

# Research on the Lifestyle of Migrant Elderly from the Perspective of Livelihood Capitals: A Case Study of W Community in Sanya City

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**Abstract:** As China's population ages rapidly, the phenomenon of "migrant elderly" has garnered increasing academic attention. This study, taking W Community in Sanya City as a case, analyzes the lifestyle of migrant elderly from the perspective of livelihood capitals. The research finds that the migrant elderly effectively utilize natural, physical, human, social, and financial capitals to create a high-quality lifestyle. However, they also face challenges such as unstable social relationships and health risks. The paper suggests that government and society should enhance policy support, community development, and service optimization to improve the well-being of migrant elderly and promote social harmony and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Migrant elderly, livelihood capitals, lifestyle, Sanya City, aging

## 1. Introduction

China is undergoing a rapid aging process, leading to an increasingly diverse lifestyle among the elderly population. The phenomenon of "migrant elderly"—elderly people who migrate between regions according to seasonal changes in pursuit of a more comfortable living environment—has attracted sociological interest. Sanya City, a popular destination for migrant elderly due to its unique natural environment and excellent living facilities, serves as the focal point of this study. This paper explores the lifestyle of migrant elderly in W Community, Sanya, through the lens of livelihood capitals, aiming to reveal how they leverage various types of livelihood capitals to cope with challenges and provide corresponding policy recommendations.

## 2. Background and Theoretical Framework

The theory of livelihood capitals was first proposed by the Institute of Development Studies in the UK to analyze how households or individuals utilize resources to maintain or enhance their livelihood levels in different environments. Livelihood capitals include five main dimensions: natural, physical, human, social, and financial capitals. Natural capital refers to resources like land, water, and climate; physical capital includes material assets like housing and infrastructure; human capital encompasses education, skills, and health; social capital involves social networks and mutual support relationships; and financial capital refers to monetary assets and financial resources. This theoretical framework is used to analyze how migrant elderly utilize these livelihood capitals to adapt to their seasonal migration lifestyle.

## 3. Analysis of the Lifestyle of Migrant Elderly

### 3.1 The Role of Natural Capital

Sanya's unique natural environment, including its warm climate, abundant sunshine, and fresh air, is a key reason for migrant elderly choosing this location. With an average annual temperature of 24-27°C, the warm and humid winters in Sanya are beneficial for the recovery of chronic ailments such as rheumatism and arthritis, and have a positive impact on mental health. The excellent air quality, rich in negative ions, forms an essential part of the natural capital that ensures the physical and mental well-being of the elderly, reducing health problems associated with harsh weather.

### ***3.2 Impact of Physical Capital***

Physical capital includes all material conditions such as housing, infrastructure, medical services, and convenience facilities. W Community in Sanya is well-equipped with infrastructure like hospitals, supermarkets, parks, and accessible transportation, allowing migrant elderly easy access to necessary supplies and services. The community's housing is designed to meet the needs of elderly residents, often featuring barrier-free facilities. The presence of comprehensive medical services, including multiple general hospitals and specialized elderly care institutions, provides ample healthcare security for the migrant elderly. This robust physical capital system enhances their living comfort and sense of security.

### ***3.3 Accumulation and Utilization of Human Capital***

Human capital, encompassing knowledge, skills, and health status, also plays a significant role in the lifestyle of migrant elderly. Most of the migrant elderly in W Community have received good education and possess rich professional experience and social insight, enabling them to maintain a high level of autonomy and adaptability after retirement. The community regularly organizes various cultural and recreational activities, such as calligraphy, painting, and Tai Chi, which provide platforms for the elderly to showcase and enhance their skills while integrating into community life. Participation in these activities not only enriches their retirement life but also boosts their health levels. The effective use of human capital is a key reason why migrant elderly can adapt to new environments and maintain a positive outlook on life.

### ***3.4 Formation and Role of Social Capital***

Social capital in the lives of migrant elderly is reflected in their social networks, mutual assistance relationships, and degree of social participation. Due to their seasonal migration, the social networks of migrant elderly often span across regions. In W Community, they quickly establish new social circles through community activities, joining elderly clubs, and participating in volunteer services. The presence of elderly mutual aid groups and community volunteer service teams provides them with platforms for communication and support, enabling migrant elderly to quickly integrate into new environments. Additionally, they actively participate in community management affairs, increasingly enhancing their influence and participation within the community. This social capital not only strengthens their sense of belonging but also injects vitality into community development.

### ***3.5 Security and Management of Financial Capital***

Financial capital refers to the financial resources that migrant elderly possess, such as pensions, savings, and investments, forming the foundation for their seasonal migration and high-quality living. Most migrant elderly have stable pension income, with some also generating additional income through investments, property rentals, and other means. These financial resources allow them to choose their residence freely, covering rent, medical expenses, and daily living costs. Moreover, through prudent financial management, they ensure that living expenses in different regions do not exceed their budget. The sufficiency of financial capital not only guarantees their quality of life but also provides an economic buffer for unforeseen circumstances.

## **4. Characteristics of the Lifestyle of Migrant Elderly**

### ***4.1 Seasonal Migration***

The most prominent feature of the lifestyle of migrant elderly is seasonal migration. Each winter, they move from colder northern regions to warmer southern areas like Sanya, returning to their original residences in spring and summer. This migration pattern allows them to enjoy favorable climate conditions year-round, avoiding the health impacts of extreme weather. Seasonal migration is not only a lifestyle choice but also reflects the elderly's high regard for the natural environment and quality of life. As one of the main destinations for migrant elderly, Sanya attracts a large number of elderly individuals each winter due to its warm climate and beautiful natural surroundings.

#### ***4.2 Diverse Social Activities***

Migrant elderly engage in a variety of social activities, quickly establishing new social circles in their new environments through community activities, making new friends, and joining interest groups. W Community regularly organizes various cultural and recreational activities, such as calligraphy, painting, and photography competitions, providing platforms for migrant elderly to showcase their talents. The community also has dedicated elderly clubs where they can participate in fitness, chess, dance, and other activities, enriching their social lives and enhancing their physical health. Moreover, migrant elderly actively give back to the community through volunteer services, such as helping other elderly with life difficulties and participating in community environmental protection. The diversity of these social activities not only enhances the quality of life for migrant elderly but also strengthens their sense of community belonging.

#### ***4.3 Health Management and Quality of Life***

Health management is a crucial part of the lifestyle of migrant elderly. They typically place great emphasis on maintaining daily health through physical exercise, maintaining good routines, and regular health check-ups. W Community has a dedicated medical center providing diagnosis and health consultation services for common elderly illnesses. The community also regularly organizes health lectures, inviting medical experts to provide health management advice to the elderly. Migrant elderly also establish personal health records to monitor their health status and make adjustments based on doctors' recommendations. Additionally, they pay attention to dietary health, opting for a balanced diet and avoiding unhealthy eating habits such as high sugar and salt intake. These health management measures help migrant elderly maintain good physical condition, thereby improving their quality of life.

#### ***4.4 Richness in Leisure and Spiritual Life***

Another important feature of the lifestyle of migrant elderly is the richness of leisure and spiritual life. W Community provides a variety of leisure and entertainment facilities, such as parks, fitness squares, and libraries, catering to the different recreational needs of the elderly. Migrant elderly often spend their mornings and evenings walking or practicing Tai Chi in community parks, benefiting from physical exercise while enjoying nature. The community library serves as an important venue for elderly individuals to acquire knowledge and enrich their spiritual lives, with many enjoying reading and learning new things there. The community also regularly hosts cultural events, such as photography exhibitions, concerts, and theatrical performances, offering rich spiritual enjoyment to the elderly. By participating in these activities, migrant elderly not only enrich their leisure time but also enhance their cultural literacy and spiritual fulfillment.

#### ***4.5 Diverse Economic Management and Life Security***

Migrant elderly adopt diverse economic management strategies, ensuring the stability of their lives through prudent planning of economic expenditures. Many choose to rent housing in Sanya to avoid the financial pressure of purchasing a property. Some elderly supplement their living expenses in the south by renting out properties in the north. Others manage and grow their financial capital through investment, stock trading, and other means. W Community has financial service institutions that provide elderly financial management consultation services, helping them make informed economic decisions. Additionally, migrant elderly lower medical costs and mitigate the financial risks of unexpected events by joining medical insurance and purchasing commercial insurance. These diverse economic management strategies not only ensure the quality of life for migrant elderly but also enhance their financial security.

### **5. Challenges and Coping Strategies in the Lifestyle of Migrant Elderly**

#### ***5.1 Instability of Social Relationships***

The seasonal migration of migrant elderly leads to instability in their social relationships. Although they can quickly establish social networks in new environments, these relationships are often temporary and lack depth. Frequent migration may also reduce contact with friends and family from their original residence, affecting their mental health. To cope with this challenge, migrant elderly can maintain contact

with distant friends and family through modern communication tools such as mobile phones and online video calls, reducing feelings of loneliness. W Community can also establish long-term social platforms for the elderly, allowing them to maintain contact even after returning to their original residence, thereby enhancing the stability of their social relationships.

### ***5.2 Health Risks and Coping Measures***

The health risks faced by migrant elderly primarily stem from frequent migration and aging-related health issues. Long-distance travel and climate change can pose health risks, especially for elderly individuals with chronic illnesses. To address this challenge, migrant elderly should prepare in advance by ensuring they have sufficient medication and healthcare supplies. Before traveling, they should undergo a comprehensive health check-up to assess their physical condition. Additionally, they should avoid traveling during peak periods to reduce the risk of health issues during migration. W Community should also provide transportation and medical support to ensure the safety of elderly residents during migration.

### ***5.3 Economic Pressure and Management Strategies***

Although most migrant elderly have stable pension income, they may still face economic pressures such as rising rent, medical costs, and daily expenses. To alleviate economic pressure, migrant elderly can diversify their sources of income by investing in property rentals or other financial ventures. They can also join elderly financial management courses to improve their economic management skills. W Community can provide financial subsidies for low-income elderly and organize group buying activities to reduce living costs. Additionally, migrant elderly should plan their budgets carefully and avoid overspending, ensuring they maintain a stable economic foundation.

### ***5.4 Cultural Adaptation and Psychological Adjustment***

Migrant elderly may face challenges related to cultural adaptation and psychological adjustment when moving to new environments, especially if they relocate to places with significant differences in language, customs, and living conditions compared to their original residence. Such cultural differences may cause discomfort, anxiety, and loneliness among the elderly. To address these challenges, migrant elderly can increase their adaptability by learning the local language and cultural customs. Communities can also organize cultural exchange activities to help migrant elderly understand and integrate into the local culture. For psychological adjustment, participating in community activities and making new friends can help reduce psychological stress, boost self-confidence, and enhance overall well-being.

## **6. Policy Recommendations and Future Prospects**

### ***6.1 Government Policy Support***

To better serve the migrant elderly, the government should develop targeted policies and provide comprehensive support. On one hand, specialized service institutions can be established in communities where migrant elderly are concentrated to offer medical, legal, and social activities. Additionally, simplifying cross-regional medical insurance reimbursement procedures will enable migrant elderly to access convenient medical services in different areas. The government could also provide economic support, such as subsidies for migration and living expenses, to alleviate their financial burdens. Furthermore, promoting the development of age-friendly communities with more suitable housing options and service facilities for migrant elderly should be prioritized.

### ***6.2 Community Building and Service Optimization***

Communities play a crucial role in the lives of migrant elderly, making community building and service optimization essential. Communities can enhance the quality of life for migrant elderly by increasing senior activity spaces, offering diverse cultural and recreational programs, and improving community medical services. W Community, for example, could establish social platforms for elderly residents to promote interaction and communication. Additionally, strengthening cooperation with external organizations to introduce more social resources can provide more comprehensive services for migrant elderly.

### **6.3 Mobilization and Integration of Social Capital**

Mobilizing and integrating social capital is important for improving the quality of life of migrant elderly. Communities can enhance the social support network of migrant elderly by organizing volunteer services, establishing mutual aid groups for the elderly, and other initiatives. Social organizations and non-profit institutions can also contribute by providing professional support such as psychological counseling and legal assistance. By mobilizing and integrating social capital, migrant elderly can gain more social support and actively participate in community affairs, thus enhancing their sense of social participation and belonging.

### **6.4 Learning from International Experience**

Learning from successful international experiences can provide valuable insights for serving China's migrant elderly. For example, countries like the United States and Japan have accumulated extensive experience in community building for the elderly, cross-regional medical insurance, and the development of age-friendly cities. China can explore suitable service models for its local context by studying these successful practices. Government and academic institutions can engage in international cooperation and exchange to jointly research the characteristics and needs of cross-regional migration among the elderly, and develop more scientific and effective policies and service measures.

## **7. Conclusion**

Migrant elderly in W Community, Sanya, have created a high-quality lifestyle through the effective utilization of livelihood capitals, including natural, physical, human, social, and financial capitals. However, they also face challenges such as unstable social relationships, health risks, and economic pressures. By adopting appropriate coping strategies and receiving support from the government and community, migrant elderly can further enhance their quality of life and contribute to the harmonious development of society. Future research should continue to explore the lifestyle of migrant elderly from multiple perspectives, providing more comprehensive policy recommendations for addressing the challenges they face.

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