. The conclusion gives us a revelation that: for the elderly, compared with material pension, spiritual pension conducted by increasing social participation can bring more happiness and satisfaction to the elderly.

## 5. Conclusions

Because the satisfaction of the elderly is positively correlated with age, health status and the frequency of children's care for them; Labor participation time is negatively correlated with satisfaction; There is a positive correlation between monthly income of labor participation and

satisfaction, and a negative correlation between working hours and satisfaction. Therefore, this paper believes that to improve the satisfaction of the elderly in the future, more targeted countermeasures and suggestions should be put forward from the aspects of paying attention to the health of the elderly, increasing the frequency of children's care for the elderly, and promoting the social participation of the elderly. The realization of "personal value" and "social value" of the elderly is combined, through improving the level of social participation of the elderly to improve the satisfaction of the elderly.

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