

# Discussion on the Intergenerational Co-Living Model in Hong Kong, China

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**Abstract:** Hong Kong, China has entered a super-aging society and continues to be serious, while the birth rate in Hong Kong, China continues to decline. Although there are enough nursing homes in Hong Kong, China, there is still not enough psychological comfort for the elderly. The elderly in Hong Kong, China are well-known in the world for their longevity, but their psychological condition is only ranked 79th in the world. Therefore, we can learn from the European intergenerational cohabitation model to provide spiritual companionship for the elderly in Hong Kong, China.

**Keywords:** Super-aging, Elderly in Hong Kong, China, Elderly care services.

## 1. Introduction

Hong Kong, China announced that by mid-2022, Hong Kong, China's population aged 65 or above accounted for 20.9% of the total population of 7.29 million, officially becoming a super-aged society, and the elderly population will reach 30% in 2037. The longevity level of Hong Kong, China people has increased so that the life expectancy of Hong Kong, China's elderly is the highest in the world, but Hong Kong, China elders ranked 79th globally in terms of mental health. According to the forecast of the Hong Kong, China Census and Statistics Department, the number of centenarians in Hong Kong, China will increase to 51,100 by 2066. However, Hong Kong, China's resources for the elderly are more about physical care for the elderly, and extremely lack of psychological comfort. The 2016 survey in Hong Kong, China showed that there were 152,500 elderly people living alone, and the number increased by 54% compared with 2006. In 2020, Hong Kong, China recorded 438 elderly suicide cases, the highest number since records began in 1973. [1]

The Hong Kong, China Baptist Church Oi Kwan Social Service District conducted a questionnaire survey among the elderly aged 60 or above from Neighborhood Elderly Centers in Tai Po District, Yau Tsim Mong District, Tsuen Wan District and Kwai Tsing District in 2016 to 2017, collecting a total of 1,543 questionnaire (33% of respondents were 60 to 69 years old; 35% were 70 to 79 years old; 32% were 80 or older). [2] The survey results showed that 15% of the respondents had a Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) score of 6 or above, belonging to the level of borderline depression (from the elderly aged 80 or above, the elderly living alone, the elderly with financial pressure, the sick and need long-term follow-up, not participating in group activities). [3] In order to take care of the psychological needs of the elderly, some developed countries have introduced the following measures. For example, The Singapore Housing Development Board implements a Multi-Generational Priority Scheme, and it allows married children to purchase two new homes on the same floor of the same building as their parents. And under the Singapore housing subsidy policy (Proximity Housing Grant), Singapore citizens who buy a new house and live within 4 kilometers of their parents or married children can receive a subsidy of about HK\$115,000, for those who buy a

new house and live with their parents or children, the subsidy can be increased to about HK\$173,000. [4] Since the subsidy was launched in 2015, nearly 40,000 families have benefited, involving more than HK\$4 billion. In 2017, Singapore completed the Action Plan for Successful Aging with a total value of approximately HK\$17.1 billion. One of the measures is to set up facilities that can take care of both the elderly and young children in 10 newly built buildings, aiming to help the elderly enjoy mental health in later life. [5]

Intergenerational Co-Living is an elderly care model that has been successfully tested in some developed countries. This elderly care model first originated from the common housing plan in Copenhagen, Denmark in the 1970s, and was gradually extended to European and American countries such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, and even Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea. [6] For different reasons, such as financial ability, lifestyle choices or network expansion, young people try the Intergenerational Co-Living Model. Hong Kong, China has been the city with the highest housing prices in the world for 9 consecutive years. A family with a median income needs to spend 21 years without spending at all to afford a small house, so the rent in Hong Kong, China is also very high. Moreover, public housing in Hong Kong, China is very difficult to get allocated, and it takes at least 6 years. [7] Japan once implemented the Home Share program in Bunkyo District, Tokyo, where the largest number of university students are. It encourages elderly living alone who own private houses to provide rooms for university students studying in Tokyo at free or cheap rent, with priority given to college students in related departments of the elderly. Yau Yung, Prof. from Lingnan University in Hong Kong, China pointed out that the Intergenerational Co-Living model in Europe is successful, but it does not mean that it will be successful in Hong Kong, China. For example, the generation gap and the privacy issues of young people need to be resolved and need to find more open-minded people. From May to July 2019, some scholars interviewed 520 Hong Kong, China youths aged 18 to 30 and 8 experts to discuss the implementation of the Intergenerational Co-Living Model in Hong Kong, China. [8] Among the 520 respondents, 64% of the young people surveyed said they had no plans to buy a house, all because of lack of financial capacity. The average score of respondents on the government's support for public housing is only 4.52 (out of 10 points), so they tend to be

dissatisfied. The development of co-living can make more effective use of social idle house resources and alleviate the youth housing problem. However, 68% of the youth interviewed said they would not consider co-living, mainly because they were worried about the lack of space for personal privacy. Some experts said that the model requires the area of the living house to reach at least a certain level, but many houses in Hong Kong,China are small in size. In addition, some operators said that it is very difficult to use dilapidated tenement buildings in Hong Kong,China for development, and the value and acquisition cost of the buildings are not low. The model has been developed and matured in other developed regions, but in Hong Kong,China, this concept is still in its infancy, and the general public does not have a deep understanding of it. Someone interviewed young people in Hong Kong,China on the spot. The survey results showed that 58.7% of the young people interviewed had never heard of the Intergenerational Co-Living Model. [8] Therefore, Hong Kong,China people naturally do not accept this model very much. The survey also showed that co-living is attractive to young people in Hong Kong,China mainly to save rental expenses.

Regarding the urgency of implementing the Intergenerational Co-Living Model in Hong Kong,China, I think there are the following reasons: with the aging of Hong Kong,China continuing to be serious, Hong Kong,China 's birth rate continues to decline, from 12% in 1991 to 5% in 2021. In 2021, only 772 babies will be born per 1,000 Hong Kong,China women. In addition, Hong Kong,China 's net population migration has reached a new high for three consecutive years from 2020 to 2022, and most of the migrants are young people. The median age of the Hong Kong,China population has risen from 31.6 years in 1991 to 47.3 years in 2021, and the old-age dependency ratio has risen from 126 to 300. These conditions mean that the elderly in Hong Kong,China are likely to lack the care and company of their children in their later years, and This situation is difficult to reverse and may affect generations to come. Based on some public data from the Census and Statistics Department of Hong Kong,China, I am trying to provide some feasible suggestions for formulating a the Intergenerational Co-Living Model that is more in line with Hong Kong,China 's social characteristics. For example, commercial intermediaries cooperate with the government. Intermediary companies can match suitable young people who are willing to live together with the elderly in Hong Kong,China who need to live together, and the government will provide certain subsidies. Since there are many elderly people living alone in Hong Kong,China, and most of the elderly in Hong Kong,China own their own real estate, the elderly in Hong Kong,China can provide vacant rooms for young people to live in. With regard to the choice of young people, because the local young people in Hong Kong,China have less stress in life and attach great importance to privacy, most of these people are unwilling to participate in the co-living model. I suggest that students aged 18 and above who come to study in Hong Kong,China from the Mainland can be considered as youth targets. [9] The first is that the cost of living for mainland students in Hong Kong,China is relatively high, and the second is that mainland students have almost no personal connections in Hong Kong,China and it takes a long time to adapt to Hong Kong,China. According to the survey, the number of student dormitories provided by institutions of higher learning in Hong Kong,China is very rarely, so most

mainland students can only share rooms with others off-campus, affording high rent and living costs. [10] Third, the customs of mainland students are similar to those of the elderly in Hong Kong,China, and it is easier to live comfortably, because most of the elderly in Hong Kong,China today came to Hong Kong,China from the mainland in the last century. Since 90% of Hong Kong,China people speak Cantonese, we can recruit students who grew up in Cantonese-speaking areas of Guangdong Province and study in Hong Kong,China. In this way, there will be no language barriers, and the cultures of the Cantonese-speaking areas are very similar. At the beginning of 2023, the ports connecting Hong Kong,China and the Mainland has been officially opened, and the unemployment rate in Hong Kong,China continued to drop to about 3%, indicating that Hong Kong,China 's economy is picking up. The number of mainland students studying in Hong Kong,China will increase sharply from 2022, and exchanges between Hong Kong,China and the mainland will show a positive upward trend in the future. For many students from impoverished mainland families but with excellent grades, the obstacle to studying in Hong Kong,China is funding. Therefore, the elderly in Hong Kong,China can voluntarily choose sponsorship methods, such as inviting students to live together for free or very low rent, or giving partial sponsorship for tuition fees or living expenses, etc. I believe that with the market-oriented development of the Intergenerational Co-Living Model, this model will have More advantages to attract the old and the young. Mainland students accounted for 25.1% of those who have been in Hong Kong,China for less than 7 years, equivalent to one out of every four Hong Kong,China non-permanent residents. The commercial intermediary companies that live in the Intergenerational Co-Living Model can earn intermediary fees that are responsible for matching the elderly and young people. The government can assist these companies and encourage students studying in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to participate in the Intergenerational Co-Living Model cohabitation experience in Hong Kong,China in batches, and give appropriate credit rewards, students majoring in social sciences, psychology and other related majors can be given priority, because they have mastered the relevant knowledge, and need a short period of professional training under the guidance of professional professors before entering the co-living modle. In addition to being managed by the university or the government, young people and the elderly also need to sign a contract before moving in to ensure that both parties will abide by their commitments.

The sex ratio of the Hong Kong,China population has dropped from 1,044 in 1991 to 839 in 2021, and the average annual death toll sex ratio (male to female) in the past three decades is 1,276. Therefore, from a long-term perspective, the Intergenerational co-living model serves more for female elders. According to the data of the Hong Kong,China Census and Statistics Department in mid-2022, there are 806,500 female elders aged 65 or above, and 713,600 male elders. The elderly have the ability to purchase the service of co-living because Hong Kong,China 's per capita income was HK\$410,000 in 2021 and the comprehensive consumption index of personal care and social protection in Hong Kong,China has continued to rise in the past two years. In addition, non-permanent resident youths who have come to Hong Kong,China for a relatively short period of time to work

can also serve as selectable object . In 2021, the median monthly income of mainlanders who have settled in Hong Kong,China for less than seven years is only about 70% of that of the entire working population in Hong Kong,China. The median per capita housing area for such people is 9.0 square meters, much lower than Hong Kong,China 's 16.0 square meters. More than three-quarters of non-permanent mainland residents are tenants, mainly living in Sham Shui Po District, Kwun Tong District, Yau Tsim Mong District and Yuen Long District, all of which are relatively backward districts in Hong Kong,China. [11] The 2021 Hong Kong,China Census shows that among the Hong Kong,China residents who often stay in Guangdong Province, there are 85,100 elderly people aged 65 and over, 15,500 more than in 2013. There are 126,900 people aged 45-64, more than young people. Among the 18 districts in Hong Kong,China, Eastern District, Wong Tai Sin, Kwun Tong, Kwai Tsing, Wan Chai, Southern District, Sha Tin, and Sham Shui Po have more than 19.5% of the population aged 65 and above. Those with a monthly median income exceeding HK\$40,000 include Wan Chai, Central and Western Districts, Sai Kung, Southern District, Eastern District, and Tsuen Wan. Tai Po, Sai Kung, Eastern District, Tsuen Wan, Central and Western District, North District, Wan Chai, Sha Tin, and Tuen Mun have more than 55% of their own residences. Yau Tsim Mong, Wan Chai, Central and Western District, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon City, Outlying Islands District, and Tuen Mun had single-person households accounting for more than 20%. Outlying Islands District, Kowloon City, Sham Shui Po, Sai Kung District, Sha Tin, Tsuen Wan District, Kwun Tong, Yuen Long, and North District have full-time students accounting for more than 14.5%. Outlying Islands District, Yau Tsim Mong District, Kowloon City District, Eastern District, Central and Western District, and Wanchai District have more than 50% of the elderly with secondary education or above. According to the above data, it can be found that: Wan Chai has five indicators, the Eastern District and Central and Western District have four indicators, and Sha Tin, Sham Shui Po, Sai Kung, Tsuen Wan, Kowloon City, and Outlying Islands all have three

indicators. Therefore, Wan Chai, the Eastern District and the Central and Western District are the preferred test sites for the co-living model.

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