



# Research on the Residents' Willingness to participate Community Social Organizations Based on Theory of Planned Behavior

Wanyi Liu \*, Bing Li

School of Public Administration, University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, Chengdu, Sichuan Province China 610000

\*Email:hgljju@163.com

**Abstract.** This paper introduces the social network into the theoretical framework of planned behaviour and constructs an extended theoretical model of planned behavior of residents' willingness to participate in community social organizations. Based on the data of CGSS in 2017, the hierarchical regression model and the mediation effect model were used to discuss the influence mechanism of social network, behavioral attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on the residents' willingness to participate in social organizations. The research found that: (1) social network can significantly promote residents' participation in community social organizations; (2) behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control can significantly promote residents' participation in community social organizations; (3) subjective norms has a partial mediating effect between social network and willingness to participate in social organizations.

**Keywords:** theory of planned behavior; social network; willingness to participate; subjective norms

## 1 Introduction

The 14th Five-Year Plan adopted by the Fifth Plenary Session of the Nineteenth Central Committee of the Party reaffirmed the requirement of "building a community of social governance in which everyone fulfills their responsibilities and shares in the benefits". In these fields involving the basic interests of grassroots people, social organizations can give full play to their advantages of strong flexibility, carry out personalized services, realize complementarity with the government, and make up for the government's service vacuum in some areas of urban grassroots governance.

At present, the cultivation and development of local social organizations in the community is not yet perfect, and there are problems such as low enthusiasm of residents to participate, low professionalism and lack of credibility. Among them, the lack of residents' participation is the most prominent problem, and it is difficult for community social organizations to play a role without a solid mass foundation. Therefore,

in order to cultivate community social organizations and develop and strengthen the team of social organizations, the key is to increase the enthusiasm of residents to participate in community social organizations.

## 2 Literature review

Many scholars have conducted research on the influencing factors of residents' participation in community social organizations, which can be summarized from two aspects: individual factors and social factors.

Individual factors include residents' educational level, personality tendency, personality, and behavioral attitudes<sup>[1-2]</sup>. Ma Weihong (2000) found that residents' participation requires a certain amount of time and energy. Retired Middle-aged and elderly people who have more leisure time are more inclined to participate in community affairs<sup>[3-4]</sup>. The older, the more likely to have willingness to participate. Xu Zheng (2015) found that one's own subjective attitude will affect the individual's behavioral intention, and subjective norms will indirectly affect it by affecting behavioral attitude<sup>[5]</sup>.

Social factors mainly include social capital factors, that is, community members' association qualifications and mutual trust, as well as the complexity of social networks. Zhang Lei and Zhang Ping (2015) analyzed the structural equation model of the sample data of 1794 cases, and proposed that the main factors affecting residents' motivation in participating community autonomy are community social capital, personality tendency, autonomy attitude, and autonomy cognition<sup>[6]</sup>. Pan Zequan and Xie Yan (2019) found that social relationship network and social trust structure have a significant impact on the participation of community residents in social organizations.

To sum up, the academic community mainly uses the theory of planned behavior and social capital theory from the aspects of individual factors and social factors to explain the factors that affect residents' participation in community social organizations. The method is mainly based on case studies, but existing research still has some deficiencies<sup>[7]</sup>. First, few studies combine social networks with planned behavior theory to explore the intermediary role of behavioral norms. Second, many scholars' research methods are mostly based on the case method, which lacks detailed data support. Based on this, this paper incorporates social network into theoretical model of planned behavior, constructs a comprehensive theoretical framework for the analysis of residents' willingness to participate in community social organizations, and uses the comprehensive social (CGSS2017) survey data released by Renmin University of China in October 2020 involving 28 provinces and cities (autonomous regions and municipalities), and the hierarchical regression model is used for empirical analysis, and finally puts forward countermeasures and suggestions to stimulate residents to join social organizations and strengthen local community social organizations.

### 3 Model Building and Data Sources

#### 3.1 Theoretical model construction

According to the theory of planned behavior, behavioral intention is mainly affected by three factors: behavioral attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control. Behavioral attitude refers to the evaluation held by an individual on certain behaviors. Subjective norm refers to the pressure from society an individual feels when taking a certain action. Perceived behavior control refers to the individual's perception of his ability to execute a certain behavior. Endogenous interaction theory believes that the interaction between network members will generate certain social norms among groups, and this social norm affect the behavior of residents. Therefore, this paper introduces the social network into the theory of planned behavior, builds an extended theoretical model of planned behavior, and conducts an empirical analysis of the mediating effects of behavioral attitudes and subjective norms to reveal the formation mechanism of residents' willingness to participate in social organizations. The extended planned behavior theory model of residents' willingness to participate in community social organizations constructed in this paper is shown in Figure 1.

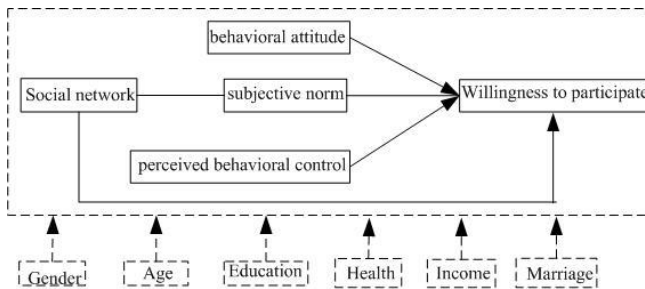


Fig. 1. Theoretical model of residents' willingness to participate in community social organizations

#### 3.2 Research Hypothesis

##### 3.2.1 The relationship between social network and subjective norms and willingness to participate.

Pan Zequan (2009) pointed out that the social relationship network can be regarded as a spatial carrier presented in the form of complex interpersonal relationships<sup>[8]</sup>. In this spatial carrier, other rich social resources is implicitly embedded, which are brought directly or indirectly by different interpersonal relationship lines. Whether such resources can be obtained or not will have a certain impact on the next action of individual residents. Based on this, the following hypotheses are put forward:

H1: Social network has a significant positive impact on residents' subjective norms.

H2: Social network has a significant positive impact on the willingness to participate in social organizations.

### **3.2.2 The relationship between behavioural attitude and willingness to participate**

According to the theory of planned behavior, behavioral attitude is an important influencing variable of behavioral intention, the more positive an individual's attitude towards a certain behavioral activity is, the higher his behavioral intention will be. Many studies have verified the predictive effect of behavioral attitudes on behavioral intentions. Based on this, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3: The behavioral attitude of residents has a significant positive impact on the willingness to participate in social organizations.

### **3.2.3 The relationship between subjective norms and willingness to participate**

According to the theory of planned behavior, the stronger the individual's subjective norm for a certain behavior, that is, the greater the social pressure that the individual perceives to perform the behavior, the higher the behavior will be. Based on this, the following hypotheses are put forward:

H4: Residents' subjective norms have a significant positive impact on the willingness to participate in social organizations.

H5: Residents' subjective norms have a mediating effect between social network and willingness to participate in social organizations.

### **3.2.4 The relationship between perceived behavioural control and willingness to participate**

According to the theory of planned behavior, the stronger the individual's perceived behavioral control over a certain behavioral activity, the more active the willingness to participate in the behavioral activity will be. Based on this, the following hypotheses are put forward:

H6: Residents' perceived behavioral control has a significant positive impact on the willingness to participate in social organizations.

## **3.3 Data sources and indicator definitions**

### **3.3.1 Data sources**

This paper selects the China General Social Survey (CGSS) database released by Renmin University of China on October 1, 2020. The scope of the data survey covers 28 provinces and cities (autonomous regions and municipalities) across China, with 13,582 valid questionnaires. Samples which the respondents did not know or refused to answer are eliminated, and the resident samples are screened according to the household registration attributes, and the questionnaire data of 2115 questionnaires are finally obtained.

### **3.3.2 Variable selection**

*3.3.2.1 Explained variable:* The dependent variable of this study is the willingness to participate in social organizations. The 2017CGSS uses a behavioral scale containing 3

items to measure the participation status of social organizations. The details are as follows: How often do you participate in the activities of the following groups: ① Activities organized by leisure groups, sports groups or cultural groups; ② Activities organized by political parties, political groups or political associations; ③ Volunteer activities by charitable organizations or religious organizations. In this study, "never participated" was assigned a value of 0, and the rest were assigned 1. The sum of the scores of these three items is taken as the variable of willingness to participate in social organizations.

*3.3.2.2 Core Explanatory Variables:* The explanatory variables of this study are social network, behavioral attitude, and perceived behavioral control. Drawing on the research of Zhang Liangliang (2015), social network is measured by the "frequency of gathering with friends", and a behavioral scale containing 5 items is used to measure behavioral attitude and perceived behavioral control.

*3.3.2.3 Mediator variable:* The mediator variable of this study is subjective norms, that is, residents' perceptions of the social pressure they feel when taking a certain behavior, including whether they often consider other people's feelings, family pressure, and frequency of contact with friends. The sum of the scores of these three items is taken as the subjective normative variable.

*3.3.2.4 Control variables:* In addition, this study introduces socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age, marital status, and years of education as control variables. The specific variables are shown in Table 1

**Table 1.** Table 1 Variable descriptive statistics

Variable name	Minimum value	Maximum value	Average	Standard deviation
Social organization participation	0	3	0.63	0.49
Social network	1	5	2.55	0.96
Behavioral attitude	0	5	0.11	0.48
Subjective norm	1	13	6.63	2.18
Perceived behavioral control	1	5	3.20	0.69
Gender	1	2	1.49	0.50
Age	23	106	53.78	16.51
Education	0	5	2.32	1.27
Health	1	5	3.59	1.06
Income	0.00	6.997	3.74	1.65
Marital status	0	1	0.84	0.37

## 4 Empirical analysis

Before the regression model analysis, this study firstly diagnosed the model fit and multicollinearity problems. After testing, the Durbin-Watson value of the model is within the acceptable range, and the residuals are independent, indicating that the fitting degree of these five models is good. Then the variance test of the model was carried out, and the P values were all less than 0.05, indicating that the model had statistical significance. The tolerance and variance inflation factor of the model are within a reasonable range, and the model does not have multicollinearity problems.

### 4.1 Direct effect test

The influence of social network on willingness to participate is significantly positive at the 1% level, indicating that social network significantly promotes the willingness to participate in community social organizations, and hypothesis H2 is verified. Behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control have a significant positive impact on residents' willingness to participate in social organizations, and hypotheses H3 and H6 are verified. The results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Hierarchical regression model of influencing factors of residents' participation in social organization

Variable	Willingness to participate					Subjective norm	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Gender	0.063***	0.064***	0.064***	0.065***	0.062***	-0.027	-0.018
Age	0.003***	0.003***	0.004***	0.004***	0.003***	-0.030***	-0.028***
Education	0.119***	0.112***	0.113***	0.109***	0.110***	0.172***	0.100**
Health	0.031***	0.026***	0.030***	0.026***	0.025**	0.040	-0.012
Income	0.018***	0.015**	0.016***	0.014**	0.014**	0.057**	0.026
Marriage	-0.090***	-0.079***	-0.080***	-0.074**	-0.079***	-0.278	-0.177
Social network		0.067***		0.049***			0.634***
Subjective norm			0.034***	0.028***			
Behavioral attitude					0.051**		
Perceptual behavioral control					0.053*		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.112	0.197	0.174	0.264	0.131	0.102	0.171
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	0.112	0.085	0.062	0.142	0.002	0.102	0.069
F	44.370	55.579	52.026	65.098	31.773	39.729	61.945

Note: \* means  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* means  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* means  $p < 0.001$ ; the regression coefficients in the table are all standardized regression coefficients.

## 4.2 Mediating effect test

According to the mediation effect test procedure proposed by Wen Zhonglin et al. (2004), the mediation effect of social network is tested by stepwise method. Among them, Model 3 and Model 4 introduce social network and subjective norms on the basis of Model 1, and Model 6 and Model 7 use subjective norms as dependent variables to explore the role of social networks on subjective norms. The results are shown in Table 3. The coefficients of social capital in Model 2 and Model 4 are both significant, and the coefficient of subjective norms in Model 7 is also significant. Hypotheses H1 and H4 are tested. The coefficient of social capital in model 4 is also significant, that is, subjective norms play a partial mediating effect in the relationship between social network and participation willingness of social organizations, and hypothesis H5 is tested.

**Table 3.** Results of correlation variable coefficients

Variable	Explained variable		
	Willingness to participate	Willingness to participate	Subjective norm
Social network	0.067	0.049	0.634
Subjective norm		0.028	

## 5 Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

### 5.1 Analysis conclusion

(1) Social networks have a significant role in promoting residents' participation in community social organizations. The more complex the personal interpersonal network of residents, the higher their willingness to participate in community social organizations. (2) Behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control play a significant role in promoting residents' participation in community social organizations; (3) Subjective norms play a partial mediating role between social networks and social organization participation willingness.

### 5.2 Policy suggestion

First, strengthen publicity and popularization efforts to enhance the popularity of social organizations.

First of all, community social organizations should vigorously publicize the voluntary activities of community social organizations and their effectiveness, publicize typical deeds, create an online brand of "Internet + community voluntary service", and attract more residents to actively join the community social organization services. Secondly, start with the families of the members, encouraging more family members to actively participate in community social organizations, and form a participatory atmosphere within the family to improve residents' subjective norms.

Second, focus on self-capacity building and improve the credibility of social organizations.

In order to improve the credibility of social organizations, emphasis should be put in two aspects of training and incentives. In terms of training, assess volunteers individually, and provide them with special training based on their individual needs. After the training is over, assign them to the corresponding organizations according to their abilities and preferences. In terms of incentives, the method of on-the-job scoring and post points can be adopted.

Third, improve the conditions for participation and improve the convenience to participate in social organizations. The government should strive to create favorable conditions for residents to participate in community social organizations, such as establishing consultation offices, assistance centers and other institutions in the community to help residents improve their ability to participate and reduce the cost for their participation.

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