

The Influence of Satisfaction with Public Service on Residents' Subjective Well-being

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Abstract—Providing public service and improving residents' well-being are the goal of the government. Using data of Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS) 2015, this paper analyses the relationship between satisfaction with public service and subjective well-being. Through regression analysis, the results showed satisfaction with public service have positive effect on subjective well-being, especially the satisfaction with housing, social security and social service.

Keywords—Satisfaction with public service; Subjective well-being; Influence; Chinese

I. INTRODUCTION

Subjective well-being reflects the cognitive level of individuals' living conditions; it is the eternal pursuit of individual development and the ultimate goal of national and social development. Public service is closely related to residents' daily life, as the key content of constructing service-oriented government, public service emphasizes transformation of modern governance concept from "management" to "service". Satisfaction with public service is a kind of subjective reflection of the quality of public service at the level of citizen, which is the mirror of government performance. Government is an important factor which can influence individuals' happiness, such as government quality and governance [1-2]. Literatures from the perspective of psychology or economics about individuals' happiness or life satisfaction is growing, however, the effects of public service on residents' well-being are largely overlooked. Especially in China, when the government proposed "China Dream", which aim is to improve people's happiness and quality of public service.

II. HYPOTHESIS

Government is an important factor which can influence individuals' happiness, because government has become the strongest organization in the society. As the government

possesses a large amount of resources, the outcome of the public policy can affect individuals' well-being positively or negatively. However, there are very few studies of government in the field of happiness research [3]. In addition, most of the existing literatures focused narrowly on how the budgets and expenditures of the government have influenced the individuals' happiness. For example, Ott found that the negative relationship between government expenditure and citizens' quality of life [4]. Providing high quality of public service to residents is the basic duty of the government. Especially in China, "serving the people" is the purpose of the government. Different kinds of public services play important roles in enhancing citizens' well-being. Residents are the consumers of the public service, so their satisfaction should be the ultimate goal of government. However, the studies about the satisfaction with public service and residents' well-being are still limited.

When residents were satisfied the public service, it means residents set a high value on the government performance, it is easier for the government to implement policies and gain trust from residents. The studies about satisfaction with public service always focusing on the antecedent variables, but the outcomes had been overlooked [5]. Diener defined subjective well-being is people's cognitive and affective evaluations of their lives [6], it is not only the pursuit of individual development, but also the aim of the public policy. But the relationship between satisfaction with public service and subjective well-being is neglect.

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, residents would be happy when their different levels of needs were satisfied. Public services are provided by the government and other multi-units to meet the different basic needs of residents. Based on the above, we hypothesize:

The satisfaction with public service is positively related to subjective well-being.

III. METHOD

A. Data

Data used in this paper come from China General Social Survey (CGSS) 2015. CGSS is the first nationwide and continuous large-scale social survey project in China, which is launched by Renmin University of China from 2003. The survey was carried out among Chinese residents with a face-to-face interview in 28 provinces in mainland China. After processing the missing data, there are 9816 valid data entries.

Among the 9816 respondents, 4639(47.3% of the total) were male, and 5177(52.7%) were female. 3534 (36%) had lower education (primary school), 4571(46.6%) had finished high school, 1597(16.2%) had a bachelor’s degree, and 114(1.2%) had a master’s degree or doctor’s degree. 5847(59.6%) 1056(10.8%) were unmarried, 7409(75.5%) were married, and 1351(13.7%) were divorced or widowed. The mean age of all respondents was 49.86 years (SD=16.94).

B. Measure

Subjective well-being was measured by a single item by asking respondents “All things considered, do you feel happy in your life?”. The response categories included (1) “not happy at all”, (2) “not happy to a certain extent”, (3) “between unhappy and happy”, (4) “happy to a certain extent”, and (5) “happy very much”. Self-report measures of subjective well-being had been widely used in many researches and demonstrated adequate validity and reliability [7].

Satisfaction with public service was measured by asking respondents to evaluate the quality of public services they had received, including nine dimensions: (a) school, (b) healthcare, (c) housing, (d) social management, (e) employment, (f) social security, (g) social service, (h) entertainment, and (i) infrastructure. The respondents indicated the extent to which they satisfied or dissatisfied with each statement on a scale from 0 (totally dissatisfy) to 100 (totally satisfy). The Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.838$, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett’s tests resulted in a score of 0.949, $df=36$, and $\chi^2 = 68841.743$ ($p=0.000$).

TABLE I. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF VARIABLES

Variable	Question	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Satisfaction with public service	Satisfaction with school	0	100	73.071	17.112
	Satisfaction with healthcare	0	100	69.797	17.785
	Satisfaction with housing	0	100	66.791	19.621
	Satisfaction with Social management	0	100	69.343	17.299
	Satisfaction with employment	0	100	66.571	18.616
	Satisfaction with social security	0	100	69.249	18.034
	Satisfaction with social service	0	100	68.625	19.124
	Satisfaction with entertainment	0	100	69.701	17.779
	Satisfaction with infrastructure	0	100	70.092	17.890
Subjective Well-being	All things considered, do you feel happy in your life	1	5	3.874	0.812

IV. RESULTS

We take gender, age, education, income, and living area as control variables, and conduct the correlation analysis. Partial correlation analyses about satisfaction with public service and subjective well-being is executed. Results are shown in Table 2. Satisfaction with public service is positively related to subjective well-being ($r=0.186$, $p \leq 0.001$), and every dimensions of public services and subjective well-being are significantly related with each other. Among the dimensions of

public services, the mean of satisfaction with school service (73.071 ± 17.112) is the highest, satisfaction with infrastructure (70.092 ± 17.890) ranks second, the satisfaction with employment (66.571 ± 18.616) is the lowest. This implies that residents can access to the good educational sources easily, and Chinese had experienced the rapid development of infrastructure construction. But they may think the government should take more efforts to create the opportunity of job and improve the salary of working. The mean of subjective well-being is 3.874; it means Chinese were generally happy.

TABLE II. CORRELATIONS STATISTICS

Variables	Mean	SD	1	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	2
1. Overall satisfaction	69.249	15.069	1										
1.1 school	73.071	17.112	.776	1									
1.2 healthcare	69.797	17.785	.807***	.675***	1								
1.3 housing	66.791	19.621	.823***	.578***	.642***	1							
1.4 social management	69.343	17.299	.859***	.629***	.654***	.700***	1						
1.5 employment	66.571	18.616	.851***	.581***	.615***	.681***	.731***	1					
1.6 social security	69.249	18.034	.871***	.617***	.670***	.674***	.725***	.748***	1				
1.7 social service	68.625	19.124	.822***	.562***	.613***	.614***	.643***	.658***	.738***	1			
1.8 entertainment	69.701	17.779	.832***	.592***	.583***	.617***	.677***	.673***	.670***	.652***	1		
1.9 infrastructure	70.092	17.890	.815***	.578***	.579***	.605***	.656***	.647***	.648***	.622***	.745***	1	
2. Subjective well-being	3.874	0.812	.186***	.128***	.141***	.161***	.152***	.155***	.178***	.177***	.142***	.147***	1

* Denotes $P \leq 0.10$; ** $P \leq 0.05$; *** $P \leq 0.01$.

According to the conclusion from Ferrer-I-Carbonell and Frijters [8], we use hierarchical regression method to examine the effects of satisfaction with public service and different

dimensions of public service on subjective well-being. From table 3, we put gender, age, income, and education level in Model 1, the results show that gender ($\beta = 0.036$, $p \leq 0.001$) and

age ($\beta = -0.056, p \leq 0.001$) are related to subjective well-being. In model 2, different dimensions of public services were put in, from the result, satisfaction with housing ($\beta = 0.057, p \leq 0.001$), satisfaction with social security ($\beta = 0.069, p \leq 0.001$), and satisfaction with social service ($\beta = 0.083, p \leq 0.001$) have positive effect on subjective well-being. In model 3, the results showed the overall satisfaction with public service ($\beta = 0.187, p \leq 0.001$) has positive effect on subjective well-being.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Providing public service is a basic duty of the government, good governance can improve residents' happiness [9]. This study investigates the relationship between satisfaction with public service and residents well-being. Happiness is viewed as an important indicator of overall personal development and social functioning. The purpose of public service is to meet the basic living needs of residents. From the results, residents would be happy when their different needs of public service were satisfied.

As satisfaction with employment and social service having low ranking, the public policies are effective to increase the happiness of the people, so the government should take measures to improve it. Unemployment means individuals have no ability to make money, which will hinder the normal development of individual potential. It is important to provide adequate employment position and create good institutional conditions for the improvement of the employment quality. Basic social service can make up for the inequality of income distribution in the form of redistribution; it plays an important role in different life cycles of residents. The government should expand the coverage of social service to make sure everyone can have the service fairly and equally, and improve the quality of social service.

This study extends our knowledge by providing empirical evidence about the relationship between satisfaction with public service and subjective well-being, especially satisfaction with housing, social security and social service. Liquidity constraints and preventive savings are the two mechanisms about the effects of housing on subjective well-being. It is a core question of the government to stabilize housing price within a reasonable range and improve the quality of housing. Social security meets the security needs of residents, which will contribute to the increment of happiness.

The results obtained from our research by using the data from CGSS 2015 demonstrated that satisfaction with public service has a positive relationship with subjective well-being.

TABLE III. RESULTS OF REGRESSION ANALYSIS

	Subjective Well-being		
	M1	M2	M3
Gender	0.036*** (0.016)	0.035*** (0.016)	0.034*** (0.016)
Age	-0.056*** (0.001)	-0.034*** (0.001)	-0.035*** (0.001)
Income	0.019(0.000)	0.020(0.000)	0.020(0.000)
Education Level	0.135(0.003)	0.142*** (0.003)	0.141*** (0.003)
School		-0.001 (0.001)	
Healthcare		0.006 (0.001)	
Housing		0.057*** (0.001)	
Social management		0.000 (0.001)	
Employment		0.002 (0.001)	
Social security		0.069*** (0.001)	
Social service		0.083*** (0.001)	
Entertainment		-0.015 (0.001)	
Infrastructure		0.024 (0.001)	
Overall Satisfaction			0.187*** (0.001)
F	38.841***	42.568***	103.007***
R ²	0.016	0.053	0.050
ΔR ²	0.015	0.052	0.049

* Denotes $P \leq 0.10$; ** $P \leq 0.05$; *** $P \leq 0.01$.

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