

# An Analysis of the Influencing Factors on the Leisure Choices of China's Elderly Sports Population

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**Abstract:** The increasing aging population in China has drawn significant attention to the quality of life in the elderly, particularly about their leisure pursuits. This study aims to analyze the factors influencing the leisure choices of China's elderly sports population, with a focus on physical activities. Through comprehensive literature review and field surveys, the research identifies the multifaceted elements that shape the elderly's decisions to engage in sport-related leisure activities. The findings indicate that health status, socioeconomic status, accessibility to sports facilities, social support, and cultural attitudes towards aging and exercise play pivotal roles. Health benefits, including improved mobility, disease prevention, and mental well-being, emerge as the primary motivator. However, limitations in financial resources and lack of public sport facilities act as deterrents. The study also highlights the positive impact of supportive social networks and cultural shifts that encourage active aging. Policy implications are discussed, emphasizing the need for more age-friendly sports infrastructure and programs that cater to the diverse needs of the elderly. This research contributes to the understanding of leisure sports participation among the aging Chinese population, providing insights for stakeholders to enhance the well-being of the elderly through informed policy-making and community support initiatives.

**Keywords:** Elderly Sports Population; Leisure Choices; Aging in China; Active Aging; Sports Participation

## 1. Introduction

In the lives of the elderly, sports activities are a critical aspect of their later years. Not only does participation in sports improve their quality of life, but it also enhances their sense

of well-being and happiness. Leisure sports have emerged as a new form of leisure activity following recreational and amusement leisure. Due to their unique advantages, such as the integration of leisure, sports, and entertainment elements, sports activities have become a preferred mode of leisure. Song Xusheng's study "A Study on the Leisure Sports Methods of the Elderly in Heilongjiang Province" takes Heilongjiang Province as an example, analyzing the leisure time activities of the elderly across various age groups within the province. By collecting and processing data, and considering factors such as the elderly's monthly income, age distribution, education level, professional titles, in conjunction with their satisfaction with sports fitness, duration of exercise, and choice of sports activities, the study concludes that leisure sports have become a predominant choice in the discretionary leisure time of the elderly. Engaging in leisure sports not only improves the quality of life for the elderly but also relaxes the mind and eases emotions. In today's rapidly developing material culture, leisure sports are the most suitable choice for the elderly's spiritual pursuits [1-6].

Urban elderly have a relatively higher awareness of sports compared to rural residents and engage more actively in a wider variety of sports activities for longer durations. Liu Hui's study "A Study on the Leisure Behavior of the Elderly in Central Cities" examines the leisure behavior of the elderly in urban communities, noting that due to rapid urban development, sports infrastructure is more comprehensive, and facilities are more abundant. Zhao Jiahua's research "A Study on the Leisure Behavior of the Elderly in Xi'an City" surveys the development of sports in cities of various sizes in Xi'an and investigates the leisure activities of the elderly there. Both studies conclude that the leisure behavior of the elderly is a focal issue in the lives of the Chinese people at this stage, and it is

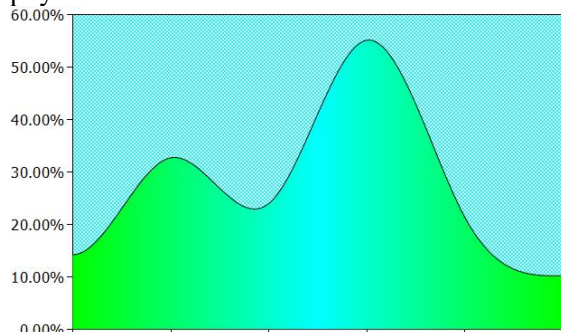
significantly related to their age and cultural structure. It is also influenced by external factors such as the construction of community sports facilities, government support, and the establishment of sports mechanisms [5-10].

This paper focuses on the factors influencing the leisure time choices of the elderly within the sports population. By analyzing the proportion of the elderly in the sports population, the paper investigates issues surrounding the allocation of leisure time by the elderly. From the perspective of statistics and mathematical models, the paper proposes that the leisure time choices of the elderly are primarily influenced by their personal interests and hobbies. Additionally, external conditions such as the safety of sports facilities also play an important role.

## 2. The Structure of China's Sports Population and Factors Influencing Elderly Leisure Choices

The sports-active population represents a significant segment of the Chinese populace, with senior citizens comprising a substantial proportion of this group. An analysis of the composition of the elderly within the sports-active demographic is essential for understanding their recreational sports behavior.

Data analysis indicates that the ratio of young to old within China's sports-active population is approximately 25%, with a predominance of youth and relatively fewer elderly individuals; only about 7% are over the age of 65. This suggests that China's sports-active population is predominantly made up of the younger generation, with seniors less involved in physical exercise activities.



**Figure 1: The Influencing Factors of The Elderly Amateur Life Choices**

The leisure choices of the elderly have always been a focal issue in the current Chinese lifestyle. As a vulnerable social group, the

leisure choices of the elderly are influenced not only by their standard of living but also by their awareness of the importance of physical activities. Moreover, the construction of sports facilities for the elderly is a key aspect of enabling their participation in fitness activities, as depicted in **Figure 1**.

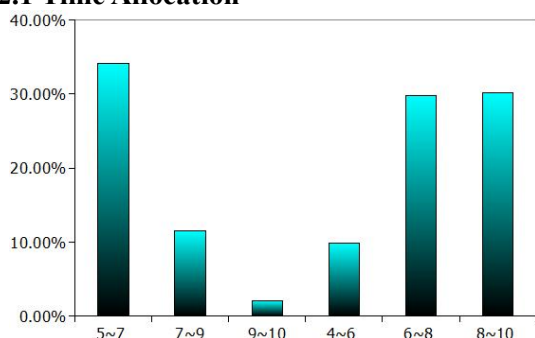
The availability and accessibility of sports facilities significantly affect the elderly's engagement in sports. A well-established infrastructure can provide safe and suitable environments for the elderly to maintain an active lifestyle. In contrast, the lack of such facilities can be a substantial barrier.

In addition to infrastructure, other factors such as societal support, government policies, and cultural attitudes towards aging and physical activity also play critical roles. Social support systems within communities can encourage senior citizens to participate in sports, while governmental initiatives can provide the necessary resources and create conducive environments for sports participation. The cultural perspective on aging and the associated stereotypes can either motivate or discourage the elderly from partaking in sports. Therefore, the allocation of leisure time among the elderly in the sports population is not a matter of personal preference alone. It is a complex decision affected by multiple elements ranging from personal health and interests to societal and infrastructural support. Understanding these factors is essential for policymakers and society at large to foster an environment that promotes active and fulfilling lifestyles for the elderly. The aforementioned survey highlights that among the myriad factors influencing the leisure life choices of China's elderly population, personal interests and hobbies are the primary influencing factors. The accessibility and availability of sports facilities also play a crucial role in determining the engagement of the elderly in leisure activities. Moreover, considering the physical condition of the elderly, the safety of these facilities is an indispensable factor. Personal interests and hobbies, which drive intrinsic motivation, are found to be the most significant predictors of an elderly individual's likelihood to participate in sports and recreational activities. When seniors engage in activities they enjoy, they are more likely to maintain a consistent and active lifestyle, which can lead to improved physical health

and psychological well-being. The construction and design of sports venues are of paramount importance. Facilities that cater to the specific needs of the elderly, such as low-impact exercise equipment, walking tracks, and seated exercise areas, provide not only practical but also inviting environments for the elderly to engage in sports activities. The proximity of these facilities to residential areas and the inclusion of age-friendly design features enhance accessibility, encouraging regular use. Safety is another essential factor, especially given the vulnerability of the elderly to injuries and accidents. Sports and recreational areas that are designed with the safety of older adults in mind, equipped with non-slip surfaces, adequate lighting, handrails, and clear signage, help to mitigate potential risks. Additionally, the presence of trained staff or instructors can provide the necessary guidance and assistance, ensuring that the elderly can participate in physical activities with confidence.

Collectively, these factors underscore the multifaceted nature of leisure life choices among the elderly. They suggest that any strategy aimed at increasing sports participation within this demographic must be comprehensive, addressing not only the provision of suitable facilities but also the broader context of cultural attitudes, societal support, and personal motivation. The survey's findings can thus inform targeted interventions to foster a more active, engaged, and ultimately healthier elderly population.

## 2.1 Time Allocation



**Figure 2: The Elderly Physical Exercise Time Distribution**

For elderly individuals, the abundance of leisure time presents an opportunity to enhance their quality of life through well-considered allocation. Typically, the elderly in China tend to focus their physical exercise routines to the

early morning and evening hours. Activities such as community fitness, square dancing, and ballroom dancing are particularly popular, as indicated in **Figure 2**.

The preference for exercising in the early morning, between 5 am and 7 am, and in the evening, from 6 pm to 10 pm, can be attributed to several factors. Cooler temperatures during these times offer a more comfortable environment for physical exertion, which is especially important considering the physiological constraints of older adults. These time slots also coincide with periods of reduced traffic and noise, creating a more serene and safe setting for outdoor activities.

Moreover, the types of activities preferred reflect the social and cultural fabric of the elderly community. Community fitness programs, square dancing, and ballroom dancing not only provide physical benefits but also foster a sense of community and belonging through social interaction. Such activities are readily accessible and often require minimal equipment, making them both convenient and economical options for the elderly.

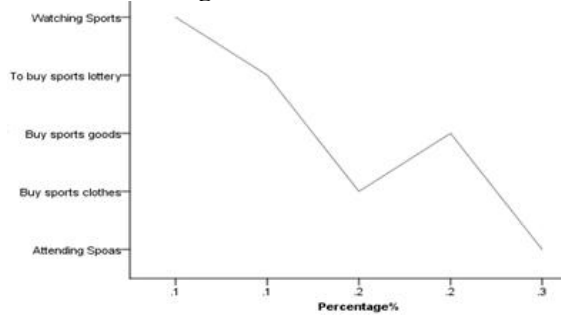
In designing programs and allocating resources, policymakers should consider these temporal preferences and the popularity of certain activities. By doing so, they can ensure that programs are tailored to the needs and interests of the elderly, thereby maximizing participation and the associated health benefits. Community centers and public parks often serve as hubs for these activities, and their operational hours should align with the peak times of elderly participation. Furthermore, officials may consider organizing special events or classes at these times to encourage regular participation and to introduce a variety of activities that can cater to a wide range of interests and abilities within the elderly community.

This focus on time allocation and activity preferences is crucial as it moves beyond mere availability of resources and looks at the practical aspects of their usage. By aligning resources with the elderly's lifestyles and preferences, communities can significantly enhance the engagement levels and overall well-being of their senior citizens.

## 2.2 Sports Consumption Level

The consumption level of sports-related goods

and services plays a direct role in shaping the engagement of the elderly in physical activities. This encompasses expenses related to sports equipment, attending competitive events, and participation in organized sports activities, as showcased in **Figure 3**.



**Figure 3: The Elderly Sports Consumption Statistics**

The statistical data presented suggest that the primary channels of sports consumption for the elderly in China include participation in sports events and purchasing sports apparel and equipment. Compared to these, expenditures on viewing sports competitions and buying sports lottery tickets are relatively minor.

The inclination towards active participation in sports activities over passive consumption, such as spectating, indicates a desire for engagement and social interaction. This aspect is crucial for designing programs and facilities that cater to the elderly. It underscores the need for affordable and accessible sports offerings that encourage physical activity and foster community connections.

However, purchasing power and the financial ability to engage in such activities can be a limiting factor. It is important, therefore, for community leaders and policymakers to consider subsidizing the cost of sports activities or providing low-cost gear and apparel to ensure that all elderly individuals have the opportunity to participate, regardless of their economic status.

Facilities and organizations can further support elderly sports consumption by offering special discounts, designing custom sports programs, and promoting age-appropriate sports equipment. By enhancing the affordability and accessibility of sports for the elderly, communities can improve the physical and mental health outcomes for this demographic.

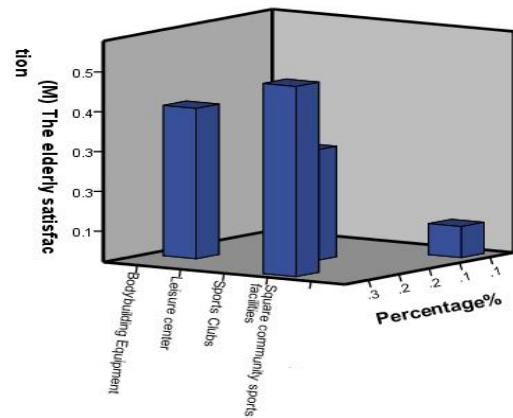
The data suggests a potential market for sports-related businesses to develop products and services that cater specifically to the elderly.

To stimulate and accommodate this demand, marketing strategies and product development should be aligned with the preferences and requirements of the elderly, with an emphasis on safety, ease of use, and the potential for social interaction.

In conclusion, understanding and supporting the sports consumption level of the elderly not only encourages a healthier lifestyle but also contributes to the broader economy by tapping into this growing demographic's needs and desires. Creating an environment where the elderly can actively participate in sports activities is essential for their well-being and can lead to increased overall participation in sports across the community.

**2.3 Construction of Sports Venues**

The development of sports venues is a critical component in fostering physical activity among the elderly, especially after cultivating a passion for sports within this demographic. The construction of these facilities must account for the unique needs of the elderly, which differ significantly from those of younger populations. As shown in **Figure 4**, there is a need for facilities that prioritize safety and accessibility, acknowledging the physical limitations that often come with age.



**Figure 4: Statistics on the Construction of Sports Venues**

The design and construction of sports venues for the elderly should incorporate several key features:

**Safety Measures:** Surfaces should be non-slip, and the area should be well-lit to prevent falls, which are a common risk for seniors. Equipment should be designed or selected with the user's safety in mind, with features such as enhanced grips, stable bases, and low-impact materials. **Accessibility:** Facilities should be

easily accessible, with ramps, elevators, and paths that accommodate wheelchairs and walkers. Moreover, the location of these venues should be within easy reach, preferably within the community, to encourage frequent use.

**Age-Appropriate Equipment:** Exercise equipment should be tailored to the strength and flexibility levels of elderly users. Resistance levels should be adjustable to cater to a range of abilities, and instructions should be clear to prevent misuse. **Rest Areas:** Adequate seating and rest areas should be provided for seniors to take breaks as needed during their exercise routines. **Health and Emergency Services:** Given the health risks associated with aging, it is essential to have medical equipment like defibrillators on-site and staff trained in basic first aid and emergency response protocols. **Program Diversity:** A variety of programs can cater to different interests and physical capacities, from low-impact exercises like tai chi and yoga to more vigorous activities like swimming and cycling, provided suitable safety measures are in place. The satisfaction levels of the elderly with community-based sports facilities are relatively high, indicating a positive response to investments in this area. Fitness equipment and sports clubs also play a role as activity venues, especially among more affluent senior citizens who have higher requirements and expectations for their exercise environments. By considering these factors, developers and city planners can better serve the elderly population, encouraging them to maintain active lifestyles. This is not only beneficial to the seniors themselves, providing them with opportunities for social interaction and physical health benefits, but also to the broader community, by promoting a holistic approach to wellness and active aging.

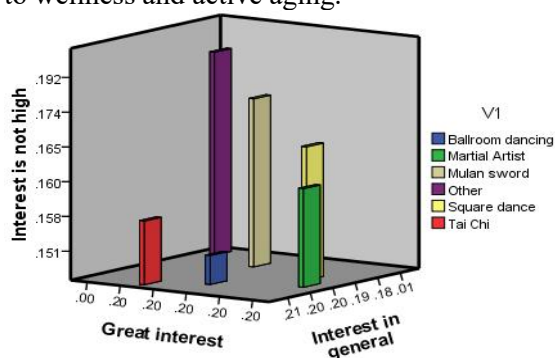


Figure 5: The Old Hobbies Statistics

## 2.4 Interests and Hobbies

Interests and hobbies play a pivotal role in shaping the consciousness and cultivation of sports participation among the elderly. A strong inclination towards sports can significantly motivate them to engage actively in physical activities and maintain high levels of enthusiasm, as depicted in **Figure 5**.

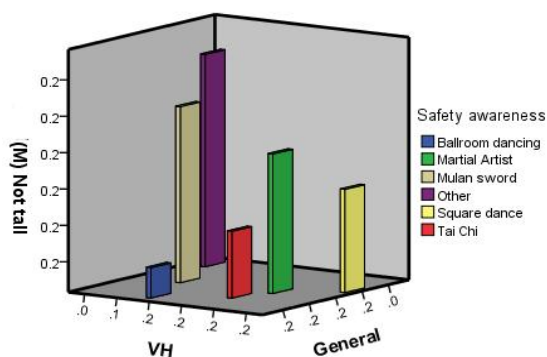
The formation of sports consciousness among the elderly is not merely about making sports facilities available; it is equally about aligning these facilities with the interests and hobbies that resonate with this demographic. For many seniors, the social aspect of physical activities, such as participating in group exercises or dance classes, is just as important as the physical benefits. Such activities do not only serve their fitness goals but also provide a platform for socializing and emotional fulfillment. To cater to the varying interests of the elderly, it is essential to offer a diverse range of activities. Some may prefer traditional, low-impact exercises such as tai chi, which is deeply rooted in Chinese culture and offers both physical and mental health benefits. Others might find joy in more dynamic activities like dancing, which not only improves cardiovascular health but also enhances coordination and balance. Moreover, some seniors might find a renewed sense of purpose and community in sports-related hobbies such as table tennis or badminton, which are popular and accessible forms of exercise among the elderly in China. These activities also open up opportunities for participating in competitions, which can be particularly motivating. Community centers and local sports clubs can facilitate interest-based sports groups or clubs, where the elderly can sign up based on their preferences. They can also organize regular classes, workshops, or tournaments to keep the elderly engaged and cater to a broad spectrum of interests. Additionally, technology can play a role in nurturing sports hobbies among the elderly. For instance, virtual classes and online communities can provide platforms for seniors to learn new forms of exercise, share their experiences, and connect with like-minded individuals, all from the comfort of their homes. Incorporating these diverse interests into the sports programs for the elderly can lead to the formation and reinforcement of a

strong sports consciousness. When sports activities align with their hobbies, the elderly are more likely to participate willingly and regularly, thus reaping the numerous benefits of an active lifestyle and contributing to their overall well-being.

The survey shows that the elderly have strong interest in magnolia sword, square dance, ballroom dance, martial arts and Tai chi, which benefits from the characteristics of these projects. Sports activities such as Magnolia sword and Tai chi are all self-cultivation projects for the elderly, which are very in line with the physical conditions of the elderly.

### 2.5 Sports Fitness Safety for the Elderly

Safety in sports fitness is a paramount concern when it comes to the elderly due to their vulnerability to physical injury and slower recovery times. This concern significantly impacts the development of the elderly sports population. In China, the satisfaction levels of the elderly regarding the safety of current sports and fitness facilities, along with their awareness of safety issues, require careful analysis, as shown in **Figure 6**.



**Figure 6: The Elderly Fitness Security**

The data presented in Figure 6 likely reveals both the perceived and actual safety of the sports facilities used by the elderly, and the extent to which safety awareness is propagated among them. It is crucial to assess the adequacy of the existing infrastructure, the availability of safety measures, and the effectiveness of safety education programs.

By addressing these areas, the satisfaction levels regarding safety among the elderly can be improved, leading to increased participation in sports and fitness activities. It is an investment not only in the physical well-being of the elderly population but also in their

confidence and autonomy, contributing to a more vibrant and active elderly community.

### 3. Conclusion

This paper provides an in-depth analysis of the factors influencing the participation of the elderly in sports activities, supported by statistical and mathematical models. The findings contribute to understanding the characteristics of China's elderly sports population and further promoting the development of healthy lifestyles for the elderly. The study reveals that China's sports population is predominantly young, with a low participation rate among the elderly. Despite the proportion of the population over 65 being around 7%, given China's large population base, this group is significant and should not be overlooked. Therefore, promoting the development of sports activities for the elderly is of great importance. The analysis of influencing factors indicates that interests and hobbies, along with the availability of sports facilities, are the primary drivers for encouraging elderly participation in sports activities. At the same time, considering the physical condition of the elderly, enhancing the safety of sports and fitness activities is an indispensable element in promoting elderly sports. The establishment of an optimal evaluation model further confirms that interests and hobbies are the most critical factors for the elderly when choosing sports and leisure activities, followed by the level of sports consumption and the assurance of safety during activities. This suggests that policymakers and community organizers should focus more on personalized and differentiated services, as well as creating a safe and reliable sports environment.

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