

Determinants of Social Activities among Older People in China:

An Analysis of Community Factors

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Background

China has the largest aging population and this aging trend is exacerbated by the one-child policy. The issue of older people's social integration outside family will only be increasingly more important. Few studies have been conducted to determine factors affecting engagement in social activities by older people in China. We investigate the opportunity structure, namely, community factors, that may influence engagement in these activities (non-market productive activities and leisure activities).

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

1. Special context in China:

- Since the 1980s, China has reformed local communities, which become the distributors of welfare [1]. *Administrative offices* may be crucial in organizing residents' participation and activities.

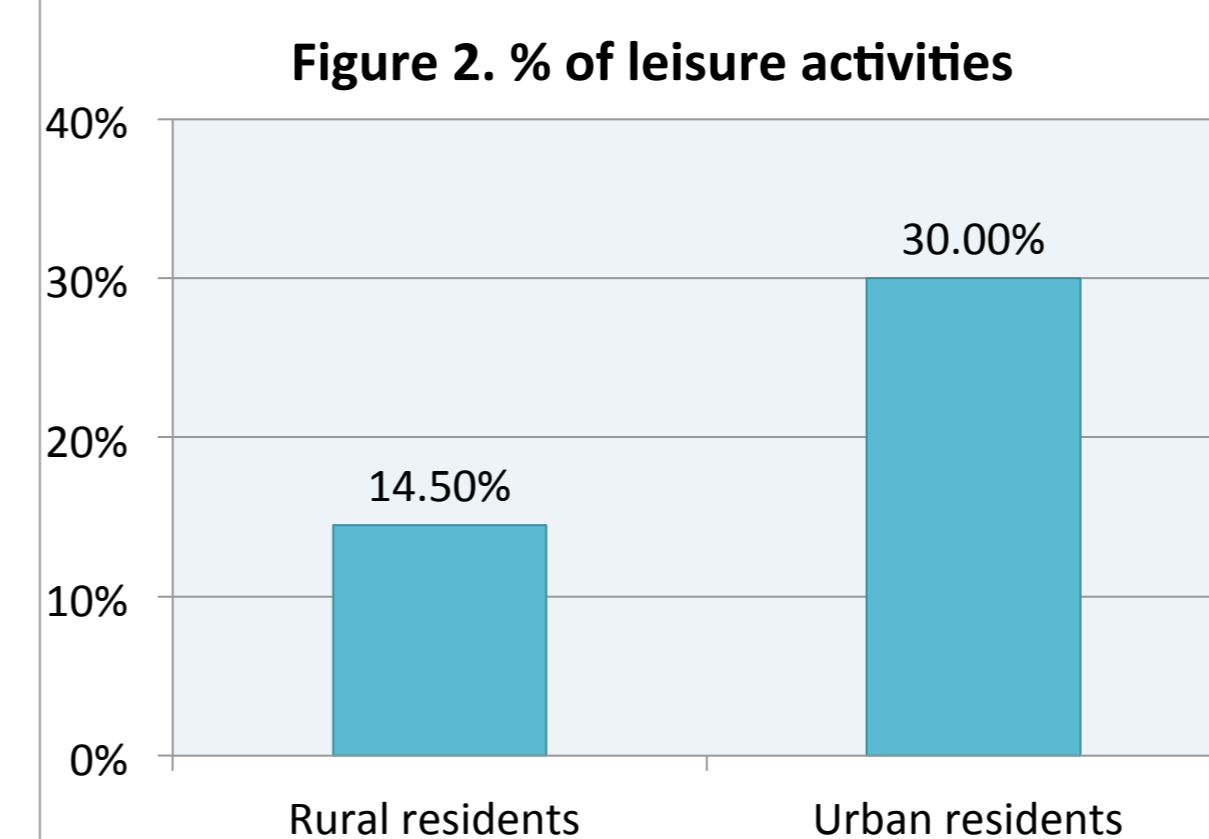
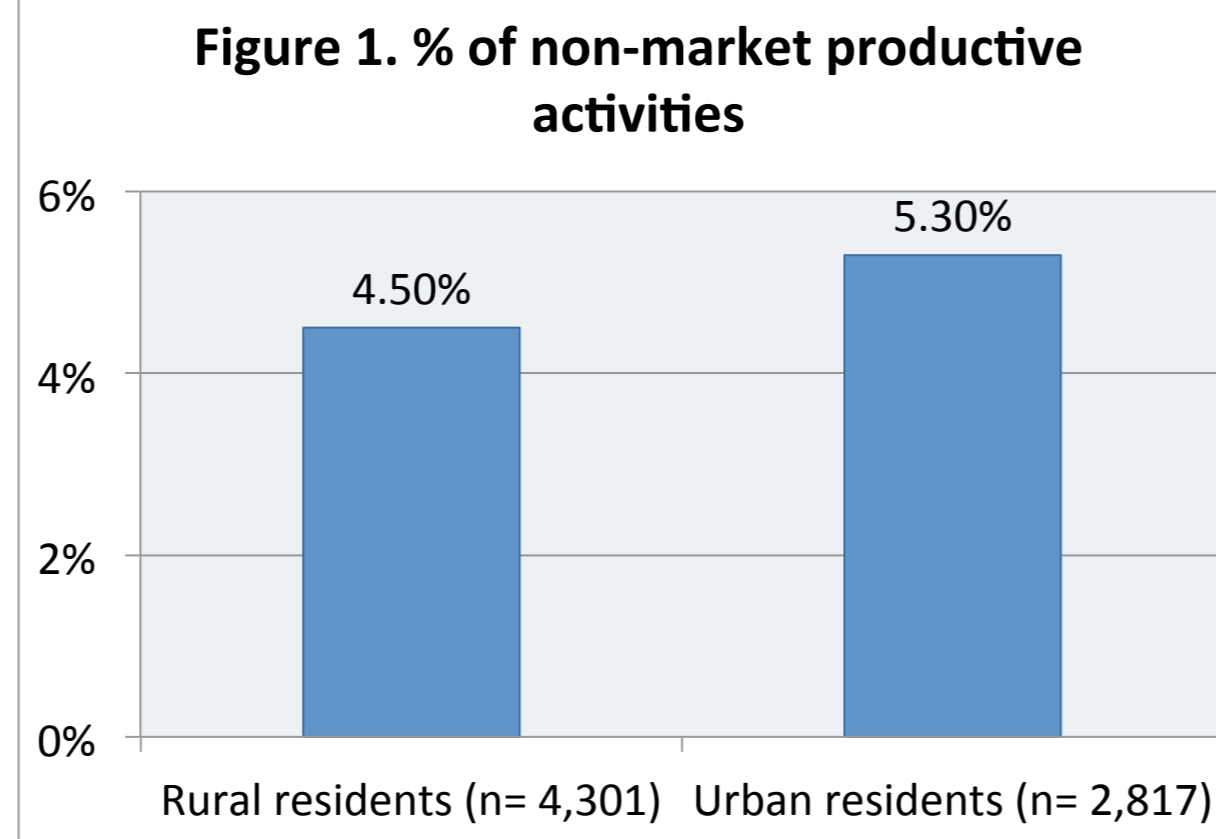
2. Demographic/Environmental dimension:

- The *community/neighborhood socioeconomic status (SES)* is associated with stable residence, which may help residents develop deeper ties and do volunteering [2].
- Community issues* like pollution and social problems may increase residents' awareness to join community help organizations [3].

3. Institutional dimension:

- Community facilities and infrastructure* determine whether individuals have the mobility to participate physically and socially [4].
- Public transportation* affects the ability of older people to reach clubs or join social events [5].
- Pensions* provide economic security, enabling the freedom to engage in productive social activities [6].

Descriptive Results: Figures of Participation Rates



Interference Results: Table 1. Productive Activities

Variables	Rural respondents		Urban respondents	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Years a community office has existed		1.03* (0.01)		1.00 (0.01)
Variety of community facilities				
0 (ref.)		1.00		1.00
1-2		1.31 (0.58)		1.23 (1.02)
>2		1.06 (0.61)		1.78 (1.34)
Accessible bus				
0 (ref.)		1.00		1.00
1		1.80 (0.78)		5.14* (3.82)
>1		0.78 (0.46)		4.73* (3.12)
Having a pollution problem		0.78 (0.46)		0.48 (0.27)
Pensions to older people above 65		1.04 (0.51)		0.48 (0.25)
% of residents at middle-school level				
0-20% (ref.)		1.00		1.00
>20%		0.68 (0.31)		1.22 (0.56)
σ^2_{η}	4.39 (1.34)	4.81 (1.63)	3.23 (1.37)	3.35 (1.62)
σ^2_{ν}	3.60 (0.95)	3.43 (1.01)	3.19 (0.95)	2.90 (0.99)
$\rho_{\eta\nu}$	0.71	0.71	0.66	0.66
ρ_{ν}	0.32	0.30	0.32	0.30
LR test vs. logistic regression	165.95***	135.86***	120.63***	84.23***

Table 2. Leisure Activities

Variables	Rural respondents		Urban respondents	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Years a community office has existed		1.00 (0.01)		1.00 (0.01)
Variety of community facilities				
0 (ref.)		1.00		1.00
1-2		1.19 (0.26)		3.48** (1.45)
>2		2.43** (0.67)		5.67*** (2.17)
Accessible bus				
0 (ref.)		1.00		1.00
1		1.28 (0.28)		1.34 (0.44)
>1		1.02 (0.29)		1.59 (0.45)
Having a pollution problem		0.78 (0.24)		0.63 (0.16)
Pensions to older people above 65		1.28 (0.31)		0.79 (0.19)
% of residents at middle-school level				
0-20% (ref.)		1.00		1.00
>20%		0.88 (0.20)		0.87 (0.19)
σ^2_{η}	1.16(0.36)	1.94 (0.54)	2.19 (0.50)	1.86 (0.50)
σ^2_{ν}	1.05(0.21)	1.02 (0.23)	1.66 (0.32)	0.83 (0.21)
$\rho_{\eta\nu}$	0.40	0.47	0.54	0.45
ρ_{ν}	0.19	0.16	0.23	0.14
LR test vs. logistic regression	159.84***	120.96***	268.85***	107.11***

Note: numbers are in odds ratio (Std. Err.); *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Method & Data

- Data:** The first wave of the China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study (CHARLS). Respondents were above 60 years old (n= 7,118) in urban (210) and rural communities (237).
- DV:** Non-market productive activities (help, volunteering and care) and leisure activities (such as sports, Majong, etc.). **IV:** % of residents who completed middle school; pollution; variety of community facilities; years a community office has existed; no. of accessible buses, and issuance of pensions (control variables not listed).
- Method:** 3- level Multilevel models for dichotomous data (individual, household and community)

Conclusions

- A unique Chinese context:** Hierarchical administrative offices seem to influence participation by older people in social activities in rural communities.
- Institutional efforts matter:** Transportation and community facilities affect older people's participation in both rural and urban areas
- The limitation of the study:** Cross-sectional data should be interpreted as correlations instead of causal relationships.

References

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