



Research on the Influence Mechanism of Public Service Provision on Civil Society Attitudes

Anqi Liu

University of Washington Seattle, Department of Economics, American

a103@uw.edu

Abstract. Along with the rapid economic development, the types and quality of public services provided by the government have been gradually improved. Improving the level of public services is not only a realistic demand of citizens but also a key concern of the government. Therefore, it is necessary to study the situation of public services and public service satisfaction. This paper uses CGSS data to identify the impact of public service provision on citizens' social attitudes through factor analysis, multiple linear regression, and other methods. It also finds that public service provision can positively contribute to citizens' well-being and social equity. These findings have some implications for the government in improving public services.

Keywords: public services; satisfaction; sense of social equity; CGSS

1 Introduction

Along with the rapid economic development, the types and quality of public services provided by the government have been gradually upgraded. Numerous studies have emerged on how public service provision shapes citizens' social attitudes, with conclusions centered around citizens' sense of social justice, well-being, and public service delivery. These studies suggest that the quality and accessibility of public services directly affect citizens' social attitudes and psychological perceptions. High-quality public services can enhance citizens' sense of social justice, make them feel cared for by the government and equitably distributed in society, and thus improve their overall sense of well-being^[1].

However, are there any other factors that also affect the improvement of public services? Although the policy emphasizes safeguarding and improving people's livelihoods, in reality, do all social groups (e.g. rural population, low-income groups) feel the benefits of improved livelihoods? How can the improvement in the type and quality of public services be specifically measured and evaluated? Are there any objective criteria or indicators to support the claim of such enhancement? Has the quality of public services the government provides improved, and has the public's satisfaction increased in tandem? (Li Lulu et al., 2012; Ouyang Boqiang & Zhang Guangsheng, 2018)^[1-3].

Based on the analyses above, the main research question of this paper is ‘How does public service provision shape citizens’ social attitudes’. To study this question, this paper mainly adopts a quantitative research method, based on CGSS data, through factor analysis, combining related indicators, and identifying how different dimensions of public service provision affect citizens’ social attitudes through the method of multiple linear regression.

2 Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

2.1 Public Service Provision and Residents’ Happiness

A study on education services found that the equitable distribution of quality education resources can significantly increase the satisfaction and social acceptance of students and their families. Improvements in public services also enhance citizens’ trust and satisfaction with the government. Citizens with high levels of trust are more willing to participate in social activities, develop positive social attitudes, and hold more optimistic views on social development. The quality of public services reflects, to a certain extent, the government’s ability to govern. High-quality public services not only satisfy the basic needs of citizens but also reduce inequality and social conflicts by enhancing social welfare, thereby building a harmonious society.^[4] To specifically measure and evaluate the type and quality improvement of public services, researchers have proposed a series of objective standards and indicators. In addition, public satisfaction surveys conducted regularly are an important tool for measuring the effectiveness of public services. Through these indicators and surveys, the Government and researchers can obtain specific data on the enhancement of public services, thus providing a scientific basis for policy adjustment and improvement^[5].

First, the adequacy of public service resources directly affects citizens’ quality of life and well-being. When public service resources are abundant, citizens are more likely to have access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and transport, thus enhancing their life satisfaction (H1a). Second, the balanced distribution of public service resources is also an important factor affecting citizens’ happiness. If resources are unevenly distributed, citizens in certain areas may be dissatisfied with the lack of necessary services, thus affecting their overall well-being (H1b). In addition, the ease of access to public services is directly related to citizens’ subjective well-being. Convenient public services can reduce citizens’ time and energy consumption in the process of accessing services, and increase their life efficiency and satisfaction (H1c). Finally, the degree of universality of public services, i.e., equal access to public services for all citizens regardless of their socio-economic status, is a factor that also has a significant impact on citizens’ sense of well-being. Citizens’ subjective well-being tends to be higher when they feel fairly treated and socially cared for (H1d). Therefore, when providing public services, the government should focus on the adequacy, balanced distribution, accessibility, and universality of resources to comprehensively enhance citizens’ subjective well-being^[6].

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between public service provision and citizens’ subjective well-being.

H1a: There is a significant positive relationship between the adequacy of public service resources and citizens' subjective well-being.

H1b: There is a significant positive relationship between the degree of balance in the distribution of public service resources and citizens' subjective well-being.

H1c: There is a significant positive relationship between the degree of convenience in accessing public services and citizens' subjective well-being.

H1d: There is a significant positive relationship between the degree of universality of public services and citizens' subjective well-being.

2.2 Public Service Provision and Residents' Sense of Social Equity

The study concluded that high-quality and equitably distributed public services can not only enhance citizens' sense of social fairness and well-being but also strengthen trust in the government and promote social harmony and development. Through scientific evaluation indicators and public feedback mechanisms, the government can continuously optimize public services to ensure that all social groups can effectively feel the fruits of livelihood improvement. At the current stage of development, inequality between urban and rural areas, between regions, and between industries is widespread, and these problems not only affect citizens' subjective sense of well-being but also their perceptions of social equity. More specifically, when public service resources are sufficient, the number of public services available to each citizen will be elevated, and the differences between regions and populations will be reduced accordingly, helping to prompt citizens' sense of social fairness. Secondly, an old Chinese saying, 'Don't worry about scarcity but worry about unevenness', which refers to the fact that when goods are scarce, the fact that no one can obtain them does not necessarily affect everyone's sense of fairness, whereas if there is an uneven distribution, it will have a very negative impact on the citizens' sense of social fairness. In addition, the ease of access to public services and the degree of universality of public services will also have a certain impact on citizens' sense of social fairness^[7, 8].

More specifically, the provision of public services has a significant impact on residents' sense of social equity. First, the adequacy of public service resources can enhance citizens' perception of social equity. When public service resources are sufficient, all types of social groups can enjoy the necessary services, reducing the inequality caused by the shortage of resources and thus enhancing citizens' sense of social equity (H2a). Second, the balanced distribution of public service resources has a significant impact on the sense of social equity. If public service resources are distributed evenly across regions, citizens can access the same quality of services regardless of their location, which helps reduce regional disparities and social inequalities and enhances citizens' sense of social fairness (H2b). In addition, the ease of access to public services also plays a significant role in the sense of social equity. When citizens can access public services conveniently, they will feel the fairness and reasonableness of the system design, which in turn enhances their trust and sense of belonging to society (H2c). Finally, the degree of universality of public services, i.e. ensuring that all citizens, regardless of their socio-economic status, have equal access to public services, is a factor that is particularly important to the sense of social justice. When public services are universally

accessible to all classes, citizens will feel fairly treated by the government and cared for by society, which in turn will enhance their sense of social justice (H2d). Therefore, when designing and providing public services, the government should focus on the adequacy, balanced distribution, accessibility, and universality of resources, to effectively enhance citizens' sense of social fairness^[9].

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between public service provision and citizens' sense of social equity.

H2a: There is a significant positive relationship between the adequacy of public service resources and citizens' sense of social fairness.

H2b: There is a significant positive relationship between the degree of balance in the distribution of public service resources and citizens' sense of social equity.

H2c: There is a significant positive relationship between the degree of convenience in accessing public services and citizens' sense of social fairness.

H2d: There is a significant positive relationship between the degree of universality of public services and citizens' sense of social equity.

3 Data Sources and Measurement of Variables

3.1 Data Sources

This paper mainly uses data from the Chinese General Social Survey.

3.2 Variable Measurement

Dependent Variables.

The first dependent variable in this paper is citizens' subjective well-being. The specific measurement methods are shown in Table 2.

The second dependent variable in this paper is citizens' sense of social fairness. The specific measurement methods are shown in Table 2.

Independent Variables.

The independent variable of this paper is the government's public service provision, for the measurement of public service provision, this paper selects the indicator 'How satisfied are you with the current public services in China in general in all aspects?', the questionnaire was used to measure the public service resources. The questionnaire is based on the four dimensions of the adequacy, balance, convenience, and universality of public service resources, and the corresponding questionnaire item is B17, and the corresponding options are: 1-very dissatisfied, 2-not very satisfied, 3-unspecified, 4-comparatively satisfied, and 5-very satisfied. Factor analysis result is shown in table 1.

The KMO measure obtained from the factor analysis is 0.77, which indicates that the scale is suitable for factor analysis. The explained variance of the common factor extracted from the factor analysis was 74.89%, which proves that the common factor has good explanatory strength.

Table 1. Factor Analysis Results.

	Public service provision
Adequacy of public services	0.284
Balance in our public services?	0.289
Ease of access to public services in your country?	0.291
Universality of public services	0.292
Eigenvalue	2.995
Explained variance	74.89

Control Variables.

The control variables in this paper include respondents' gender, age, religion, hukou location, income level, education level, and marital status, for which the measurements are detailed in the table 2.

Table 2. Variable Measurement.

Variable type	Variable name	Measurement Title	Estimate
Implicit variable	Social equity	In general, do you think that today's society is fair or unfair?	1 - Completely unfair
			2 - Rather unfair
			3 - I can't say
			4 - Fairer
			5 - Totally fair
Implicit variable	Well-being	Overall, do you feel happy with your life?	1 - Very unhappy
			2 - Quite unhappy
			3 - I can't say
			4 - Comparatively happy
			5 - Very happy
Independent variable	Public service provision	1. Adequacy of public service resources	1 - Very dissatisfied
		2. Degree of equilibrium in the distribution of public service resources	2 - Not very satisfied
		3. Degree of accessibility to public services	3 - I can't say
		4. Degree of universality of public services	4 - Quite satisfied
Control variable	Gender	Gender	0-Female, 1-Male
	Age	What is your date of birth?	Actual age
	Religious beliefs	What is your religion?	0- Irreligious, 1- Religious
	Location of residence	The type of neighborhood in which the respondent lives:	0- Countryside, 1- Municipalities
	Income levels	What was your total personal income/gross labour or occupational income last year?	Continuous variable
	Educational level	Your current highest level of education is:	0-20

Marriage status	Your current marital status is?	0 - Not in marriage 1- Married
Health status	Do you feel that your current physical health is:	1 - Very unhealthy 2- Fairly unhealthy 3- Average 4- More healthy 5- Very healthy

3.3 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics of all the variables used in this paper are shown in table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Stats.

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Sense of social equity	8845	3.205	.996	1	5
Sense of well-being	8845	3.88	.805	1	5
Public services Adequacy	8845	3.16	.918	1	5
Degree of equalization of public services	8845	2.977	.939	1	5
Degree of accessibility of public services	8845	3.155	.947	1	5
Degree of public service inclusion	8845	3.103	.931	1	5
Gender	8845	.482	.5	0	1
Age	8845	49.843	16.769	18	94
Religious beliefs	8845	.103	.305	0	1
Type of household	8845	.45	.497	0	1
Educational level	8845	9.391	4.223	0	20
Marriage status	8845	.778	.415	0	1
Health status	8845	3.642	1.061	1	5
Public service provision	8845	83.353	18.106	0	120.2

The results of the descriptive statistics show that the mean value of the respondents' sense of social fairness is 3.205, indicating that the respondents' sense of social fairness as a whole is at a moderately high level. The mean value of respondents' subjective well-being is 3.88, indicating that respondents' overall sense of social fairness is at a high level. The mean value of the degree of adequacy of public services is 3.16, indicating that the overall supply of public services is more adequate. The mean value of the degree of balance of public services is 2.977, indicating that the overall supply of government public services is relatively balanced. The mean value of the degree of convenience of public services is 3.155, indicating that it is more convenient for citizens to obtain public services from the government; the mean value of the degree of universality of public services is 3.103, which is in the middle-upper level in general. The results of descriptive statistics show that the interviewees, whether in terms of age, gender, education level, or hukou distribution, are all in line with the

overall distribution of society, indicating that these interviewees are very representative, and therefore the research findings have a good degree of credibility.

4 Data Analysis

To verify the above research hypotheses, regression modeling was carried out in this paper and the regression results are shown in the table 4 and table 5.

Models 1 to 5 are mainly to verify the hypotheses H1, H1a, H1b, H1c, H1d. models 6 to 10 are mainly to verify the hypotheses H2, H2a, H2b, H2c, H2d.

Table 4. Regression Model (Dependent Variable is Subjective Well-Being).

	(1) M1	(2) M2	(3) M3	(4) M4	(5) M5
Public service provision	0.00752*** (16.63)				
Gender	-0.0786*** (-4.78)	-0.0807*** (-4.89)	-0.0810*** (-4.89)	-0.0816*** (-4.93)	-0.0810*** (-4.91)
Age	0.00566*** (9.27)	0.00613*** (10.03)	0.00627*** (10.25)	0.00629*** (10.29)	0.00614*** (10.07)
Religious beliefs	0.149*** (5.58)	0.129*** (4.81)	0.130*** (4.83)	0.126*** (4.70)	0.120*** (4.50)
Location of residence	0.0280 (1.46)	0.00778 (0.40)	0.0134 (0.69)	0.00844 (0.44)	0.00879 (0.46)
Income levels	4.73e-08 (1.30)	3.99e-08 (1.09)	4.18e-08 (1.14)	4.35e-08 (1.19)	4.19e-08 (1.15)
Educational level	0.0205*** (7.87)	0.0199*** (7.59)	0.0205*** (7.81)	0.0198*** (7.55)	0.0200*** (7.63)
Marriage status	0.137*** (7.01)	0.130*** (6.62)	0.131*** (6.65)	0.129*** (6.57)	0.131*** (6.69)
Health status	0.198*** (23.79)	0.206*** (24.64)	0.206*** (24.64)	0.204*** (24.39)	0.204*** (24.52)
Adequacy of public service resources		0.125*** (14.01)			
Degree of balance in the distribution of public service resources			0.107*** (12.24)		
Accessibility of public services				0.113*** (13.07)	
Degree of inclusion in public services					0.129*** (14.71)
_cons	1.959*** (29.15)	2.166*** (34.00)	2.224*** (35.07)	2.204*** (34.79)	2.162*** (34.15)
N	8845	8845	8845	8845	8845
R ²	0.11	0.11	0.10	0.10	0.11
adj. R ²	0.11	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.11

Table 5. Regression Model (Dependent Variable is Sense of Social Justice).

	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10
Public service provision	0.0143*** (25.31)				
Gender	0.0320 (1.56)	0.0272 (1.30)	0.0275 (1.32)	0.0259 (1.24)	0.0268 (1.28)
Age	0.00914*** (11.98)	0.0103*** (13.29)	0.0103*** (13.34)	0.0105*** (13.60)	0.0103*** (13.34)
Religious beliefs	-0.0198 (-0.59)	-0.0584* (-1.72)	-0.0565* (-1.67)	-0.0627* (-1.84)	-0.0717** (-2.12)
Location of residence	-0.101*** (-4.24)	-0.137*** (-5.62)	-0.129*** (-5.32)	-0.136*** (-5.56)	-0.135*** (-5.57)
Income Levels	1.96e-08 (0.43)	7.67e-09 (0.16)	9.07e-09 (0.20)	1.33e-08 (0.29)	1.07e-08 (0.23)
Educational level	0.00866*** (2.66)	0.00728** (2.19)	0.00862*** (2.60)	0.00715** (2.15)	0.00740** (2.23)
Marriage status	-0.0545** (-2.23)	- (-2.67)	-0.0664*** (-2.67)	- (-2.71)	- (-2.60)
Health status	0.0573*** (5.51)	0.0729*** (6.89)	0.0725*** (6.88)	0.0702*** (6.62)	0.0709*** (6.72)
Adequacy of public service resources		0.194*** (17.18)			
Degree of balance in the distribution of public service resources			0.204*** (18.59)		
Accessibility of public services				0.175*** (15.98)	
Degree of inclusion in public services					0.203*** (18.34)
_cons	1.342*** (15.97)	1.853*** (22.94)	1.841*** (23.02)	1.913*** (23.80)	1.839*** (22.94)
N	8845	8845	8845	8845	8845
R ²	0.10	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.07
adj. R ²	0.09	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.06

From model 1, it can be seen that the regression coefficient of public service provision on citizens' subjective well-being is 0.00752 and the p-value is less than 0.01, so it can be assumed that public service provision has a significant positive impact on citizens' subjective well-being, and for every 1 unit increase in public service provision, citizens' subjective well-being will increase by 0.00752 units.

From model 2, we can find that the adequacy of public service resources has a significant positive impact on citizens' subjective well-being. For every 1 unit increase in the provision of public services, the subjective well-being of citizens will be increased by 0.125 units.

From model 3, we can find that the degree of balance in the distribution of public service resources has a significant positive impact on citizens' subjective well-being. For every 1-unit increase in the provision of public services, citizens' subjective well-being will increase by 0.107 units.

From model 4, we can find that the degree of convenience of access to public services has a significant positive impact on citizens' subjective well-being. For every unit increase in the provision of public services, citizens' subjective well-being will increase by 0.113 units.

From model 5, we can find that the degree of universality of public services has a significant positive impact on citizens' subjective well-being. For every one-unit increase in the provision of public services, the subjective well-being of the citizens will increase by 0.129 units.

From model 6, we can find that public service provision has a significant positive effect on citizens' subjective well-being, and for every 1 unit increase in public service provision, citizens' subjective well-being will increase by 0.0143 units.

From model 7, we can find that the adequacy of public service resources has a significant positive impact on citizens' subjective well-being. For every 1-unit increase in the provision of public services, citizens' subjective well-being will increase by 0.194 units.

From model 8, we can find that the degree of balance in the distribution of public service resources has a significant positive impact on citizens' subjective well-being. For every 1-unit increase in the provision of public services, citizens' subjective well-being will be increased by 0.204 units.

From model 9, we can find that the degree of convenience of access to public services has a significant positive impact on citizens' subjective well-being. For every one-unit increase in the availability of public services, the subjective well-being of the citizens will increase by 0.175 units.

From model 10, we can find that the degree of universality of public services has a significant positive impact on citizens' subjective well-being. For every unit increase in the provision of public services, citizens' subjective well-being will increase by 0.203 units.

5 Conclusions

The results of the above studies show that the provision of public services has a significant effect on citizens' subjective well-being and social equity. These findings have certain implications for the government in improving public services.

Reference

1. Li, Lulu, Lina Tang, & Qin, Guangqiang. (2012). 'Suffering from Inequality, Suffering from Injustice': Sense of Fairness and Sense of Conflict in the Transitional Period. *Journal of Renmin University of China* (04), 86-96.

2. Ouyang, Boqiang, & Zhang, Guangsheng. (2018). Intergenerational differences in income level and relative deprivation of migrant workers - Tests and explanations based on the perspective of sense of social fairness. *Business Research* (3), 9.
3. Zhu, N. & Li, M.. (2024). How does basic public service provision affect the well-being of low-income groups? --An empirical analysis from a field survey in four provinces of China. *Journal of Northwest University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition)*(01),153-168.
4. Li Xiumei, Gui Y & Huang Ronggui. (2018). Government Basic Public Service Provision and Sense of Social Equity - A Study Based on CGSS 2010. *Social Science*(07),89-97.
5. Mei Zhenwu, Sun Yudong & Liu Wenzhang. (2020). The level of public service equalization and citizens' sense of social equity - an analysis based on CGSS 2013. *Research on Finance and Trade*(04),63-74.
6. Shi, Shengxu & Guo, Xinqin. (2023). A study on the impact of public service satisfaction on the sense of social fairness - A study based on the perspective of intergenerational differences. *Chongqing Social Science* (04), 77-93.
7. Wu, W., Yu, W. X. & Ma, L.. (2016). Enhancing the sense of social fairness and building a service-oriented government - A survey report on 2014 Lien's public service index of Chinese cities. *Public Management and Policy Review* (01), 5-16.
8. Xia, Min & Zhang, Yi. (2020). Actual access versus subjective access - The moderating role of public services based on social equity perceptions. *Gansu Journal of Theory* (06),120-128.
9. Xu Kangran & Qin Jingxia. (2018). The impact of public service level on residents' sense of social fairness - A study based on 2013 China General Social Survey (CGSS) data. *Contemporary economy* (08), 126-128.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

