

# Study on the Problems and Strategies of Recreational and Educational Services for the Elderly in Transitional Communities in the Context of Positive Ageing

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**Abstract.** With the aim to address the shortage of recreational resources available for elderly communities in transition, and to overcome the challenge of balancing population ageing and social restructuring across China, this study explores the recreational services offered to the elderly in transition areas through an analysis of the studies conducted on recreational services for the elderly. Besides, various perspectives are taken to examine the challenges facing the Chinese recreational services for the elderly industry, such as service forms and recreational products, which are purposed to promote the development of elderly care services in transitional communities. From the perspective of social work, appropriate measures and recommendations are proposed to develop a forward-looking plan for further research on the recreational services system intended for the elderly in transitional communities.

**Keywords:** Recreational and Educational Services for Older Adults; Transitional Communities; Community Ageing; Social Integration.

## 1. Introduction

As a community form resulting from the urbanization process since the 21st century in China, the transitional community marks a transition from rural to urban communities, representing a specific community situated between urban and rural communities. Combining the characteristics of rural communities, it reflects the features of urban communities. Rather than being classified as an urban village or having achieved the same level of development as the urban community, the transitional community is categorised as a "new community" with both urban and rural characteristics [1]. Considered as a distinct community situated between urban and rural areas, it exhibits not only the attributes of a rural community but also the essence of urban residence. This community neither falls into the category of an urban village nor has reached the same level of development as urban communities. Instead, it represents a "new type of community" that demonstrates the dual characteristics of both urban and rural communities [1]. There are various forms taken by transitional communities, including village-to-residential, overall resettlement of rural demolition and relocation, commercial housing, and others. As a common form of community in the urbanization process, they tend to undergo "semi-urbanization" [2]. Transitional communities follow a transitional process due to their "mobility," "complexity," and "regional customary differences," among other characteristics. Consequently, these communities struggle to achieve transformation in a short period, which gives rise to an urgent need to realise all-round transformation and reshaping for genuine urbanization. Accounting for a significant proportion of the transitional community, the elderly have preserved nearly all the customary principles and lifestyles that have been established for long in rural areas. However, they have to re-encounter the contemporary communal way of life due to the distinctive qualities of this transitional community. With access to neither rural land nor workspaces, elderly people cease to be capable of identifying as local farmers and maintaining their rural lifestyles. This has contributed to such phenomena as "inactivity" and "emptiness and boredom" among many of the elderly. With social development, the semblance of rural communities fades away gradually, which improves the flexibility of neighbourhood relations in transition. Therefore, the elderly are inclined to return to their native towns rather than taking residence in relocated 'transitional communities'. Due

to intergenerational differences, there is a psychological imbalance among the elderly. Meanwhile, their integration into a new social environment is impeded by discrimination from urban residents and a decline in their learning ability. Consequently, they struggle to truly derive a sense of belonging. To solve these issues, it is essential to develop a novel approach to community recreation and education for the elderly residing in transitional communities. It is expected to engage the elderly in the construction of daily activities within the community.

## **2. Interventions in Recreational Education for the Aging in Transitional Communities**

### **2.1. The Current State of Elderly Care under Transitional Communities**

Recently, various social phenomena have arisen from the ageing issue and acceleration of urbanization, such as 'transitional communities' and 'accompanying elderly people'. Furthermore, there are some challenges in rural communities transitioning into urban areas due to many population movements and social relations' reformation, such as the absence of essential provisions, the tardiness in government grants, and the procrastination in constructing leisure facilities. As for the transition to urbanization for rural communities, it confronts various difficulties due to a sharp rise in population movement and the reshaping of social relations. The development of transitional communities is severely inhibited by the shortage of basic materials, government subsidies, and delays in recreational facility construction. Secondly, there is a shortage of human resources and an inadequate mechanism for addressing the needs of the elderly in such communities, which is due to the generally lower quality of the population in transitional communities compared to urban communities, as well as their more conservative approach to old-age care. Meanwhile, the percentage of personnel responsible for dispensing care to the elderly is generally low, with the certification for social service for the elderly possessed by only a small number of employees. Due to these factors, transitional communities often face a dilemma, making the provision of recreation and education for the elderly even more challenging.

By contrast, a large majority of the elderly in transitional communities are the "migrant elderly" or "local farmers" with distinct cultural identities and lifestyles. Despite coexistence, there is limited communication between these two groups. Moreover, different elderly care requirements are necessitated by the variations in their income sources and living standards. There are varying needs for the elderly because income sources and living standards differ. It is also challenging to integrate migrant elderly within the community, with some finding it difficult to derive a sense of belonging. Secondly, the continuous development of the community economy has stimulated spiritual demands among the elderly for recreational activities, social engagement, and cultural education. With diverse and high expectations, they cease to be content with the basic care for meals, which makes the pursuit of spiritual and cultural enrichment increasingly urgent. Due to the enhanced mobility of the elderly population and the decline in employment opportunities for the retirement community, there is a need for recreational and educational services for the elderly in transitional communities. Spending their days caring for children or doing housework in the past, many of the elderly seek ways to spend their spare time, which makes it imperative to develop such services.

### **2.2. Recreational Education for Aging in Transitional Communities**

"Elderly entertainment and education" refers to a service that caters to the spiritual and cultural needs of the elderly by integrating education and entertainment. The term "entertainment" encompasses not only the basic material care, but also the responsibility of providing spiritual support for emotional and spiritual fulfillment. This service lays emphasis on ensuring the well-being and satisfaction of elderly individuals. The term "entertainment" refers not only to the provision of basic material support for the elderly but also to the obligation of supporting them on a spiritual level by prioritizing their spiritual and emotional satisfaction. The term "education" is purposed to enhance the ability of the elderly to accept new things, encourage their engagement in community activities, and increase their value in later life. To provide educational content in an entertaining way, elderly users are allowed to

learn while getting entertained. This is aimed to create an enjoyable experience for the elderly, fill the gaps in their spiritual needs, and improve the quality of their later life [3]. Therefore, this paper aims to address the issues arising from the provision of transitional community aged-care services by implementing "entertainment and education for the elderly." In addition to resolving a specific issue within transitional community aged-care services, this intervention also fulfills the aged-care requirements of various transitional communities. However, considering the intricate movement of people and different regional traditions within the communities in transition, it is more likely for the elderly to suffer social isolation. Therefore, the "recreation and education for the elderly" in transitional communities are supposed to prioritise amplifying interaction and communication among senior citizens, enhancing their social connections, and reinforcing their sense of communal participation. Secondly, considering the characteristics of transitional communities, which may exhibit a higher level of poverty and disparities in health and education, it is critical for the "recreation and education for the elderly" programs in such areas to focus on disadvantaged groups and meet the requirements of older individuals at varying degrees. Finally, regional variations should be respected by the recreational and educational activities aimed at meeting the needs of older people worldwide and their capability to communicate across diverse environments should be enhanced.

Despite a late start, transitional communities progress rapidly, exhibiting numerous intricacies and particularities that present a challenge to governance. To promote the development of elderly services and develop a recreation and education service system for seniors in such areas, it is crucial to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the practical and theoretical significance of the subject.

### 3. Research and Analysis on Recreational and Educational Services for the Elderly at Home and Abroad

During the search for literature on community-based leisure and educational services for the elderly, it can be found that there are few academic websites addressing the subject specifically. Therefore, "education for the elderly," "entertainment for the elderly," "recreation and education," and "recreation and education products" were taken as the keywords for search, with data collected on October 31, 2023.

**Table 1.** Statistics on search results from research findings

Keywords	Literatures	Journals	master's thesis	Conference papers	newspapers
Elderly recreational products	33	1	2	0	0
Education for the elderly	5779	3788	680	248	575
Recreation for the Elderly	101	40	49	5	4
cultural and recreational education	27	13	12	0	2
Entertainment Products	46	18	21	1	0

Statistical period: 31 October 2023

According to the information shown in the above table, there is only limited research on the entertainment and educational products for the elderly. In contrast, there are plenty of studies focusing on elderly education. A future research can be guided by sorting and reviewing the relevant literature.

### **3.1. Domestic Studies on Recreational and Educational Services for the Elderly**

#### **3.1.1. On the Model of Recreational Services: All Regions have Enhanced Their Exploration of the Elderly Model.**

As ageing progresses, domestic research has been gradually conducted on elderly recreational services, with service models introduced in different regions to suit the development of local pensions. In 2017, a new model of medical and nursing collaboration was established in Kunming and the evaluation was passed for the first batch of national "elderly-friendly hospitals." By developing the model of pension institutions and medical collaborative bodies, the city offers precise and personalised medical and nursing combination services to the elderly, with pension services incorporated into the concept of health [4]. In Jiaying Economic Development Zone, the "Happy New Harvest" community nursing station was launched and the "Seven Excellent Enjoyments" project was promoted, including the "Old Have Recreation and Support" initiative. In 2022, the "Aidou Silver Age Care" community-led project was launched in Jiaying Jingkai District for the provision of public welfare elder care services, under the support from the Alibaba Public Welfare Foundation. As an effort to provide older adults with wellness and nourishment, this project is purposed to enhance the "Happy Xinhe" elderly care station within the community and enact the "Seven Excellent Enjoyments" initiative. Through the development of an intelligent elderly care system that integrates the home, the community, and the institutions, the community undergoes a smart transformation to construct a trinity system that is continually improved [5]. In order to develop community volunteerism while fostering community social organizations A community service project was undertaken in three urban communities in Beijing, Shanghai, and Chengdu. Cultivating 163 community social organizations, the project improved the elderly services offered within the community [6]. The issue of aging has attracted significant attention from society. In some regions across China, distinct service models are implemented to reduce the issues with elderly care, the focus of which is to improve the quality of such services. Following the Kunming and Jiaying Economic Development Zone, other regions are expected to explore the appropriate service models for the local eldercare industry.

#### **3.1.2. Entertainment and Educational Service Products are Abundant in the Sunset Entertainment Market.**

With a significant rise in the ageing population across China, there has been a surge of interest in the care and leisure industry targeted at this population. As a wide range of products developed to meet the need of seniors for recreation and education, elderly people increasingly seek to enrich their spiritual lives in various innovative ways. Based on the varied spiritual necessities of older adults, elderly leisure and educational products can facilitate mental relaxation and make an educational impact, which increases the worth of the product while reinforcing the belief that the elderly remain valuable. For instance, "Singing Bar K Song Bao" debuted at the Sixth China Elderly Industry Business Innovation Conference. Revolving around vocal music as the premise, it establishes the "Peanut Classroom," which is an entertainment and education platform targeted at middle-aged and elderly people. It is aimed primarily to create a learning and leisure space in which the elderly can socialise through music. Tencent has launched "Silver-haired Green Pine Assistant," known as an Internet education product. While navigating the Internet landscape, the project addresses the challenges encountered by the middle-aged and elderly. It is also conducive to integrating them into the information society seamlessly. To satisfy the varied demand of senior citizens for entertainment and education, some companies have trialed the combination of science and technology with traditional culture by introducing distinctive entertainment and educational products for the elderly. For instance, intelligent hardware devices have been produced to integrate Chinese medicine and healthcare with technological elements, encouraging the elderly to develop healthy lifestyles through gamification. In summary, the growing demand for senior entertainment and education has played a role in promoting the innovation and development of various products. The sunset industry in China is expected to thrive as a dynamic sector with massive market potential.

### **3.1.3. Forms of Recreational and Educational Activities: Increased Demand and Gradual Diversification**

Since retirees have more flexible time to spare, the demand for recreational and educational activities have been growing constantly among the elderly. In recent years, a wide variety of recreational activities have emerged to cater for senior citizens across China, such as square dancing, tai chi, fishing, chess, cards, and more. Apart from enhancing the spiritual and cultural lives of elder citizens, these activities have also exerted a positive influence on their physical and mental well-being. Besides, with the gradual expansion of educational activities, the state has also paid significant attention to educating the elderly by providing them with access to twilight education under senior universities and community education programs. Covering a range of subjects, such as traditional culture, health care, information technology, and foreign languages, the educational activities cater to the varied needs of elderly individuals for learning. These sunset recreational and educational activities play a crucial role in creating a new social circle for the elderly and in enhancing their social adaptability. Despite this, there remain some challenges facing the provision of educational opportunities that truly meet the needs of the elderly. This is attributed to the gap between the supply of educational activities and the exact needs of this population. Apart from that, some of the elderly find it difficult to search for suitable activities.

## **3.2. Overseas Studies on Recreational and Educational Services for the Elderly**

### **3.2.1. On the Model of Recreational and Educational Services, Clear Definitions of Services are Established, and the Optimal Solution is Discerned Through Practical Application.**

In foreign research, the emphasis has been increasingly placed on the study of recreation and education for senior citizens, with effort made to develop a service model that suits the needs of the elderly best. In the US, the "active retirement community" model has been adopted, which involves the creation of extensive recreational service scenes within the communities to meet the demand of the elderly for communal activities, which has given rise to the "Disneyland for the Elderly" villages. In comparison, Japan has established "Nursing Homes for the Elderly," with cultural retirement integrated into their market operations through integrated services. In South Korea, "digital education has been developed for the silver-haired" and a video school has been established to support the elderly in discovering self-worth. These efforts enrich their spiritual lives while providing them with the opportunities to acquire knowledge and abilities. Thus, they find it easier to adapt to the information society and recognise their self-value.

### **3.2.2. On Recreational and Educational Service Products: With Personalization and a High Degree of Innovation.**

Globally, there are plenty of institutions working on the design and research of entertainment and educational products for the elderly. As an example of this, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology commits itself to achieving digital toy innovation targeted at this population. Likewise, they have established a research group working on the design and innovation of entertainment products for the elderly. In 1986, the Japanese government set up the "Silver Industry Promotion Office" for development of the bionic interactive robots that could communicate with the elderly emotionally. While offering elderly residents electronic game software for entertainment, the community nursing homes in Switzerland also provide cognitive exercise. To promote socialisation among elderly populations in Europe, a digital display system known as "YoooM" has been developed, encouraging senior citizens to build their social networks with the assistance of social and leisure platforms. This system aims to satisfy the social needs of the elderly through a social and recreational platform, thereby improving their spiritual well-being. It is demonstrated by the study and implementation of these overseas leisure and educational services that the elderly can access more diverse and personal leisure and educational services through scientific and technological methods and innovative ideas, which enriches their elderly lives.

### 3.3. Results

It was discovered by the author through an analysis of the current state of elderly recreational and educational services globally that such services are conducive to enhancing the well-being and happiness of senior citizens. As this topic has attracted widespread attention from global communities, research has identified both areas of focus and limitations in the development of these services. In foreign countries, personalization and technological innovation are prioritised, with extensive and grounded research conducted in this field to discover the best-suited service model for the needs of the elderly to be met in practice. In some research, an investigation has been conducted into the issues that involve multiple disciplines, including psychology, sociology, gerontology, and pedagogy, surpassing the domestic research focused on fulfilling the psychological needs of the elderly and revolutionary technology. On the contrary, a more comprehensive approach is adopted in domestic research to investigate recreation and education concerns for the elderly and to implement development strategies and models. However, despite the origin of the research, there are still some inadequacies in community recreation and education for the elderly.

1) To provide entertainment to the elderly is a comprehensive service model in which various dimensions of personalization and differentiation must be taken into account. It is crucial to offer diverse and tailored services that can meet the distinct needs of older adults in various circumstances. However, there remains a shortage of specifically targeted approaches and comprehensive discussions. For the elderly individuals residing in "transitional communities," it is usually difficult to predict the quality of recreational services, which requires the development of additional service strategies. While for the elderly individuals residing in transitional communities, the provision of recreational services tends to be unstable. This makes it necessary to develop additional service strategies. 2) It is essential to consolidate and analyse the findings and limitations of previous studies, as the recreational services offered for older adults continue to encounter various challenges arising from the inequitable distribution of resources and ambiguity around the frameworks of development. Moreover, the application of new media technology to the practice of elderly recreation and education in China remains underdeveloped. Compared to foreign countries, there is a considerable lack of innovation domestically. Many foreign products focus mainly on fulfilling the needs of individuals for elderly recreation and education, with less consideration given to the interdependent support and collaboration between the two domains and innovation. Differently, new media technologies, including smart phones and virtual reality, have been applied to enhance ageing recreation and education. In terms of the ability to innovate in this field, China still lags behind foreign countries. 3) A further refinement is required for the research methods and theoretical frameworks related to the community recreation and education services offered to the elderly. Through the combination of sociological and design frameworks, in-depth research on these services can be facilitated. By taking the sociological approach, a comprehensive insight can be gained into the requisite demands and involvement patterns of elderly individuals in those communities undergoing transition, along with the impact of the physical surroundings of such areas on the accessibility of recreational and educational amenities for the elderly population. A design perspective can be taken to facilitate the analysis and evaluation of the instructional techniques and impacts of leisure services for the elderly residing in transitional communities. This approach aims to develop a service model that can meet their needs while constructing a systematised service framework. By applying sociological and design theories, the inherent mechanisms and operation processes involved in the provision of recreational services for these individuals are revealed.

In summary, the social relations in communities tend to be disconnected during times of transition, which is attributed to the geographical environment and different lifestyles. Thus, the interaction among the elderly is reduced and community cohesion is weakened. In this circumstance, it is particularly challenging to meet the recreational and educational needs of the elderly in transitional communities. Also, the newly established transitional communities in the city are affected by the level of economic development and the paradigm of old-age care. Inexperienced social workers are hindered from engaging in professional social work methods and coordinating community resources

effectively for elderly services, which results in a bleak picture of elderly care in transitional communities. Therefore, it is unrealistic to simply replicate the recreational and educational service models of regular communities in transitional ones. Hence, it is possibly difficult to adopt the recreational service model of typical communities in transitional communities.

Finally, it is argued in this paper that within the distinctive transitional communities, there is a necessity to construct a multi-tier interactive platform through which recreation and education are accessible to the elderly to improve their social skills and address the alienation of their community relations. Additionally, the dynamism of the demographic structure makes it imperative to expand the community recreation and education framework for the elderly and to establish a self-contained recreation and education service chain for the enhanced sense of social cohesion among them. Besides, given the low level of economic development and infrastructure, it is necessary to provide diversified choices for the elderly in transitional communities as far as possible by coordinating various types of service providers in transitional communities as soon as possible. Through these measures, the well-being of senior citizens residing in transitional communities can be enhanced. Meanwhile, their sense of disorientation and insecurity is reduced during the times of change. This leads to a more positive ageing experience for the society as a whole.

#### **4. Conclusion and Implications**

In conclusion, when the spiritual well-being of elderly individuals within the transitional community is enhanced, their active involvement can be encouraged and the community receives benefits through their valuable ideas and experiences. Therefore, it is necessary to construct a recreational and educational service system for the elderly in transition-type communities from the perspective of social work. In light of this, some recommendations are made as follows.

##### **4.1. Increasing the Number of Providers for Recreational and Educational Services and Enhancing the Level of Professionalism of Elderly Care Facilities within Ferry Communities.**

In the UK, neighbourhood committees and volunteers play a major role in planning and overseeing community activities for the elderly. However, the effectiveness and quality of these events are frequently limited by the limited resources and capabilities of the organisers. Differently, professional social institutions and organisations typically oversee senior activities in foreign locations, thus achieving a high standard of execution and ensuring the satisfaction among the participants. In addition to enhancing the specialisation and training of community-based recreational services for the elderly, transitional communities can also build a platform where the information and resources related to recreational activities can be shared. In this way, elderly individuals find it easier to choose and engage in community-based recreational activities. Elderly people can make use of this platform to produce customised modules for meeting their spiritual requirements and to launch activity applications. Once reviewed, the community can provide activity support to stimulate the sense of "mastery" among the elderly. Moreover, the challenge of assimilating certain elderly members into the transitional community can be reduced, which enables them to initiate and coordinate transitional community services. Empowering the elderly to become initiators and organisers of transitional community services, the platform enhances their sense of self-satisfaction.

##### **4.2. Upgrading the Forms of Recreational Services and Promoting the Reform of the Transitional Community Recreation Model**

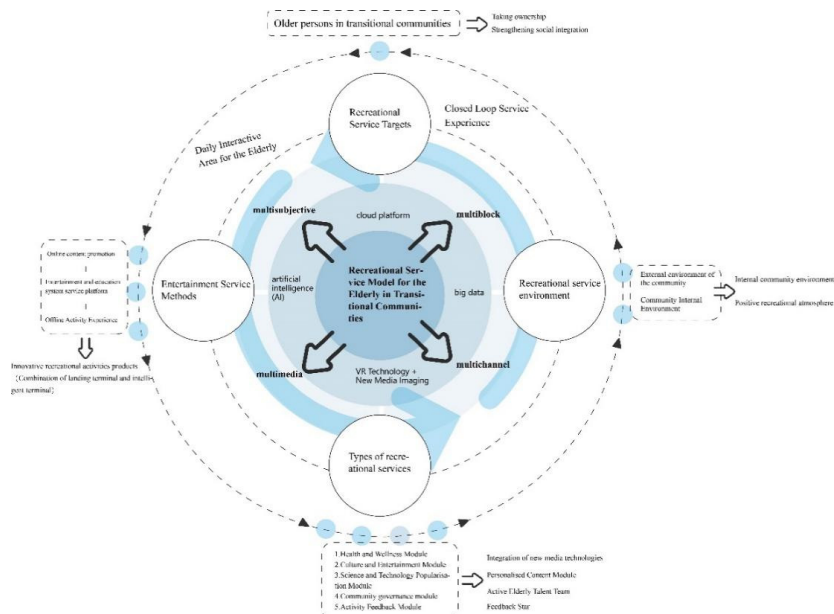
At present, there remains a lack of high-quality recreational and educational activities tailored to the different needs of different groups of elderly people as most of the community activities for the elderly in China focus on cultural recreation, fitness, and health care. In contrast, the form of senior activities in foreign communities is more diverse, such as cooking, painting, music, handicrafts, etc., the focus of which is placed on teamwork and social interaction among the elderly, sustainability and innovation, as well as the ability to adjust the contents and forms of activities according to the needs

of the elderly and the development of the times. The development of transitional communities makes it necessary to draw on foreign experiences, focus on the development needs of the elderly in different geographical contexts, apply new media technology into recreational and educational activities for the elderly, and reduce the information gap caused by the strong mobility of people in transitional communities by building a closed-loop activity chain of "online content publicity + operation of recreational and educational system service platforms + offline activity experience". In this way, the information gap caused by the strong mobility of people in transitional communities can be reduced. Meanwhile, the elderly can be provided with rich and varied activity contents and forms with the support of new media, thus improving the accessibility and coverage of recreation and education services in transitional communities as a whole.

### 4.3. Optimising the Experience of Recreational and Educational Services to Enhance the Participation of Older People in Transitional Communities

Due to a lack of the insufficient mechanisms of effective participation and feedback for domestic community-based recreational and educational activities intended for the elderly, the level of involvement and transparency is low. Furthermore, there is a feeling of alienation from the community among the elderly who exhibit diminishing enthusiasm towards comprehending and attending such activities. In contrast, other countries typically incorporate a range of channels for senior citizens for the meaningful participation in society, including various exclusive participation mechanisms and feedback systems such as the Council for the Elderly in the United Kingdom and the Senior Citizens' Advisory Council in the United States. These platforms are developed to engage the elderly in community services, encourage their involvement in community affairs, and make the most of their experience and skills. In transitional communities, dedicated social platforms and notification systems can be created to engage older people both online and offline. Meanwhile, several complementary modules can be developed, including health and wellness, culture and recreation, the popularisation of science and technology, community governance, and activity feedback. Thus, the elderly can acquire new knowledge and skills. Finally, a team of "active elderly" has been established in the community to implement "feedback stars" for the active participation of the elderly in recreational and educational activities, which is conducive to the development of a transitional community.

### 4.4. Cutting-edge Leisure and Educational Offerings are Designed to Facilitate a Comprehensive Closed-Loop Service Experience Within a Transitional Community.



**Figure 1.** Transitional Community Closed-Loop Senior Recreational and Educational Services Model

Specialised hardware products have been developed for the areas where the elderly perform daily activities. A positive recreational atmosphere can be created within the community through the dissemination of up-to-date information about recreational activities, personalised activity notifications, and feedback ratings, among other features. Thus, the greater interest and participation of the elderly are stimulated for their engagement in recreational activities. Secondly, virtual kiosks can be merged with on-site kiosks, and imaginative leisure items for senior citizens can be formulated by monitoring the demands of elderly inhabitants in transitional zones. Through this approach, a more intricate and all-encompassing system can be constructed to improve the standard and contentment of leisure facilities for the elderly in transitional communities.

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