

# *Research on Stress about Elderly Care for Young People*

Yuecheng Shi<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Beijing No.4 High School International Campus, Beijing, 100031, China

a. k\_syc@sina.com

\*corresponding author

**Abstract:** People have been bothered by anxiety. Studies have shown that the elderly may feel stressed about future life. Few essays focused on the anxiety of younger generations' worries about future post-retirement life, which is going to be the main focus of the study. The research surveyed 101 samples to obtain information on the anxiety level of youth and the causes. By analyzing these samples, attention should be paid to the anxiety of the younger generation, and it varies from person to person. The main reasons for anxiety were concerns about financial issues, loneliness, and illness. Those reasons show rather a large amount of overlap with the anxiety of the elderly due to similar issues: the fear of being accompanied and the financial issues. Besides, some objective factors contributed to anxiety positively: the number of children and the parent's marital status, while their marital status and the number of siblings hurt the participants' stress levels.

**Keywords:** Stress, elderly care, anxiety, young people

## 1. Introduction

It is generally recognized that if the total fertility rate (the average number of children per woman of childbearing age) of a country or region falls below 2.1, the number of newborns will not be sufficient to make up for the lack of parents. 1992 saw China's total fertility rate fall below 2.1 (1.98), and after 1995, it remained at 1.6–1.7 for a long period. The results of the Seventh Population Census indicated that China has been experiencing a trend of population aging compared with the results of previous population censuses. Although the proportion of the population aged 65 or above (generally regarded as the elderly population) has continued to rise, the increase has generally been no more than two percentage points per decade. However, according to the results of the current census, the proportion of older people in the population has been increasing.

However, according to the results of the current Census, the proportion of the elderly in the population has not only exceeded 10% (13.5%) for the first time but has also increased by a surprising 4.63%, indicating that the aging of the population is accelerating [1].

The dramatic social, political, cultural, and economic changes of the past decades have led to a change in climate and the shrinking and reconfiguration of the "family" [2]. With urbanization and modernization, parent-child equality, emotional exchange, and understanding have gradually replaced traditional notions of the superiority and inferiority of children and families [3–4]. However, not all characteristics disappeared or changed in the process; many others remained [5]. People are beginning to feel unsettled and anxious about life after retirement.

In China, the idea of "raising children to prevent old age" has long existed. Although traditional attitudes vary from place to place, according to research, in general, older people in China still rely on the care brought by their families [6]. Previously, the Chinese government issued the one-child policy, and the new system developed during this period troubled not only individuals but also society as a whole. Under the influence of the "family planning policy", families gradually revealed a new family structure of "four-two-one," including four elderly people, a couple, and a child. As a result, under the traditional concept of "raising children for old age", the burden of labor on the only child will become heavier as time passes. This pressure directly affects the harmony and stability of the population, which accounts for one-third of society, and China's old-age care business is facing unprecedented challenges [7]. At the same time, some argue that only a child is capable of taking care of the elderly and that people have exaggerated the seriousness of the problem of one-child families supporting the elderly [8].

Previous studies have focused on how the elderly cope with their anxieties and analyzed how society as a whole cope with these anxieties through, for example, insurance rates [9–10] and the elderly's choices in old age. There seems to be less focus on the younger and soon-to-be-retired group. Based on this, the author designed this study to try to fill in this gap—whether or not young adults also feel stressed out when they think about their lives after retirement and the main causes of these anxieties.

A survey is on the way, targeting the general public, to ask for their level of anxiety when they think of their lives after retirement and then about what causes them to be like this. Meanwhile, social background was also being asked in the survey to back up their response. By analyzing the results of the survey, the study could come up with a comprehensive conclusion.

## 2. Research Design

### 2.1. Methods and Results

The study involved a survey and sampling via the Internet and received a total of 101 sample responses from all around China. Since the original survey targets the Chinese population, it was designed in Chinese. To make them understandable, further explanations about those questions will include a direct English translation. The survey contained two parts of information. The first part is: Do they feel anxious considering post-retirement life? The study designed a direct and explicit question that directly asked: "When thinking about your elderly care, are you anxious?" and a horizontal axis accompanied by a scale from 0 (not anxious at all) to 100 (extremely anxious). In this question, the average score is 52.21, and the standard deviation is 24.89. The second part asks for the respondents' background, and the author will elaborate on the results in the third part of this paper.

### 2.2. Research objects

The questionnaire has been published via email invitation. Of all the received samples, in 101 samples in total, 53 (52.48%) samples are people between 18 and 30 years old, 37 (36.63%) samples are between the ages 30 and 50, 4 (3.96%) samples are under the age of 18, 7 (6.93%) samples are between 50 and 70 years old, and no samples come from people above the age of 70. In this survey, around 72 samples (71.29%) have a bachelor's degree or above (including 7 (6.93%) samples owning master's degrees and no one owning a doctorate's degree). 3 (2.97%) samples' highest education is junior high school. 7 (6.93%) samples' highest education is normal high school. 4 (3.96%) samples' highest education is vocational high school, and 15 (14.85%) samples' highest education is junior college. Based on those, the general explanation is mainly suitable for people who check their email often, mainly received a high level of education, between the ages of 18 and 50 (those groups of people may become independent but are not yet directly facing retirement).

### 3. Results

The background-related questions begin with: “What is the reason that contributes most to your anxiety?” This appears to be a sequencing question: participants can choose the factors that correlate with their anxiety and get an order of priority for those reasons. This way, the answer will not only include the specific reason for the anxiety but also the relative importance of those reasons.

The following table is a list of the ten reasons listed in the questionnaire. Please notice that since the original survey is in Chinese and is only being spread around China, all questions, including the reasons, are the ones the author translated herself. The author tries her best to keep the meanings consistent with the original ones. In the following explanation, the author will mainly elaborate on two aspects: how many people choose the orders of those, and the average importance of this option. If the subject listed this reason first, the system labeled it 10. If it were ranked second, it appears to be 9, and so on. If the subject did not select this option, it was marked 0.

Table 1: The Causes of elderly care anxiety

	Ten reasons are listed in the questionnaire.	Total people choosing this choice (people)
About Money	Worrying about not having enough savings.	86
	Medical care is too expensive	77
	Worrying about the unanticipated future, including life after retirement.	80
	Worrying about social insurance not covering the annuity.	71
About mental situation	Afraid that no one is taking care of the sick.	71
	Afraid of loneliness.	66
	I cannot accept my aging.	62
	I am unwilling to see people around aging.	61
	I am not anxious at all so no reason.	14
Others	Others(please clarify)	1

In Table 1, the “others” choice is clarified “Because I do not want to have children at present, the pension may depend on society, so the participant was worried that the nursing home would not be developed and humane enough after she entered the retirement age”.

Table 2: The relative importance of the causes

options	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨	⑩
Average Importance	7.34	6.14	6.03	4.8	4.72	3.99	3.34	3.21	0.82	0.1
1st place	53(61.63%)	22(28.57%)	8(10%)	3(4.23%)	2(2.82%)	3(4.55%)	3(4.84%)	2(3.28%)	5(35.71%)	0(0%)
2nd place	7(8.14%)	26(33.77%)	23(28.75%)	13(18.31%)	10(14.08%)	4(6.06%)	5(8.06%)	3(4.92%)	1(7.14%)	1(10.00%)
3rd place	2(2.33%)	6(7.79%)	18(22.5%)	13(18.31%)	17(23.94%)	14(21.21%)	4(6.45%)	7(11.48%)	1(7.14%)	0(0%)
4th place	8(9.3%)	7(9.09%)	10(12.5%)	15(21.13%)	13(18.31%)	7(10.61%)	9(14.52%)	4(6.56%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
5th place	6(6.98%)	2(2.6%)	9(11.25%)	7(9.86%)	10(14.08%)	12(18.18%)	7(11.29%)	9(14.75%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
6th place	2(2.33%)	5(6.49%)	6(7.5%)	11(15.49%)	9(12.68%)	9(13.64%)	8(12.9%)	10(16.39%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
7th place	6(6.98%)	5(6.49%)	6(7.5%)	5(7.04%)	5(7.04%)	9(13.64%)	8(12.9%)	12(19.67%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
8th place	2(2.33%)	4(5.19%)	0(0%)	4(5.63%)	5(7.04%)	7(10.61%)	17(27.42%)	13(21.31%)	2(4.29%)	0(0%)
9th place	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	1(1.52%)	1(1.61%)	1(1.64%)	5(35.71%)	0(0%)
10th place	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Standard deviation	3.6887305	3.9227188	3.4370434	3.51288998	3.49174415	3.37336686	3.18520714	3.05717789	2.47950011	0.89553347

In Table 2, ①represents worrying about not having enough savings; ②represents medical care being too expensive; ③represents worrying about the unanticipated future, including life after retirement; ④represents worrying about social insurance not covering the annuity; ⑤represents being afraid that no one is taking care of the sick; ⑥ represents being afraid of loneliness, ⑦ represents I cannot accept myself aging, ⑧represents I am unwilling to see people around aging, ⑨ represents I am not anxious at all so no reason, ⑩represents Others(please clarify).

The next few questions in the survey are the ones asking basic information about the participants.

The first one of them was, “May I ask your marital status?”. 62 (61.39%) samples clicked on the answer “married”; 2 (1.98%) samples clicked on “divorced”; and 37 (36.63%) samples clicked on the answer “unmarried”. The next question was: “Do you have any children?”. Among the samples, 33 (32.6%) participants selected “have one child” 18 (17.82%) participants selected “have two children,” 47 (46.53%) participants selected “no children”, and 2 (1.98%) participants selected “unwilling to provide specific information”. The next question was, " What is the marital status of your parents?". 82 (81.19%) participants ended with the choice “married well and happily”; 4 (3.96%) participants ended with the choice “divorced”; 10 (9.9%) participants ended with the choice "others"; and 5 (4.95%) participants ended with the choice “reluctant to reveal details”.

The last but not least question was, “How many brothers and sisters do you have?”. 34 (33.66%) participants are the only children in their family. 34 (33.66%) participants have one brother or sister; 20 (19.8%) participants have two brothers or sisters; 10 (9.9%) participants have three brothers or sisters; 2 (1.98%) participants have four brothers or sisters; and 1 (0.99%) participants have more or equal to five brothers or sisters.

Table 3: The correlation between each variable and the level of anxiety

	Questions	Results
Correlation analysis	How does the participants' marital status correlate with their anxiety level?	-0.06
	Correlation between the number of children of subjects and anxiety values.	0.30
	Correlation between the number of siblings and anxiety values in subjects.	-0.15
	Correlation between subjects' parents' marital status and anxiety values.	0.019
	Correlation between choosing “worrying about not having enough savings” and anxiety values.	0.37
	Correlation between choosing “medical care is too expensive” and anxiety values.	0.28
	Correlation between choosing “worrying about the unanticipated future, including life after retirement” and anxiety values.	0.14
	Correlation between choosing “worrying about social insurance cannot cover the annuity” and anxiety values.	0.25
	Correlation between choosing “Afraid that no one is taking care of the sick” and anxiety values.	0.33
	Correlation between choosing “Afraid of Loneliness” and anxiety values.	0.25

Table 3: (continued).

	Correlation between choosing “I cannot accept myself as aging” and anxiety values.	0.16
	Correlation between choosing “I am unwilling to see people around aging” and anxiety values.	0.08
	Correlation between choosing “I am not anxious at all so no reason” and anxiety values.	-0.52
	Correlation between choosing “others” and anxiety values.	-0.08
	Correlation between participants' age and anxiety values.	0.24
	Correlation between participants' education attainment and anxiety values.	0.12

Note: Some changes aimed at changing those word responses into numbers are happening in this form, following the rules below: For education attainment, I changed “Junior High School education” into 1, “Vocational High School” into 2, “Normal High School” into 3, “Junior College” into 4, “Bachelor's degree” into 5, “Master's degree” into 6, “Doctor degree” into 7. For the participant's marital status, I replaced “Unmarried” with 1, “Married” with 2, and “Divorced” with 0.5. For the participants' number of siblings, I replaced “I am the only child” with 0, “I have one sibling” with 1, and so on. For the participants' parents' marital status, I replaced “others” with 1, “happy marriage” with 2, and “divorced” with 0.5.

The correlation data is kept to two decimal places.

#### 4. Discussion and Reflection

From the table, first of all, this data is reliable as the value of the choice “I am not anxious at all, so no reason” has the biggest negative correlation with participants' anxiety levels.

Starting with the first and foremost question, are people feeling anxious when thinking of their post-retirement life? In this question, the average score is 52.21 and the standard deviation is 24.89. This shows that anxiety among young adults about their future post-retirement lives is a problem to a certain extent since 52.21 is a high score and is greater than half. However, it may not be as annoying as we expected since this rather high standard deviation shows that people vary greatly on this problem. It bothered different people differently.

By analyzing the results, there are mainly two questions that bothered adults the most when thinking about post-retirement life.

Accompany: The only two choices of negatively correlated factors except the “I am not anxious at all, so no reason” choices are marital status and the number of siblings. These two represent close relatives accompanied by participants of similar age. However, since the “number of children” has the 2nd largest positive correlation with anxiety level, having people to accompany may not always contribute to less anxiety. Only those who have similar ages can contribute. Also, when analyzing the correlations, although the data showed a negative correlation, there was no significant difference in population statistics.

Financial status: by directly analyzing the responses, more than half 53(61.63%) of the participants selected “worrying about not having enough savings” as their top cause of anxiety. On average, 86 out of 101 (around 85.15%) participants selected “worrying about not having enough savings” as one of their reasons. The second choice is “worrying about the unanticipated future, including life after retirement”. The second top is “Medical care is too expensive”. The third top reason is “worrying about social insurance cannot cover the annuity”. For the correlation numbers, although the choices “Afraid that no one is taking care of the sick” and “Afraid of loneliness” do not receive that much selection, they have a high correlation with the level of anxiety.

Despite the two main reasons listed above, some other factors contribute to the anxiety toward post-retirement life. The first one is the context of the time, since this survey was conducted in 2023 and from 2023.9.13 to 9.19. While society is changing and unstable, people tend to seek a more stable life; for the choice that mentions costly medical care, I believe that COVID-19 also contributes to that. It seems that diseases are not as far away from us as we previously thought. The second one may be age. Age shows a high positive correlation with the level of anxiety.

By analyzing the standard deviation, the relative importance of the choices seems to have a positive correlation with a higher standard deviation. While those subjective perceptions have a smaller standard deviation, fewer people chose these options. With the consideration of more factors, we can see that age correlates to anxiety level with a positive value of 0.24. Parent's marital status correlates positively, but is rather small, only 0.08. Interestingly, “worrying about the unanticipated future, including life after retirement,” has a high score overall but only correlates to an anxiety level of around 0.14. The results are also compared to a similar study in 2016.

However, in the 2016 survey, they set the score of the public's psychological expectation of old age between 20 and 100, with 60 as the critical value, and the higher the score, the higher the public's expectation of old age and the more optimistic their attitude towards their expectation of old age. The average value of the public's expectation of old age in the survey is 70.8 percent, which is higher than the critical value, indicating that the public's expectation of old age in 2016 is more optimistic in general [11]. However, my survey shows that in 2023, on a scale from 0 (not anxious at all) to 100 (extremely anxious), the average score will be 52.21. Compared to 2016, participants seem to be worrying more.

There are similarities and differences among the reasons: Young people are more optimistic than middle-aged people [11]. As seen from our correlation analysis, age has a positive (0.243055143463502) correlation with depth of anxiety. Married people are more optimistic than unmarried people [11]. As seen from our correlation analysis, marital status has a negative (-0.0624206351378653) correlation with depth of anxiety. Non-only children are more optimistic than only children [11]. From our correlation analysis, the number of siblings has a negative (-0.156319284180362) correlation with the depth of anxiety.

There are also a few differences: research done by Zhao Ziyang, and Huangxi shows that groups with children are more optimistic than those without [11]. From our correlation analysis, a number of children positively (0.304866961113527) correlate with anxiety. Some of those results also coincide with the results of anxiety in the elderly. Marital relationships are the most important social relationships for the elderly [12]. The partner can not only provide material and living assistance but also provide mental support, and some studies have shown that the spouse is the key to determining the sense of well-being of the elderly [13]. The higher the level of education, the higher the level of anxiety. As we can conclude from the correlation chart, education level does have a positive (0.12) correlation with anxiety level.

However, a few of these causes are different from those of the elderly: The research done by Guo Yu, and Zhang Yin-kai points out that the more children there are, the lower the level of anxiety about

old age [9]. However, in the data expressed in this paper, as shown in the correlation chart, the number of children has a positive correlation with the level of anxiety.

While the thesis is only the first step in truly understanding an issue, the analysis and conclusions of this study are rather sketchy, and I look forward to further research to refine them. For example, when I attempted to investigate the causes of anxiety, the options were naturally listed in a certain fixed order due to the limitations of the survey software. When reflecting on the data, it was found that the options that came first received a larger number of people chosen. This may have caused some confusion in analyzation.

Also, from this data, correlations and further experiments may lead to further causation or at least more reliable solutions. Also, for example, further research could focus more on specific geographical areas, such as specific areas in specific cities, to further control variables and further analyze the cultural reasons behind these anxieties. Alternatively, face-to-face surveys could be used to diminish the possible effects of the uneven distribution and use of electronic devices and gain a more holistic perspective: for example the division into urban or rural areas [14], as this is a factor influencing the level of anxiety in older adults [9].

This study also excluded other factors that have been shown to influence participants' willingness to age in place. [12] There is a need to organize all those issues together for a comprehensive view.

In addition, the author used direct surveys and self-reported data to assess anxiety levels, and further research could also use a well-established scale or a newly designed implicit measure to support our analysis. A key feature of implicit measures is that they invest considerable effort in capturing psychological attributes (e.g., attitudes, stereotypes, and self-esteem) without requiring participants to report subjective assessments of these factors [15]. Whether or not a measurement is implicit depends on the underlying procedure. In other words, a result is indirect if it does not result from an accurate self-assessment by the participant [16].

Implicit measurement has several characteristics: it is likely to be uncontrollable; it is likely to preclude social desirability; it is vulnerable to strategic influences to some extent; it cannot be used as a polygraph; and it is at least as vulnerable to environmental influences as compared to explicit measurement [15]. The groundwork for this has been laid by the development of mathematical modeling techniques [17–18], in which measurements are viewed as behaviors that require psychological explanation rather than as direct reflections of psychological constructs that can be used to explain behavior [15]. Implicit measurement can be seen as a possible alternative to direct investigation.

## 5. Conclusion

The study looked at a sample of 101 people and collected information on the level of anxiety and the causes of anxiety among young adults. By analyzing these samples, the anxiety of the younger generation about research should be given attention, which is significantly validated between people. In the study, causation, or at least a more reliable solution, is achieved. In future studies, more specific regions, cities, and further control variables will be specifically investigated. They could also focus on the underlying mechanisms of measurement itself and its ability to predict behavior.

## References

- [1] Zhao Tingchen." *Population Aging in China: Current situation, Causes, and Countermeasures.*" *Tsinghua Financial Review*.04(2022):53-56.
- [2] Ma Chunhua, et al." *Trends and recent Findings of urban family changes in China.*" *Sociological Research* 25.02(2011):182-216+246.
- [3] Yan, Y. 2016, "Intergenerational Intimacy and Descending Familism in Rural China." *American Anthropologist*118(2).



- [4] Zhang Xhui, and Li Jianxin. "Changes in modernization and changes in family status of the elderly: A case study of economic decision-making power of intergenerational households. *Population and Economics*.04(2019):94-106.
- [5] Wang Yuesheng, 2019, *Changes, Problems and Adjustment of Family Intergenerational Relations in Social Change, Research on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*, No.3.
- [6] Hu Anning, 2017, "Children's Diverse support for Parents in the context of Aging: Ideas and Behaviors," *Chinese Social Sciences*, No.3.
- [7] Li Qian. "Focusing on Chinese "pension Anxiety", *Shanghai Financial News* 2011-03-11, A08, *Special Planning*.
- [8] Zhang G. "The anxiety of the first generation of single-child parents in urban China. *Population and Economy*.S1(2008):39-41."
- [9] Guo Yu, and Zhang Yin-kai. "Intergenerational relations, pension insurance and a new picture of urban pension in China." *Sociological Research* 36.02(2021):160-180+229.
- [10] Will young people pay for "anxiety" after 30 years? *China Economic Weekly*.19(2021):69-71.
- [11] Zhao Ziyang, and Huangxi A Survey on Elderly Care Expectations of the Chinese Public (2016). *People's Forum*. 03 (2017): 80-83 Doi: 10.16619/j.cnki.rmlt.2017.03.038.
- [12] Tao T, and Liu W L. "A study on elderly care willingness and its influencing factors in one-child and non-one-child families." *Population Journal* 41.04(2019):72-83. doi:10.16405/j.cnki.1004-129X.2019.04.006.
- [13] Ren Qiang, Tang Qiming. *Study on living arrangement and emotional health of elderly people in China [J]. China Population Science*, 2014, (4):82-91.
- [14] Yang Guoshu, 1989, *Chinese Psychology and Behavior*, Taiwan: Guiguan Books Publishing Company.
- [15] Gawronski, Bertram, and Jan De Houwer. "Implicit measures in social and personality psychology." (2014)
- [16] Reis, Harry T.; Judd, Charles M. (2013). *Handbook of Research Methods in Social and Personality Psychology // Implicit Measures in Social and Personality Psychology*. , 10.1017/CBO9780511996481(Chapter twelve), 283–310. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511996481.016.
- [17] Conrey, Frederica R., et al. "Separating multiple processes in implicit social cognition: the quad model of implicit task performance." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 89.4 (2005): 469.
- [18] Klauer, Karl Christoph, et al. "Process components of the Implicit Association Test: a diffusion-model analysis." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 93.3 (2007): 353.