

Research on the Social Needs and Motivation of "Migratory Birds" under the Construction of Hainan Free Trade Port

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of the construction of the Hainan Free Trade Port and the increasing social mobility of the elderly, coupled with the continuous improvement of residents' living standards, the "snowbird-style" off-site elderly care model is gradually becoming an accepted form of elderly care. This study, employing methods such as literature review, on-site observation, and in-depth interviews, thoroughly analyzes the needs and motivations of the "snowbird" population, considering the current policy environment for off-site elderly care, the satisfaction of elderly care needs, and the social integration of snowbird elderly individuals. Based on these findings, practical strategies and recommendations are proposed to optimize the off-site elderly care services in Sanya City. The aim is to earnestly address the social and psychological needs of snowbird elderly individuals, fulfill their elderly care service requirements, and facilitate the rapid and healthy development of the "snowbird-style" off-site elderly care service industry. This, in turn, effectively contributes to the construction of the Hainan Free Trade Port.

Keywords: Free Trade Port Construction; Snowbird Population; Social Needs and Motivations

1. Research Background

The construction of the Hainan Free Trade Port is not only a crucial path for domestic economic development but also a significant initiative for trade liberalization, promoting economic growth, and international cooperation. The construction of the Free Trade Port is a key avenue to elevate China's future consumption levels, bringing about a high-quality life for residents. With the increase in economic income and improvement in living standards, the pursuit of a comfortable life has given rise to seasonal cross-regional elderly care. Elderly individuals residing in colder regions migrate to the warm South China during winter, forming a group known as "migratory elderly."

With the advent of an aging society, the issue of how the growing elderly population will receive care has garnered nationwide attention. In response, the country encourages and advocates for socialized elderly care, making the elderly service industry a focal point of national development. The "Decision on Several Major Issues Regarding Comprehensively Deepening Reforms" issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China explicitly states, "Take measures and initiatives to address population aging, accelerate the construction of a social elderly care service system, and actively develop the elderly service industry." [1] Benefiting from a climate akin to spring throughout the year, clean and unpolluted air quality, abundant water resources, and the advancement of the Hainan Free Trade Port, Sanya City, as the most popular choice for cross-regional elderly care in the country, witnesses a substantial influx of migratory elderly individuals every year. The "migratory" elderly care model is thriving in Sanya. However, issues such as inadequate urban management, resource shortages, and a sudden increase in social conflicts have become increasingly apparent with the large influx of seasonal crowds, necessitating urgent resolution. This study follows the footsteps of social development to further refine and address issues raised in existing research. It analyzes the needs and motivations of migratory populations in Hainan in five aspects: distribution due to the Free Trade Port construction, and the impact on society, life, consumption, and health. Understanding the needs and motivations of migratory populations in the process of constructing the Hainan Free Trade Port will contribute to fostering the model of cross-regional elderly care in Hainan from the perspective of positive aging, providing support for the construction of the Hainan Free Trade Port.

2. Research Design

This study focuses on individuals aged 50 and above, residing in Hainan Province for 3-6 months, primarily for elderly vacation purposes, and who are non-residents of Hainan Province. The research employs literature review, on-site observation, and face-to-face interviews to elaborate on and analyze migratory populations from five aspects: society, life, consumption, health, and explores the needs and motivations of migratory populations.

2.1 Literature Review

By searching keywords such as migratory elderly care, cross-regional elderly care, and tourism-based elderly care, the study utilizes resources like the school library, the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) journal full-text database, and other online databases. It extensively reviews relevant domestic and international literature, extracts viewpoints and arguments, comprehensively reads, organizes, and summarizes these viewpoints. Through a thorough understanding of the current state of previous research, weaknesses are identified, and an appropriate entry point is sought with the aim of introducing innovation. Additionally, official websites such as the Sanya City Statistics Bureau, Hainan Provincial Government website, and Sanya City Government website are used to collect policy regulations related to elderly care services in Hainan Province, particularly in Sanya City, to understand the latest policy situations and assess policy directions.

2.2 On-site Observation

Considering the time characteristics of migratory elderly individuals coming to Hainan, specific areas where a large number of migratory elderly individuals gather, namely Dadonghai Square, Bailu Park, and Haiyue Square, are selected for observation in January 2023, close to the Spring Festival. Based on the activity patterns of migratory elderly individuals, observations are conducted during the morning exercise and evening seaside relaxation, including square dance activities. This aims to understand various aspects of their daily lives and gather material to prepare for the research.

2.3 Interview Method

Research material is obtained through direct oral communication with interview subjects. Thirty migratory elderly individuals are randomly selected from Dadonghai Square, Bailu Park, and Haiyue Square. Following the direction of the interview outline, purposeful communication is conducted with migratory elderly individuals to understand their family situations, views on the development of the Hainan Free Trade Port, awareness, acceptance, and practical experiences of cross-regional elderly care, as well as their suggestions and opinions on the development of elderly care services in Sanya.

3. Analysis of the Current Situation of the "Snowbird" Population in Hainan in Terms of Social Needs and Motivations

3.1 Social Psychological Needs of the "Snowbird" Population

Firstly, there is a need for social interaction. This manifests as a desire for social connections, as they seek to establish new relationships and maintain existing ones to gain support and emotional satisfaction. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, "snowbird seniors" generally fulfill their physiological and safety needs. They are more eager to meet the next level of social needs, which we refer to as "love and belonging." Belongingness, as an expression of emotional needs, mainly refers to whether individuals feel the need for and are needed in a particular environment. "Snowbird seniors" are a unique group, leaving familiar places, making them prone to psychological discomfort and a sense of dislocation in their later years. They lack care from the outside world, leading to a sense of deficiency in both "need" and "being needed," affecting the satisfaction of their sense of belonging.

Secondly, there is a need for identity. Identity is the social attribute, position, and identification of individuals in social life, representing the highest level of social integration. Snowbird seniors neither settle in their original residence nor in the destination they migrate to but maintain the traditional mindset of "returning to one's roots." They believe they belong to their original place of residence. Meanwhile, residents in the destination do not consider "snowbird seniors" as local residents. The lack of mutual recognition between snowbird seniors and destination residents results in a low sense of

belonging and a low level of identity.^[2]

3.2 Migration Motivations of the "Snowbird" Population

Firstly, there are climate reasons. Compared to the winter in the northern regions, Sanya City is a warm place. Due to aging and various health issues, the heat-generating capacity of different parts of the elderly's bodies decreases, making the cold winter a challenging period for them. Sanya City, located at 18 degrees north latitude, has a tropical monsoon climate, mostly in a summer state throughout the year. In winter, the temperature rarely drops below 15 degrees Celsius, making the climate conditions highly favored by the elderly. The favorable climate conditions in Sanya make it a unanimous choice for many seniors to spend their winters there.

Secondly, there are personal reasons. Firstly, there are physical reasons. Due to the continuous decline in bodily functions during old age, various physical problems arise. This includes both existing and potential issues. For existing health problems, considering the principles of scientific self-care, maintaining a good body is 70% about nourishment and 30% about medicine. Therefore, seniors are willing to find a good environment to recuperate. The temperature conditions and air quality in Sanya make it an ideal choice for many elderly people. Secondly, income levels influence the decision. The retirement pensions for retired employees are substantial. According to the survey, some seniors receive pensions ranging from 5000 to 6000 yuan per month, allowing them to choose cities with good conditions for retirement. Their children also regularly provide them with support, and with multiple elderly care institutions in Sanya offering beautiful environments, they often compare and choose suitable facilities for retirement or independent living. Thirdly, tourism-based retirement is a preferred choice for the elderly. Due to a change in mindset, many seniors do not want to burden their children and choose to live separately from them. Additionally, as they were busy during their younger years, and now having rare leisure time in their old age, they decide to explore places they have never been to and try new things. This group of seniors often spends their winters in Sanya. Nationally, Hainan Province is a tropical island, but in winter, the temperature in Sanya is relatively higher than in other cities and counties in Hainan, making it more suitable for retirement.

Thirdly, there are local policies. In 2018, during the 30th-anniversary celebration of the establishment of the Hainan Province and the Hainan Special Economic Zone, the General Secretary pointed out the need to leverage its advantages, establish a free trade pilot zone, and build a Chinese characteristic free trade port. This goal implies that Hainan will undergo a new round of development, further opening up and attracting a large influx of talent. With the continued construction of the Hainan Free Trade Pilot Zone, many policies gradually open up to the elderly, providing more care for them. For instance, individuals aged 65 and above enjoy discounts on public transportation and scenic spots, and they can participate in fitness activities in public sports venues at half price. Those aged 70 and above receive further benefits such as free general outpatient registration fees, public transportation fees, and scenic spot entrance fees. The Standing Committee of the Fifth People's Congress of Hainan Province passed the decision on implementing certain provisions of the "Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly" during its 31st session. This decision specifically outlines the improvement of Hainan Province's elderly service system, the establishment of health records for the elderly, regular free check-ups, and door-to-door medical services for those meeting relevant medical guidelines. Additionally, it mentions setting up preferential service windows for the elderly and providing subsidies, among other regulations.^[3] For the elderly, these measures significantly contribute to their daily lives and provide substantial support, making it one of the reasons why they choose to retire in this region.

4. Existing Issues

The "snowbird" population often faces new cultures, social systems, and lifestyles, leading to potential challenges such as language barriers, cultural differences, social difficulties, and issues related to elderly care services. These problems may have negative impacts on their psychological well-being, social needs, and overall quality of life.

4.1 Social Adaptation Issues

Firstly, there is a challenge in communication with the local population due to language barriers. The "snowbird" population in Hainan mostly comes from the northeast, southwest, and central regions,

and their original languages differ significantly from the local Hainanese dialects, making normal communication difficult. As a result, many "snowbirds" adopt an attitude of avoiding contact with locals as much as possible. Additionally, regardless of their origin, "snowbirds" share many common characteristics, and the probability of encountering fellow natives is high. Even if they are not from the same hometown, being part of the same group makes it easier for them to understand each other's situations and psychological needs. Therefore, interactions among the "snowbird" population are more frequent than interactions with the local residents.

Secondly, there are differences in customary norms. The "snowbird" population, having lived in different regions for an extended period, has developed behavioral norms adapted to their original regions. For example, people from the northeast often prefer going to bed and waking up early, especially during winter when they prepare for sleep around 9 p.m. In contrast, people in Hainan start their nightlife around 9 p.m., with many staying awake until past 11 p.m. or even into the early morning. "Snowbirds" from the northeast are naturally less inclined to adhere to such norms. Hainan has unique customs, such as the Gongqi Festival, which is not well understood or participated in by the "snowbird" population due to limited interaction with the local people. Regarding identity, the majority of the "snowbird" population does not identify themselves as residents of the retirement destination. Surveys show that when asked about their origin, their answers mostly refer to their original place of residence, rarely claiming to be Hainanese. Correspondingly, local Hainanese do not consider the "snowbird" population as Hainanese; they often refer to them as "mainland people" to distinguish them from locals.

4.2 Elderly Care Service Issues

Firstly, there is a lag in the construction of the social elderly care service system. Currently, the development of social elderly care services in our province is still in the initial exploration stage. The construction of the social elderly care service system is relatively lagging, far from forming a comprehensive and cohesive system. Although in recent years, the province and some cities and counties have successively issued policies and regulations to strengthen the construction of the social elderly care service system, the awareness of some local governments regarding aging and their responsibility for safeguarding the rights of the elderly is not fully in place. There is a lack of sufficient recognition of the importance and urgency of social elderly care services.^[4] Social elderly care service policies are not adequately matched and supportive, and the connection and implementation measures between different social elderly care security systems need further improvement. There is a phenomenon of inadequate positioning and absence of government departments in promoting the development of social elderly care. The scale of elderly service facilities is relatively small, with a low level of sophistication and a single function, which does not adapt well to the growing needs of elderly care services and overall requirements of the elderly, making it difficult to meet the overall demands of social elderly care services and the elderly.

Secondly, there is a severe shortage of resources in the social elderly care service system. In recent years, due to insufficient government investment in the construction of social elderly care services, the basic infrastructure for elderly services in urban and rural communities is weak. Facilities such as elderly day care centers, outdoor fitness squares, elderly universities, and cultural and sports public service facilities are severely lacking. The number of social elderly care service institutions is minimal, with limited service methods and poor market development. According to surveys, the current number of beds available for the elderly in the province is only 0.43% of the total elderly population, which is lower than the national average of 1.59%. The basic public service projects for the elderly in the province are seriously insufficient, and the social elderly care service system lacks available supporting resources.

Finally, there is a widespread lack of professional training among social elderly care service personnel. Currently, the professional training of social elderly care service personnel in our province is relatively weak. Firstly, there is no training institution specifically for elderly care nursing. Secondly, most personnel in this field have not received professional nursing training. Thirdly, managers of elderly care service institutions generally lack knowledge of social work and can only provide the simplest housekeeping services. The professional services needed by the elderly, such as life care, rehabilitation care, health care, and psychological counseling, are not adequately provided at the grassroots community level, lacking specialized institutions and dedicated personnel, thus failing to meet the professional and individualized needs of elderly care services, unable to meet the demands of the elderly.^[5]

5. Enhancement Pathways for Social Needs and Motivation of "Snowbird" Population

5.1 Improve Relevant Support Systems

To effectively enhance the development mechanism of the snowbird retirement model, a comprehensive legislative system should be established. Legislation and regulations should be refined to safeguard the personal interests of snowbird retirees. As snowbird retirement involves living in a different location, policies should be formulated to support this model, improving healthcare and retirement security legal systems to provide institutional support for elderly care. As a unique consumer group, snowbird retirees face various consumption issues during their retirement. The government should enact policies to manage the retirement consumption of snowbird retirees, effectively safeguarding their related interests. Government departments should explore local retirement resources and tourism services, strengthen the management of retirement systems, improve infrastructure management systems, and enhance service quality. Encouragement, support, and guidance should be provided to the snowbird population in relevant service industries, and concerted efforts from various sectors should optimize the retirement service system, increasing satisfaction during snowbird retirement.

5.2 Formulate Supporting Development Measures

Cities should expand the infrastructure and archives available to the elderly based on the preferences of snowbird retirees and relevant development policies. A supporting development system should be perfected to establish privately-run elderly care institutions, providing snowbird retirees with various options for retirement. Emphasis should be placed on cultivating talent for related elderly care services to meet the service demands of snowbird retirees and enhance the professional competence of relevant personnel. Adequate vocational skills training, including common elderly care knowledge and emergency response measures, should be implemented. Establishing mechanisms for professional elderly care services and talent recruitment should involve attracting advanced, highly educated, and skilled individuals, including doctors, nurses, and psychological experts, effectively addressing various issues in the snowbird retirement model and providing substantial support for its development.

5.3 Build a Coexisting and Symbiotic Multicultural System

The social integration process of the snowbird population involves the collision, fusion, and symbiosis of diverse cultures. As snowbird retirees differ from other mobile populations, being in the elderly stage with stable perspectives and carrying imprints of their original places of residence, re-socializing them poses significant challenges. These cultural elements are then brought to their retirement destination. The culture of the original place of residence may differ significantly from the local culture at the retirement destination. Given these potential conflicts, the best approach is inclusivity. Coexistence is the basis for symbiosis, and symbiosis is the ultimate goal of coexistence. The government should actively construct a multicultural system of coexistence and symbiosis, guiding the public to adopt an inclusive attitude toward different cultures. People from different cultural regions should respect each other, refraining from imposing their own value systems on others' cultures. Different cultures should learn from and borrow from each other.

5.4 Provide a Reemployment Platform for Snowbird Retirees and Harness their Expertise

Snowbird retirees generally possess higher cultural qualities, and many who retire to Sanya each year are experts and elites in various fields such as medicine, education, and economics. After retirement, with ample economic resources and time, they hope to continue contributing their expertise while enjoying health and leisure. The government should actively guide this segment of snowbird retirees to participate in the economic development and construction of Sanya, maximizing the benefits of the "snowbird" retirement model.

A significant proportion of the "snowbird" elderly population is of a relatively young age, and their physical fitness is high. Efforts should be made to promote the reemployment of "snowbird" retirees. Based on the characteristics of the elderly, job positions should be set accordingly. An analysis of the actual development of various industries in Sanya, local customs and etiquette, population distribution, and the labor needs of the elderly should be conducted to tailor a job market for the elderly and develop a talent market, maximizing the contribution of the elderly.

Secondly, actively establish platforms and strengthen publicity and guidance. It is recommended that relevant departments or employment bureaus establish an information database for elderly talents, promptly collecting relevant resource information. Forming an elderly talent market to provide employment supply and demand information is essential. More entry points should be sought to create a platform for the exchange of reemployment experiences among the elderly, providing channels for them to communicate, seek employment guidance, and share employment needs. On the other hand, intensify efforts in publicity and guidance, actively promote the positive aspects of elderly reemployment, and create a positive atmosphere for the elderly to contribute.

6. Conclusion

This study investigates the evolving landscape of elderly care in the context of the Hainan Free Trade Port construction and the increasing social mobility of the elderly. The "snowbird-style" off-site elderly care model emerges as a progressively accepted form, driven by improved living standards and social dynamics. Employing a comprehensive methodology, including literature review, on-site observation, and in-depth interviews, the study analyzes the needs and motivations of the "snowbird" population. The findings offer valuable insights into optimizing off-site elderly care services in Sanya City, providing practical strategies to address the social and psychological needs of snowbird elderly individuals. The goal is to contribute to the rapid and healthy development of the "snowbird-style" off-site elderly care service industry, making a substantial contribution to the Hainan Free Trade Port. This research aligns with demographic and societal trends, shedding light on specific needs and offering actionable recommendations to enhance the quality and accessibility of elderly care services, contributing to the broader discourse on elderly care and social welfare within the framework of economic development and societal progress.

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