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ENHANCING SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING FOR THE ELDERLY VIA SHARED TERRITORIAL BONDING-TYPE RESIDENT ACTIVITY: MEANINGFUL CREATION OF INTERGENERATION EXCHANGE ACTIVITY DERIVED FROM 10,000 ELDERLY OF MORE THAN AGE SIXTY-FIVE

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Enhancing Subjective Wellbeing for the Elderly via Shared Territorial Bonding-Type Resident Activity: Meaningful Creation of Intergeneration Exchange Activity Derived from 10,000 Elderly of More than Age Sixty-Five

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ABSTRACT

This study endeavored to clarify the effects on subjective wellbeing of the elderly and resident activities in municipalities. We investigated the impact of resident activities in each on the subjective wellbeing of the elderly and to examine intergenerational exchange activities (IGEAs) that connected the young and elderly. Participants (male: 5000; female: 5000) of age 65 years and over residing all over the nation were subjects of the study. The study was conducted through an anonymous self-administered web survey on the internet. With subjective wellbeing expressed as the dependent variable, and various independent variables, including statistical data from municipalities, basic demographic attributes (gender, age, cohabitation family structure, place of residence, etc.), and participation in resident activities. Multiple regression analysis and structural equation modeling were employed for analysis purposes. The results showed that individual attributes such as annual income and age had a negative impact. Higher age and higher annual income were associated with reduced subjective wellbeing. In addition, all resident activities appeared to have favorable effects, indicating that engaging in any IGEA enhanced subjective wellbeing. The fi-

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nancial status of the municipalities where participants resided did not have a significant impact on subjective wellbeing when population density was excluded from the analysis. Furthermore, a model based on family composition and gender was established. Based on results of the present investigation, young and elderly participants engaging in shared territorial bonding-type resident activities yielded a meaningful mix of the young and the elderly. Through the present study - where Japan now is undergoing depopulation and cascading into a aging society - not only thinking of the unilateral tendency of the young supporting the elderly, but the coupling of increased connections between the elderly and the young nurture an aspect of fusing the weak and the strong from both age groups in IGEAs over time, and brings along activated interactive participations, where each side stand to learn and earn things 'new'. Our study highlights the positive effects of community involvement on the wellbeing of the elderly and underscores the potential benefits of promoting IGEAs that capitalize on the distinct features of individual communities.

Keywords: resident activities, young and elderly generations, IGEA, subjective wellbeing

1. 1. INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that the number of people surpassing 75 years of age – the baby boomers – will exceed 20 million in Japan by 2025 (Heisei 37). Additionally, the increasing in-sector population of those living alone and husband-wife couples with aging are most likely composed of senior citizen households and elderly with cognitive deficits. Therefore, in the pursuit of realizing a society where even those with severe care needs can live with dignity in their familiar surroundings until then end of their lives, the building of a 'community-based integrated care system' is being promoted. In line with this goal, innovation and reform have been initiated to shift healthcare systems based on a 'hospital-centric' approach to a 'community-centric' model, providing support throughout the entire community. However, when attention is focused on the communal society per se, it is noticed that previously cultivated community citizen networks have become less connected at present. This is due to socio-environmental changes such as increases in the quantity of multiple-dwelling housing such as mansions and apartments and lifestyle patterns and life values among the local residents that have become more diverse and disconnected: interest-concern networks seem to more likely to cascade into the use of physically separated and impersonal internet connections. As a result, the number and quality of neighborhood connections developed through in-person exchange and face-to-face communication have waned and dwindled, and have been accompanied with a growing sense of indifference over time.

Recent restrictions on community events due to Covid-19 pandemic have exacerbated this disconnect-edness within communities. Furthermore, severe problems have arisen the shared bonding-type resident activities of territorial community by disturbing the lineup of appropriate participants, coupled with resignation of some due to aging, and curtailing the activity or participation of supporting members of the community such as those hitherto community-supporting neighborhood associations (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, 2022).¹ Given such challenges, it is imperative not to rely only on the long-term nursing care insurance system to support home-confined dwelling elderly, but also to foster life-supporting services for basic and mutual supporting services within the community as a whole. This approach is crucial for addressing the needs of both the elderly and the broader community.

One effective strategy to resolve these challenges is to promote intergenerational exchange activities (IGEAs) between local youth and elders. IGEAs aim to foster and deepen mutual understanding across generations within a community. By encouraging IGEAs to place both age-groups on an equal footing before mutually interactive activities are commenced, these activities contribute to community-building support initiatives. The factors inhibiting the attractiveness of the Fujiwara IGEAs include: 1) the latent conflicts between generations; 2) a reduced sense of necessity for the vital IGEAs due to disturbance it causes to their daily-life; 3) responsibility/burden on the part of staff planning and executing intergenerational programs.² Of the Fujiwara inhibitory factors, resolving the issues related to 1) and 2) enhances the bene-

fits for both sides involved. As for, factor 3), the burden on staff is likely to diminish when both parties are aware of the merits of IGEAs. In essence, to promote IGEAs effectively, it is important to establish a win-win relationship where both parties can identify and appreciate the respective benefits they derive from IGEA participation.

In inter-generation exchange (IGE), a program that yields a win-win situation for both generations/parties, is being investigated at the Nursing Department of Tachibana University (our university department). Studies involving experiments and seminars related to community residents from various perspectives and/or in various settings have already been completed. In cases where a certain merit to the elderly has been found, however, it is common to focus on matters/events that relate to issues or difficulties in their daily lives. However, there were cases where participants gave up IGE activities due to inconvenience, or when the elderly did not understand the benefits of IGEAs, it becomes difficult to make the exchange/event successful. In such situations, it is more productive to shift the perspective towards promoting IGEAs that enhance happiness. This change of mindset can potentially facilitate participation by both young and elderly individuals.

Previous studies³⁻⁶ have clarified that it is possible to enrich subjective wellbeing and happiness via social participation in local community organizations and the accumulation of social capital can enhance the subjective wellbeing and happiness of the elderly. Additionally, regardless of gender-specific perspectives, Shishido⁷ has pointed out that there are 4 determinants of subjective wellbeing for the pre-elderly (age group: 60-74 years): employment status, family relationships, participation in community activities, and participation in leisure activities. Based on these analytical results, factors such as the cohabitation with a spouse or a family situation that involves living with children tend to influence elderly males more, while the ability to participate in local community activity tend to affect elderly females more. Therefore, in planning IGEA to enhance the subjective wellbeing of the elderly, it is vital to look into elements involving presence of cohabitants and involvement in local community activities, taking into account these gender-specific factors.

The primary objective of this research was to examine the direction of useful activities that promote IGEAs by investigating individual traits and territorial models of resident activity that impact the subjective wellbeing of the elderly. Especially for territorial model of resident activities, which may vary significantly among local municipalities, have a considerable impact on the wellbeing of individual residents. Therefore, we considered the examination of the relationship between these factors to be a crucial guideline when determining the direction of IGEAs should take to be tailored to the characteristics of each community.

Specifically, by focusing on basic self-governing municipalities, we aimed to clarify whether community features such as population density, financial status, etc., along with participation in resident activities and individual traits, influence the subjective wellbeing of the elderly. Our goal was to contribute to the creation of policies that facilitate opportunities for IGEAs between young and elderly individuals.

2. STUDY OBJECTIVES

First we clarify the effects of IGEAs on subjective wellbeing of the elderly and resident activity in the respective self-governing municipalities. Then, we examine how the IGEAs connect the young and the elderly.

Our second objective is to investigate the impact of resident activities in each municipality on the subjective wellbeing of the elderly and to examine intergenerational exchange activities that allow young and elderly individuals to engage with each other. We will begin by elucidating the effects of resident activities on the subjective wellbeing of the elderly within each self-governing municipality before delving into the analysis of IGEAs.

3. METHODS

3.1 Plan Outline

Participants (male: 5000; female: 5000) of age 65 years and over residing all over the nation were subjects of the study. The study was conducted through an anonymous self-administered web survey on the internet. Participants were recruited from the pool of registered monitors of a private survey company (Rakuten Inside). The primary independent variable in the analysis was the subjective wellbeing of the participants, while the dependent variables included basic demographics (gender, age, family cohabitation structure, place of residence, etc.), as well as municipal statistics from the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications (MPMHAPT) and the Cabinet Office. The focus of the analysis was the participants' engagement in resident activities.

3.2 Data derived from male and female subjects of 65 years or over

- 1) Subjective wellbeing:⁸ based on a 15-item questionnaire, using a 4-point Likert scale
- 2) Basic demographic information (gender, age, family cohabitation structure, cohabitation site, etc.)
- 3) Participation in resident activity and frequency (4 territories; 18 activities)

3.3 Data from municipalities

- 1) Population, area, population density
- 2) Financial situation (financial capability index, ordinary balance ratio, actual performance ratio, future burden ratio, Laspeyres index)
- 3) Information analysis

With subjective wellbeing expressed as the dependent variable, and various independent variables, including statistical data from municipalities, basic demographic attributes (gender, age, cohabitation family structure, place of residence, etc.), and participation in resident activities. Multiple regression analysis and structural equation modeling were employed for analytical purposes.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Participants were required to provide informed consent after reviewing and comprehending the information provided about the research's purpose, significance, methodology, the freedom to withdraw, and the handling of personal information. They could only access the questionnaire after agreeing to these terms, as provided on the survey company's website. Anonymity was ensured by separating login information when retrieving the survey results from the research company. Additionally, the study procedures were conducted in accordance with the approval obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the researcher's affiliated institution (Approval Number 22-23).

4. RESULTS

Table 1: Age, gender and number of participants of the study

| 4.1 Outline of participants of investigation | Participants (n) = 10,000 | | |
|--|---------------------------|---------|------|
| | Gender | Male | 5000 |
| Participants (n=10,000) were 5,000 male and 5,000 females, where 90% were in their 60s or 70s (Table 1). Household compositions were in the order of married couples (51.2%), married couples with children (17.1%), and singles (16.7%) (Fig. 1). | Age group | Female | 5000 |
| | | 60s | 5263 |
| | | 70s | 4275 |
| | | 80s | 410 |
| | | 90s | 52 |
| The locations of the survey participants were as follows: Metropolitan areas like Tokyo and Kanagawa Prefecture had the highest number of participants, | Gender + Age Group | M / 60s | 2652 |
| | | M / 70s | 2143 |
| | | M / 80s | 195 |
| | | M / 90s | 10 |
| | | F / 60s | 2611 |
| | | F / 70s | 2132 |
| | | F / 80s | 215 |
| | | F / 90s | 42 |

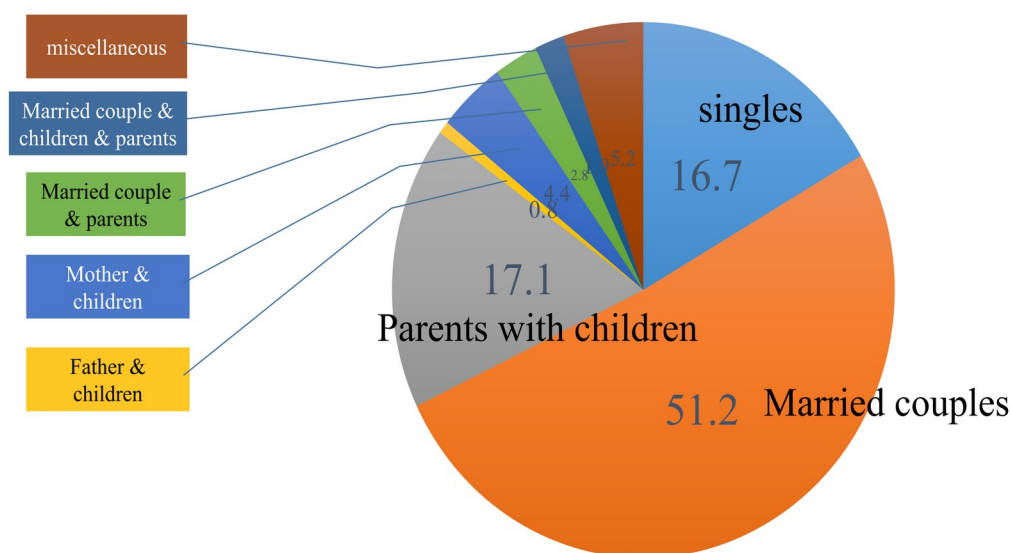


Fig. 1: Family makeup (co-inhabitation) of participants

reaching the recruitment limit of 398 individuals, while Shimane Prefecture had the lowest number, with only 117 participants.

The mean measured scores for subjective wellbeing were 42.09 ± 6.38 , with males and females accounting for scores of 42.05 ± 6.19 and 42.13 ± 6.56 , respectively. Reliability of the scores was confirmed with a Cronbach alpha (α) coefficient of 0.905. For comparison, the scores from another study with results of from 330 participants from their 40s to 70s were that males in their 50s had subjective wellbeing scores of 34.69 ± 4.86 , and 60s to 70s scoring 36.98 ± 4.49 , while females in their 50s had scores of 35.33 ± 4.02 and those in their 60s to 70s had scores of 36.61 ± 4.46 .⁹ Furthermore, a study of 331 university students by Ishihara,¹⁰ showed scores of 32.00 ± 4.06 . These findings suggest that the results of our present study are likely to be more reliable than other studies.

To derive the frequency of residents participating in community activities, we divided the types of resident activities into 4 categories: social education, social welfare/volunteer, healthy upbringing, and community social. We then compiled and graded the frequency of resident participation in each activity type as follows: none (=1); few times a year (=2); several times a month (=3); several times a week (=4); and daily activity (=5). The scores were then pooled to derive a mean frequency of resident activity by dividing the sum of these values by the number of sub-items. The means \pm standard deviations in frequency of participation in the 4 categories were as follows: social education activity 1.28 ± 0.50 ; social welfare/volunteer activity 1.25 ± 0.40 ; youth healthy upbringing 1.10 ± 0.26 ; and community social activity 1.28 ± 0.33 .

The support for resident activities relied on the financial situation and population density of the municipalities. The data were obtained from the Financial Statistical Annual Report of municipalities provided by the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications (MPMHAPT). It included metrics such as the financial capability index, ordinary balance ratio, actual public ratio, future burden ratio, Laspeyres index, and population density, as reported in the 2020 Annual Report of the MPMHAPT,

4.2 Constructing a model that enhances subjective wellbeing

Expressing the dependent variables as subjective wellbeing, the independent variables express individual attributes (age, annual income), resident activity (social education activity, social welfare/volunteer activity, youth healthy upbringing activity, communal social activity), municipal financial status (financial capability index, ordinary balance ratio, actual public achievement ratio, future burden ratio, Laspeyres index), and population density as results of summed up covariance structure analysis. The results showed that individual attributes like annual income and age had a negative impact. Higher age and higher annual income were associated with reduced subjective wellbeing. In addition, all resident activities appeared to have favorable effects, indicating that engaging in any of these activities enhanced

subjective wellbeing. The financial status of the municipalities where participants resided did not have a significant impact on subjective wellbeing, and population density was excluded from the model (CFI = .0919, RMSEA = .048, AIC = 1334.092) (Fig. 2). Furthermore, attempts were made to create models based on family composition and gender, but no well-fitting models could be established.

5. DISCUSSION

In this study involving 10,000 elderly individuals aged 65 and above, the relationship between the extent of resident activity and the characteristics of the municipalities they lived in was investigated. The results revealed that various resident activities had a significant impact on subjective wellbeing. Moreover, while the details of financial resources, such as government or local government subsidies, supporting resident activities were unclear, it was evident that financially prosperous municipalities did not necessarily lead to higher subjective wellbeing among the elderly. Additionally, factors like population density, individual annual income, and family composition in rural and metropolitan areas did not have a significant impact on the subjective wellbeing of the elderly.

Based on these results, it is vital to study how to create intergenerational connections between the young and the elderly. As mentioned above, interventions that harness the energy of the younger generation to address the challenges faced by the elderly in their daily lives are straightforward, and have been reported as successful in various examples across the country. For the elderly, the advantages of intergenerational exchange activities (IGEAs) lie in the social utilization of their abilities, wisdom, and experiential knowledge, as well as the inheritance of generational continuity through historical and cultural exchanges, contributing to the integration of life. However, in tandem with this positive development, the elderly would change their life patterns in order to not cause troubles for others (as they imagined), resulting in unconsciously creating 'new' issues to resolve. As a result, the elderly might become introverted and reluctant to participate in IGEAs. Therefore, the challenge of how to intervene with elderly individuals who are unaware or unconcerned about IGEAs has become a significant point highlighted in this study. Philosopher Immanuel Kant and psychologist Maslow and many other scholars have documented previously that pursuit of happiness and wellbeing is a fundamental human desire. Furthermore, social characters accommodating with others in the community through resident activities have been documented in numerous studies on human health as well as wellbeing and happiness.¹¹⁻¹³ In this study, as in previous research, it was evident that activities without hierarchical structures, such as community engagement, contribute to increased subjective wellbeing. However, community activities based on territorial associations, like neighborhood associations that have traditionally supported local activities, are facing serious challenges such as a shortage of volunteers, an aging population, and rigid role assignments. This situation has accelerated due to concerns that newcomers may feel unable to leave these organizations once they join. The findings of this study also suggest that many individuals are not participating in these community activities, as indicated by the means and standard deviations of the four categories of resident activities: social education activity 1.28 (± 0.50), social welfare/volunteer activity 1.25 (± 0.40), youth healthy upbringing activity 1.10 (± 0.26), and community social activity 1.28 (± 0.33). However, local municipalities are considering various measures to alleviate the burden of participating in these activities (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2022).¹⁴

Based on results of the present investigation, young and elderly participants involving shared territorial bonding-type resident activities yielded a meaningful mix of the young and the elderly. For example, organizing sports events with young individuals in leadership roles can lead to increased participation and the acquisition by young people of valuable skills they need as they transition into society. Simultaneously, the elderly can focus on enjoying the sports activities. Additionally, activities like crime prevention patrols, conducted in collaboration with local safety organizations, can build stronger relationships between local clubs and neighborhood associations, potentially expanding the scope of future activities. Building a win-win relationship between the elderly and young participants helps to reduce the burden and operational load of participating in the activity. This makes it easier for all participants to join the shared territorial bonding-type resident activity and encourages participation in the event activity. This eventually increases the number of participants, as all can find ways to pursue wellbeing and happiness. Here are some activities that serve as evidence for this approach.

In our university, we are planning to jointly operate Physical Fitness Test activities with the Senior

Club Union of Otsu City, Shiga Prefecture in 2023. We were first invited by the Senior Club Union to assist with the event. We had a limited number of teaching staff and some students for a start; but as students began to realize the limited physical ability of the elderly, the nursing students decided to join in the event when we decided to plan a training session for our students to create an opportunity for them to interact with the elderly living in the vicinity of the campus. During the training sessions, students were paired with elderly participants, and the number of participants increased by 150%. To date, the training sessions continue to attract participants in growing numbers and with increased enthusiasm. Through cooperation between the university staff and the senior Club officers, project organization developed smoothly through effective cooperation amongst all parties. Each nursing student helped out taking measurements and recording the relevant data, making the initiative mutually beneficial to both them and the other organizers.

Through the present study - where Japan now is undergoing depopulation and cascading into an aging society - not only thinking of the unilateral tendency of the young supporting the elderly, but the coupling of increased connections between the elderly and the young nurture an aspect of fusing the weak and the strong from both age groups in this IGEA over time, brings along activated interactive participations, where each side stand to learn and earn things 'new'. By incorporating the young and elderly generations living and supporting the same community, IGEAs such as described in this study create new value and the establish meaningful relationships and cultural connections for all involved. I strongly believe that these interactions between different generations, each contributing to the vitality of their communities, will result in the emergence of new and enriched perspectives on life.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on a total of 10,000 elderly of more than age 60, we investigated the relationships between the degree of resident activity and unique characteristics of onsite-dwelling municipal communities. Our findings revealed that various forms of community involvement have a significant impact on subjective well-being. In addition, the blessing of strong financial support from basic self-governing associations, population density, individual annual income, and family makeups did not – in any way – influence the subjective wellbeing of the elderly, suggesting that the significance of IGEAs in triggering onsite special community features of a community may be its constructive role in fostering young-and-elderly cohabitation and individual wellbeing.

In summary, the study highlights the positive effects of community involvement on the wellbeing of the elderly and underscores the potential benefits of promoting intergenerational exchange activities that capitalize on the distinct features of individual communities.

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