

## A Research Summary of the Elderly's Living Condition in China

Bei Feng

Master Degree Candidate, School of Public Administration and Law  
Southwest Jiao Tong University  
Email: 491174356@qq.com

### Abstract

Population aging is a major feature of China's population in the current and future period. It is a major problem in the future development of whether it can correctly and actively respond to the aging of the population. At the same time, urban and rural living conditions related to the national development of the overall situation and hundreds of millions of people well-being. To be effective in coping with the aging of the population, we must first have a correct understanding and overall grasp of the living conditions of the urban and rural elderly. Strictly speaking, at present, China's social system and policy system failed to respond to the changes in the population structure of the elderly in a timely and effective response, adjustment and optimization, making the elderly living conditions have been unprecedented challenges. Therefore, this paper aims to comb the domestic and foreign research on the living conditions of the elderly population theory and practice results, on the one hand is conducive to the study of the living conditions of the elderly to provide theoretical and practical basis to form a certain research framework system; On the other hand, it is beneficial to understand the current living conditions of the elderly in our country. Under the background of increasing aggravation, we will clarify the gap between the living conditions and the needs of the elderly, find out the balance mechanism, improving the social support and can effectively prevent the aging brings a range of problems and future crises.

**Key words:** aging of population; elderly's needs, living condition; living quality; social support

### Introduction

According to the UN standard, if a country or a region of people aged 60 and above accounted for the proportion of the total population reached 10% or aged 65 and above accounted for the proportion of the total population reached 7%, then this country or region is known as the aging

society. In 2001, the population over the age of 65 of China has reached 7% , entered into the aging society;

**\*Corresponding author.**

E-mail address:

(Rupesh Ajinath Pawar)

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About in 2025 this proportion will reached 14%, enter into the aged society; About in 2040 this proportion will reached

aging of population will also show the characteristics of the elderly population, especially the elderly, disabled and semi disabled elderly population continues to grow, the scale will increase a lot, the social

In the 21st century known as "elderly century", to ensure the survival and development of the elderly, to improve the living conditions of the elderly, to improve the quality of life of the elderly is an important topic in front of us. This is not only related to whether the elderly in their later years of life is happy and health, whether the overall social welfare is reasonable growth, but also related to whether the future economy can growth healthy, whether the society is harmony and stability as well as whether the region and the country's comprehensive competitiveness can be improved. The elderly is the last stage of the whole life cycle, both has the happy memories of past and the pessimistic mood of life. On the one hand, because of the social role change, after the elderly quit the labor market, they change from social participants to social bystanders, in this process, the elderly psychological often become sensitive and fragile and often feel lonely, confused. On the other hand, the health status of the elderly gradually becomes poor, organ

21%, enter into the super aged society. China will spend 26 years to finish the aging process in developed countries more than half a century. The future development of burden become heavier, the problem of urban and rural elderly population living is highlighted, the elderly empty nest and living alone families accelerated.

gradually aging, function gradually decline, memory

gradually fuzzy, action gradually slow, thinking and physical strength are greatly weakened, and the

elderly is the high incidence stage of chronic disease. Everything will be experienced from prosperity to decline. Life and death is the law of life.

Besides, the health status of the elderly is the foundation of their living conditions, poor health status often causes the change of the elderly psychological, so that they become pessimistic and vulnerable. At the same time, the study found that poor health status is the main reason for the mobility of the elderly, which makes them more dependent on the outside. After the elderly quit the labor market, their income will be affected, the source of income will become single, the level of income will decline. It is difficult for the elderly to increase their income through labor for physical reasons, and their economic autonomy is limited. Whether it is from the social status, physical and mental health or

economic income, the elderly living conditions are more likely to fall into trouble.

Therefore, to study the living conditions of the elderly in urban and rural areas, such as the basic situation of the elderly, family status, health status, medical status, nursing status, economic status, rights status, livable environment, social participation and cultural life and other aspects. On the one hand is conducive to supplement the current study on the living conditions of the elderly,

formatting a certain theoretical research results; On the other hand, it is helpful to clarify the gap between the living conditions of the elderly and their needs, find a balance mechanism and effectively prevent a series of problems and crises brought about by aging in the background of the degree of aging is increasing.

### **Concept Definition**

According to the the explanation of "Ci Hai", the basic meaning of "life" is the survival. Life can be understood as the survival and development of the various activities, then the living conditions can be understood as the satisfaction of the objective conditions and subjective conditions for a certain individual or group, for example, survival needs, enjoy needs and development needs. Chen Chengwen (1999) believes that the standard of living is the same concept can

replace the living conditions. In real life, people often put the living conditions and the quality of life together to consider. He divided the living conditions of the elderly into seven aspects: income source status, maintenance status, daily living status (including material life, spiritual life and daily household chores), health status, care status, family status, and psychological feelings. Liu Yulin (2005) based on the comparison of the quality of life of the elderly and the ordinary people, from three different angles of the subjective and objective, macro and micro, supply and demand, analysis of the quality of life of the elderly included in the content, on this basis he gives the general meaning of the life quality of the elderly: it refers to the extent of the elderly healthy supply and the satisfaction of the elderly healthy needs. It based on certain material conditions, the elderly's sense of identity in life and social environment. From the questionnaire design of the fourth sampling survey about the elderly living conditions in urban and rural areas of China, we can see that the living conditions of the elderly in China mainly include the basic situations as: family status, health status, care care status, economic status, livable environmental conditions, social participation, rights and spiritual and cultural life status and other major areas.

## **Related Studies**

### **The Research of Current Situation of the Elderly's Living Condition**

Many studies have shown that social support and the quality of life of the elderly have a strong correlation. At present, the research on the living conditions of the elderly is divided into two aspects. One is the needs of the elderly and its satisfaction. Li Jianxing et al. (1997) focused on the discussion of the elderly psychological needs and its satisfaction. Xiang Manjun et al. (1997) explored the factors that determine the healthy self-evaluation of the elderly from the aspects of physical health, mental health, humanities, economy and family relationship. They used the "Beijing Urban Aging Multidimensional Longitudinal Research" topic of 1992 survey data, analysis of 2543 cases, over the age of 60 urban and rural health self-evaluation and related factors. Multivariate and stepwise analysis showed that the relationship between mental and physical health and health self-evaluation is very strong; age, economic and other related low. And they pointed out that the self-evaluation of health reflects the needs of the elderly and the mental health of the elderly, which is a simple and feasible index with clear and practical significance. Lin Ge et al. (1999) paid more attention to the influential factors of life care for the elderly. They proposed a model of social security system for the elderly in combination with family and community services. Yao Yinmei (1997)

focused on the elderly medical care conditions and the health care needs, analyzed the changes in the number of elderly people, the distribution of urban and rural areas, and the characteristics of geriatric disease in health care services. On this basis. She conducted a detailed study on the allocation of health resources and utilization efficiency in China. The results showed that the current allocation of health resources in China is not reasonable and can not meet the needs of the population aging. In view of the existing problems, how to adapt the allocation of health resources in the future to the population aging society, she has put forward countermeasures and ideas.

And the other is from a macro perspective to study on the living conditions of the elderly.

Liao Xiaocheng (2013) extracted the data of the elderly in Beijing from The Third National Women's Social Status Survey in 2010, analyzed the living conditions and social support system of the elderly in Beijing, and finally draw up the ideas and countermeasures of improving the social support system of the elderly. In order to understand the living conditions of the elderly and seek measures to improve their quality of life. He Xiaoqin (2010) through the random sampling survey method, in Huzhou survey of 200 people over the age of 60 to explore the living conditions of the elderly. The results showed that the quality of life of the elderly needs to be improved,

and the improvement of the quality of life of the elderly must be ensured through the comprehensive effect of four aspects: family, community, industry and policy. Zhang Lin, Ning Yanhua et al. (2011) showed the results of multiple linear regression analysis on the quality of life and the influencing factors of the elderly in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. The factors affecting the physiology field of the elderly are chronic diseases, monthly income, age and gender; The factors affecting the psychological field of the elderly are chronic diseases, monthly income and age; The factors affecting the social relationship field of the elderly are marital status, age and the nature of the original work unit; The factors affecting the environment field of the elderly are monthly income and age; The factors affecting the quality of life field of the elderly are chronic diseases, monthly income, age and marital status. And concluded that the main influencing factors of the quality of life of the elderly in Yinchuan were age, marital status, gender, monthly income, chronic disease and the nature of the original work unit.

On the study of life satisfaction of the elderly, scholars from different elderly groups, different perspectives of the study. Xiong Yuegen (1999) used the data of the questionnaire survey of the elderly in

Changchun in 1997, analyzed the subjective evaluation index of the elderly and measured the satisfaction degree of their life, and revealed the gender difference of the satisfaction degree. Under the premise of correlation analysis, the main factors influencing this variable are further analyzed by using multiple regression. From the results of the study, the elderly's own economic status, health and inter-generational relationship affected the elderly's assessment of their life satisfaction, and the first two factors influenced more significantly. He pointed out that in the case of social economic changes, the basic income protection, good inter-generational relations and be in good health are the important reasons affecting the quality of the elderly's life. Wang Cuirong, Deng Zhiqiang (2007) explored the living conditions of the elderly, they believe that the elderly because of the low level of education, the poor health conditions and the high rate of widowhood leading to their living conditions are very serious. Chen Chengwen (1999) in the city poor living conditions of the elderly as the research object, he found that city poor living conditions of the elderly are generally not optimistic, their income level is low, often make ends meet, which led to their material living standards are very low, and the low level of material quality has a direct impact

on their health, spiritual life, family relationships, life satisfaction, and affordability. Han Mei, Hou Yunxia (2009) in the rural living conditions of the elderly showed that the rural elderly income sources are very limited, their income levels are generally low, but because of their lower expectations of life, so the rural elderly life satisfaction is relatively high.

### **The Research of Evaluation Index of the Elderly's Living Condition**

The first is about the selection of evaluation index of the elderly's living condition.

Zhou Haiwang, Gao Hui et al. (2009) used the track record of the elderly population status in Shanghai for 1998, 2003 and 2005 for three consecutive years. This paper made a longitudinal comparative analysis of the three factors, the economic, health and living, that affect the quality of life of the elderly in Shanghai. What's more, this paper studied the present situation, the changing characteristics and the existing problems of the quality of life of the elderly in Shanghai, and put forward the countermeasures to further improve the quality of life of the elderly. Chen Caixia (2003) used the data of Beijing residents living conditions to compare the five urban and rural needs of the elderly, including economic status, medical condition, care needs, psychological feelings, daily living conditions and life satisfaction. She found that, from the economic conditions, medical

conditions and care needs, the urban elderly living conditions and satisfaction are both higher than the rural elderly; From the psychological feelings of urban and rural areas without major differences between the

elderly; Although in urban, the daily living conditions are better, but the rural elderly are more satisfied than the urban elderly. What is more, she said that in the overall satisfaction of the life, urban and rural areas there is no significant difference between the elderly, this explanation still need further study. Li Jin (2013) selected the elderly at home in Shanghai as the object of study, on the basis of exploring the community pension and its theoretical evidence, from four aspects analyzed the elderly living conditions, as the economic, health, life care, spiritual comfort. Han Mei, Hou Yun-xia (2009) analyzed the living conditions of rural elderly from the aspects of living style, economic status, medical condition, leisure activities, endowment way and endowment view. Guo Yuanyuan (2012) in the view of the aging of population, taking R village as an example, according to the field investigation data, discussing the living conditions and quality of the rural elderly, food out many practical problems, explored the causes of their problems and background, and finally gave the appropriate solution path and recommendations. Wang Qing (2012) took a village in Shanxi as the research object, and

studied the living conditions of the elderly from four aspects: economic support, daily care, spiritual comfort and health care. Wei Longbao, Xu Xueling et al. (2008) conducted an empirical study on the factors influencing the well-being of urban and rural elderly people based on an investigation on subjective well-being of the elderly in urban and rural areas of Hangzhou. The study found that urban elderly people have stronger subjective well-being than rural elderly. Children's filial piety is the most important factor affecting the subjective well-being of the urban and rural elderly; economic status, community satisfaction, marriage and gender are also common factors, but there are differences between urban and rural areas. In addition, in the urban model, the personal factors such as the degree of self-care and the number of children have a significant effect on the subjective well-being of the elderly. In the rural model, the economic source and the way of after the infringement of the rights and interests are significant to the subjective well-being of the elderly. In short, the needs of improving the quality of life are different between urban and rural elderly, the urban elderly have focused on the needs for the spirit, while the rural elderly thought that the most important thing is to meet the material needs. Sitawa R. Kimuna (2005) explored the impact of gender, number of children and

marital status on living arrangements (whether shared with people) and living conditions in Zimbabwe. Alban Ylli(2008) studied the impact of poverty, social participation, and health on the living conditions of the elderly in Albania, where the aging of the population is aggravated and the economy is facing a transition. Li Ting (2011) based on the survey of urban and rural elderly population status in Yichang City, conducted an empirical study on the intergenerational relationship between the family and the living conditions of the elderly. The purpose is to reveal the current situation of intergenerational relationship between rural families and their perception of

living conditions of the elderly.

The second is about the selection of research method of the elderly's living condition.

Liu Yulin, Zhao Qing et al. (2006) using K-MEANS clustering analysis method, from the healthy life, material life, family life, spiritual life, living environment and other indicators of the quality of life of the elderly to start an empirical study of the impact of the quality of life of the elderly. Liu Jing (2008) based on the definition of the quality of life of urban elderly at home and the factors influencing the quality of life of urban elderly at home, this paper established a hierarchical analysis model to evaluate the

quality of life of urban residents in China. This quality of life evaluation model includes six dimensions: economic status and consumption level, living conditions and family facilities, physical health and mental health, social support, leisure life quality, life satisfaction evaluation. Sun Yuhua (2013) based on the survey data of elderly people living in Qiqihar, descriptive statistical analysis and ordered multivariate logistic regression analysis were carried out on the status and influencing factors (demographic factors, socioeconomic factors, lifestyle factors and health status factors, etc.) of health self-evaluation of the elderly. On the basis of defining the connotation of the quality of life of the elderly, Liu Yulin (2005) used the analytic hierarchy process to analyze and construct the index system and the weight determination of the quality of life of the elderly population. This has laid a more concrete and operational basis for judging and improving the quality of life of the elderly in China. Li Jianxin (2007) based on the China Health and Longevity Survey Data in 2002, considering the social characteristics of the population and the health variables, the Stereotype Ordinal Logit model was used to analyze the impact of social support on the quality of life of the elderly population in China from different dimensions. The results showed that social support has a positive impact on the different aspects of the quality of life of the elderly, and social support from different

sources has different effects on the quality of life of the elderly. Liu Jing (2011) using the factor analysis method, from the six dimensions of the quality of life of elderly living at home assessment of city, that is, economic status and consumption level, living conditions and family facilities, physical health and mental health, social support, leisure life quality, life satisfaction evaluation. The quality of life of the elderly population in 8 urban communities was evaluated and sorted out in the survey of the elderly population status and willingness in Shanghai. A number of representative indicators in the urban elderly living quality index system were re-aggregated into new factors.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

In summary, with the increase in the degree of population aging, the demand for all aspects of the elderly is rising. At present, more and more domestic and foreign scholars have realized that the

elderly's living conditions and quality of life problems. Especially the empty nest, living alone and the rural poor elderly life problems, including economic status and consumption level, living conditions and family facilities, physical status and psychological status, social support and security level, leisure life quality and life satisfaction evaluation and so on. Concerned and studied the elderly's living conditions and the quality of life issues, in fact, is concerned and study the development of population and balanced sustainability. So



as to provide scientific basis for the formulation of population policy and corresponding supporting policies in the future, which is one of the important paths to actively deal with the irrational population aging situation. Therefore, based on the background of aging of population, a comprehensive study of the living conditions of the elderly has become a scholar's research tendencies. Scholars are committed to understanding the elderly's living condition in urban and rural, found the problems that exist, seek the measures to improve the quality of the elderly's life, and from the theoretical and practical point of view, they put forward the idea of building a social support system to enhance the elderly life satisfaction. The existing research at home and abroad not only provides a clear research direction, but also forms a more mature theory, model and method research system, for the follow-up research has laid a solid theoretical and practical basis. But, there are still several problems of existing research as follows: (1) Survey data. China's existing survey data sample capacity is small, the country's representation is not enough. (2) Investigate the content. The existing data are concentrated on the economic status, health status and mental condition of the elderly, lack of research on the social participation and rights of the elderly, and the description of the

living conditions of the elderly is not perfect.

(3) Research methods. More focused on a single quantitative analysis, such as cluster analysis and factor analysis, making the conclusions of the lack of persuasive and systematic.

From the research point of view, the elderly on the pension, medical, service, housing, rights,

relief, culture, participation, industry, there is a great demand, all aspects of a huge room for improvement, Which shows China's aging population to solve the problem of life of the elderly population of great responsibility, and the task is arduous. Therefore, we must firmly grasp the "Shi San Wu" this response to the aging population of the last window period, in accordance with the central "Wu Wei Yi Ti" overall layout and "Si Ge Quan Mian" strategic layout, standing in the national overall strategic height, conscientiously organize the implementation of a positive response to population aging strategy, build the system, perfect and comprehensive public policy to deal with aging, to solve the problem of living in the elderly population. Based on the complexity and long-term nature of the aging problem, it is not enough to rely solely on the fertility policy or the old-age welfare policy. To achieve timely, scientific, comprehensive response to the aging population,

concerned about the living conditions of the elderly, improve the quality of life of the elderly, enrich the living content of the elderly, the need to build a systematic public policy system, covering all aspects of life, basic necessities of life and other fields. What is more, we should stand in the social whole, inter-generational and long-term development point of view, in the short term to meet the real needs of the elderly, at the same time, do a good job of long-term comprehensive response to the aging of the population, and ultimately achieve sustainable development of the society , For the elderly to create a comfortable living environment.

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