



# CONFUCIAN GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING AN AGEING SOCIETY UNDER CHINA'S MODERNIZATION PROCESS

*Jinying Zang*

School of Cultural Creativity and Media, Hangzhou Normal University, Hangzhou, 311121 – China.

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-4442-8781> |  [Jinyinsad@outlook.com](mailto:Jinyinsad@outlook.com)



*Zhuohui Liang*

School of Public Administration, Zhejiang University of Technology, Zhejiang, 310014 – China.

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-6696-5402> |  [liangznkeow@126.com](mailto:liangznkeow@126.com)

*Lin Du*

School of Social Development, Tianjin University of Technology, Tianjin, 300382 – China.

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6145-1822> |  [du24654441@email.cn](mailto:du24654441@email.cn)

XZANG, Jinying; LIANG, Zhuohui; DU, Lin. Confucian guidelines for building an ageing society under China's modernization process. *Trans/Form/Ação*: Unesp journal of philosophy, Marília, v. 47, n. 6, e02400316, 2024.

**Abstract:** This article explores how to combine Confucian principles of filial piety and benevolence with modern aging society governance through literature review and case studies, aiming to improve the elderly people's quality of life and promote social harmony by integrating traditional values into modern policies. This article analyzes the challenges brought by aging to Chinese society and explores how to solve the social problems caused by aging through these traditional values. The results indicate that the Confucian ideals of filial piety and benevolence provide moral guidance and cultural foundation for respecting and caring for the elderly. The concept of filial piety emphasizes the respect and care of children towards their parents, while the idea of benevolence advocates for the care and support of the elderly throughout society. It is crucial to integrate these traditional values with modern national policies in building a civilized elderly society. By doing so, China can improve its elderly citizens' quality of life and pave the way for a respectful and caring social framework.


**Keywords:** Harmonious Society. Filial Piety. Collectivism. Humanism. Confucius.

ZANG, Jinying; LIANG, Zhuohui; DU, Lin. Diretrizes confucionistas para a construção de uma sociedade de idosos no processo de modernização da China. *Transformação*: revista de filosofia da Unesp, Marília, v. 47, n. 6, e02400316, 2024.

**Resumo:** Este artigo reflete sobre como combinar os princípios confucionistas de piedade filial e benevolência com a moderna governança da sociedade do envelhecimento, por meio de uma revisão da literatura e estudos de caso, com o objetivo de melhorar a qualidade de vida dos idosos e promover a harmonia social, integrando os valores tradicionais às políticas modernas. O texto analisa os desafios trazidos pelo envelhecimento à sociedade chinesa e explora como resolver os problemas sociais causados pelo envelhecimento, através desses valores tradicionais. Os resultados indicam que os ideais confucionistas de piedade filial e benevolência fornecem orientação moral e base cultural para respeitar e cuidar dos idosos. O conceito de piedade filial enfatiza o respeito e o cuidado dos filhos para com seus pais, enquanto a ideia de benevolência defende o cuidado e o apoio aos idosos, em toda a sociedade. É fundamental integrar esses valores tradicionais com políticas nacionais modernas na construção de uma sociedade civilizada de idosos. Ao fazer isso, a China pode melhorar a qualidade de vida de seus cidadãos idosos e preparar o caminho para uma estrutura social respeitosa e atenciosa.

**Palavras-chave:** Sociedade harmoniosa. Piedade filial. Coletivismo. Humanismo. Confúcio.

Submission: 26/07/2024 | Decision: 06/09/2024 | Revision: 24/09/2024 | Publication: 28/10/2024

 <https://doi.org/10.1590/0101-3173.2024.v47.n6.e02400316>



This is an article published in open access under a Creative Commons license.

## CONFUCIAN GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING AN AGEING SOCIETY UNDER CHINA'S MODERNIZATION PROCESS

*Jinying Zang*<sup>1</sup>

*Zhuohui Liang*<sup>2</sup>

*Lin Du*<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract:** This article explores how to combine Confucian principles of filial piety and benevolence with modern aging society governance through literature review and case studies, aiming to improve the elderly people's quality of life and promote social harmony by integrating traditional values into modern policies. This article analyzes the challenges brought by aging to Chinese society and explores how to solve the social problems caused by aging through these traditional values. The results indicate that the Confucian ideals of filial piety and benevolence provide moral guidance and cultural foundation for respecting and caring for the elderly. The concept of filial piety emphasizes the respect and care of children towards their parents, while the idea of benevolence advocates for the care and support of the elderly throughout society. It is crucial to integrate these traditional values with modern national policies in building a civilized elderly society. By doing so, China can improve its elderly citizens' quality of life and pave the way for a respectful and caring social framework.

**Keywords:** Harmonious Society. Filial Piety. Collectivism. Humanism. Confucius.

### INTRODUCTION

The modernization process in China can be defined as a comprehensive social transformation aimed at achieving national prosperity, national rejuvenation and people's happiness. With the acceleration of modernization, the challenges of aging are becoming increasingly severe. Confucianism is an important component of traditional Chinese culture, which mainly includes core concepts, such as benevolence and filial piety. Benevolence is the most core concept in the Confucian ethical system, emphasizing care and sympathy for others. Filial piety is considered one of the foundations of all virtues, reflecting the fundamental harmonious relationship between family and society. Introducing the Confucian concepts of

---

<sup>1</sup> School of Cultural Creativity and Media, Hangzhou Normal University, Hangzhou, 311121 – China. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-4442-8781>. E-mail: [Jinyinsad@outlook.com](mailto:Jinyinsad@outlook.com).

<sup>2</sup> School of Public Administration, Zhejiang University of Technology, Zhejiang, 310014 – China. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-6696-5402>. E-mail: [liangznkeow@126.com](mailto:liangznkeow@126.com).

<sup>3</sup> School of Social Development, Tianjin University of Technology, Tianjin, 300382 – China. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6145-1822>. E-mail: [du24654441@email.cn](mailto:du24654441@email.cn).

“benevolence” and “filial piety” into policy-making and daily management can make elderly care more humane and align modern services with these deeply ingrained values.

Due to the decrease in the working age population and the increase in the retirement one, the pension system is facing the risk of funding shortage (Luo *et al.*, 2021). A lower fertility rate means a decrease in the number of young people entering the labor market in the future, a reduction in family size and a lack of sufficient family support for the elderly, leading to social isolation and reduced social participation, which has a negative impact on their mental health and overall well-being (Bao, 2020). Adapting the current elderly service system, largely influenced by Western models, is crucial to better accommodate China’s significant elderly demographic (Dong, 2020). To better illustrate this point, we can refer to the measures proposed in the following research results:

Promoting healthy and active aging, advocating aging bioethics, and encouraging lifelong learning among the elderly are essential, along with strengthening age-friendly environments to align with the needs of China’s aging population (Chen, 2020, p. 99).

Additionally, Daoist philosophy, which promotes living in harmony with nature and emphasizes balance and peace, can be instrumental in creating tranquil and accommodating environments for the elderly (Xie; Wang, 2019). Incorporating these principles into the design of public spaces and community activities can foster age-friendly settings that encourage active and peaceful engagement among the elderly (Li, 2018).

The fusion of Confucianism and Daoism into modern governance not only strengthens societal bonds, but also aids in developing a comprehensive and culturally enriched framework for an aging civilization, essential for the society’s harmonious and orderly development.

## 1 CHINA’S AGING SITUATION

These data clearly show that China’s population aging trend is significantly accelerating, which is putting increasing pressure on the social welfare system. It is expected that, by 2030, the population of elderly people over 60 years old would reach 370 million, which is almost one-third of China’s total population. It is expected that, by the middle of this century, the population aged 60 and above would reach 35% of the total population, making China the country with the most severe aging population in the world (Pan; Zhu; Wang, 2022). Other countries and regions are also experiencing population aging, but at different rates and degrees. For example, South Korea expects the proportion of people aged 65 and above to reach 24.7% by 2030. According to Japanese government data, as of 2021, the population aged 65 and above accounted for 29% of the total population, and it is

expected to further increase to 31.3% by 2030 (Tu; Zheng; Liu, 2022). At present, an aging society's development has become one of the most challenging issues in China's development process. Human society has entered an extraordinary period, and civilization has also reached this historic turning point.

## **2 ETHICS AND SYSTEM – PHILOSOPHICAL SOLUTIONS TO THE AGING DILEMMA**

The practical significance of understanding and categorizing an aging society's civilized elements into material elements, spiritual elements, language and symbols, and normative systems lies in its implications for policy-making, societal development and quality of life enhancement for elderly populations (Li, 2019). Confucianism is not only the cornerstone of traditional Chinese culture, but also an indispensable part of modern social civilization. It has made significant contributions in the construction of material civilization, the shaping of spiritual civilization, the dissemination of language and culture, and the establishment of social norms.

Material elements in an aging society encompass the tangible infrastructure and economic sectors dedicated to supporting the older adults' needs. Confucianism emphasizes "benevolence" and "filial piety", prompting society to pay attention to the construction of families and communities on a material level. As the society's basic unit, the family has been influenced by Confucianism and has formed a material support system centered around the family. This includes the aging social economy, which focuses on industries, such as healthcare, pharmaceuticals and financial services tailored to retirees.

Additionally, the aging industry involves the production of medical devices, assistive technologies and specialized housing solutions. Hardware facilities, like nursing homes and rehabilitation centers, provide essential care and services, supported by medical equipment and assistive devices. Together, these material elements form a comprehensive system aimed at enhancing the quality of life and supporting the elderly individuals' well-being, reflecting ongoing societal commitment to adapting to demographic shifts and ensuring inclusive environments for aging populations.

The spiritual element, also known as spiritual civilization, stands opposite to the material element and refers to the intelligent achievements of science, art and various values that reflect the progress of human civilization in an aging society's development process. Modern elderly care culture is an important representation of the spiritual elements of aging society civilization. The core concepts and value system of traditional Chinese culture of "filial piety" and "nurturing" have been separated from the contemporary society's values. "Filial piety" is not only a simple form of obedience or material support, but also includes spiritual care and support, as well as understanding and respecting the parents' wishes. "Nurturing"

not only refers to providing basic necessities of life, but also involves ensuring a dignified, safe and happy living environment for the elderly (Nie; Jones, 2019).

Confucianism emphasizes moral cultivation and harmonious interpersonal relationships at the spiritual level, advocating core values, such as “benevolence” and “filial piety”. These spiritual elements not only shape individuals’ moral concepts, but also provide guidance for the society’s overall values. With the acceleration of urbanization, nuclear families have become mainstream, and the phenomenon of children living separately from their parents is becoming more common. This makes it more difficult for children to directly take care of their parents (Gu; Li, 2023). The establishment of socialized service systems, such as nursing homes and community elderly care services, as well as the development of modern technology, have led to changes in specific practical methods with the society’s development. However, understanding and inheriting the spiritual essence of traditional virtues, such as “filial piety” and “respect for the elderly”, remain the foundation for the construction of civilization in contemporary aging society.

Language and symbols are the support for human communication and knowledge transmission in an aging society. The elderly care culture, in an aging society, generally emphasizes the expression and exchange of emotions between parents and children. Among them, language and symbols are the most important carriers and tools in human life, and they are also an indispensable part of the elderly’s lives. At home, parents talk to their children, and children express their hard work and thoughts to their parents. These direct and intimate words and behaviors are the most effective and direct for the construction of a civilized aging society. Confucianism has strengthened cultural identity among society’s members through the dissemination of linguistic symbols. Classic literature, such as the famous sayings and aphorisms in the *Analects*, has become important linguistic symbols in social communication, conveying the core ideas of Confucianism. These linguistic symbols are not only widely used in family education, but also play a role in regulating behavior in social interactions, promoting understanding and communication among generations.

The normative system is a concrete manifestation of spiritual civilization, referring to behavioral rules that have been established and can be repeatedly applied in an aging society. It mainly includes policies and systems related to the elderly society’s governance. When constructing a normative system for an aging society, it is necessary to highlight obligations and responsibilities, and adjust the relationship between individuals and families, as well as between individuals and society, based on core values. The “ritual” in Confucianism is a manifestation of social order and behavioral norms, which regulates the way people interact with one another and emphasizes hierarchical order and social harmony. Although modern society has gained a new understanding of equality and democracy, the Confucian concept of

“ritual” still guides people’s behavior to a certain extent, especially playing a positive role in maintaining public order and promoting social fairness and justice.

The significance of addressing aging society governance lies in ensuring that society can effectively adapt to the challenges brought by population aging and seek opportunities from them. As pointed out by Hu and Zhang in their research:

From the current development perspective, the efforts needed to address the governance of an aging society are not only emergency response and response plans to the issue of aging, but also the need to establish and deepen a cultural attitude towards aging and its top-level design philosophy, get rid of excessive concerns about aging, and view the issue of aging itself as an inevitable development process in the history of human civilization (Hu; Zhang, 2018, p. 110).

Building an aging civilized society is a multidimensional process that involves multiple fields, such as economy, culture and society. In this process, Confucianism provides rich theoretical resources and practical guidance, which is of great significance for building a harmonious, inclusive and humane aging society. Positive thinking and strategies are used to cope with the aging society, rather than passively adapting to it, in order to achieve “positive aging”. Active aging is a concept and practical method aimed at improving the elderly’s quality of life, emphasizing that they maintain a positive state in terms of physical, psychological and social aspects. Compared to the normal aging process of passive acceptance, active aging focuses on promoting the elderly’s overall well-being through proactive strategies.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to find a holistic discourse that expresses the ideas of aging strategies with a cultural attitude. From the perspective of history of human civilization, this holistic discourse is called “aging social civilization”. Specifically, both in theory and practice, it is necessary to enhance the level of civilization in an aging society, and to view “aging social civilization” as a cultural attitude and strategic thinking. It is necessary to actively explore and recognize the importance of aging in the history of civilization, and implement the aging strategy as a social civilization.

The continuation of social civilization cannot be separated from population. The change in population structure is not only a result of socioeconomic development, but also inevitably has a profound impact on the society’s various aspects and the ones of culture. An aging society’s civilization is not only an important component of the entire social system, but also an important aspect of promoting China’s modernization process. The Confucian ideology advocates the concepts of “benevolence” and “responsibility” at the social level, which can enhance the connections and trust among society’s members. With the gradual synchronization of China’s aging population and the construction of a modern socialist country, how to integrate Confucianism into the aging social civilization construction has



important practical significance for coping with the challenge of aging population in the process of China's modernization.

Modern development does not mean simply distinguishing from traditional civilization. It is a combination of existing civilizations with practical development goals, continuously advancing existing civilizations in a scientific way. Scholars Zhai and Liu emphasized the relatively lagging institutional construction in China's response to population aging:

China's modernization process shares similarities and differences with other countries' modernization processes, while as a developing country, China's civilization system construction in dealing with population aging is significantly lagging behind that of developed Western countries (Zhai; Liu, 2019, p. 15).

Therefore, in the process of governance in an aging society, it is necessary to comprehensively examine the construction of a civilized aging society and draw lessons from other developed countries.

An aging society's civilization and China's modernization development are mutually influencing and promoting each other. The goal of modern social governance in China is to build "[...] co construction, co governance, and sharing" (Li; Feng; Zhang, 2022, p. 1). From the perspective of institutional construction, the construction of a civilized elderly society in China is an important part of the modernization of the national governance system and capabilities. The Confucian concept of "rule by ritual" helps to establish a sound normative system suitable for an aging society. Confucianism believes that stability and harmony in social order can be achieved through the system of etiquette. The scientific and comprehensive nature of this civilization construction is an important landmark for the maturity and finalization of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics (Chen; You, 2019, p. 11). Through dialogue and consultation among diverse stakeholders, the construction of a civilized aging society and the optimal allocation of social resources are achieved, in order to enhance the people's vitality, especially the elderly group, and provide new ideas for China's modernization construction.

The aging society has become a fundamental national condition that China faces in the long-term development of modernization. The construction of a material and spiritual rich social civilization for the elderly is the demand of the social and economic foundation for the superstructure. The economic foundation refers to the sum of production relations in a society, including productive forces and production relations. It is the material aspect of the social structure that determines the society's fundamental nature and development direction.

The superstructure refers to the general term for social structures, such as political, legal and ideological systems built on the economic foundation. It reflects and serves the

economic foundation, changing with the changes in it. Scholars Wang and Shu emphasized the importance of actively treating aging:

When facing the trend of aging, a positive attitude towards social civilization towards aging is applied, allowing the elderly to integrate into the system operation of the entire society with dignity and worry free, fully exerting their group and personal values, which is the basic principle of social construction and governance in modern countries (Wang; Shu, 2018, p. 5).

### **3 DEVELOPMENT PATH OF CHINA'S AGING SOCIETY**

The development background of China's aging society is deeply influenced by Confucianism, which plays a core role in family structure and social relationships as an important component of traditional Chinese culture. The Confucian emphasis on filial piety is not only the cornerstone of family ethics, but also shapes the harmony and stability of intergenerational relationships. With the acceleration of modernization, Chinese society has experienced rapid economic development and urbanization, and traditional family structures are facing challenges. The aging problem is gradually emerging, and the increase in the elderly population has put forward higher requirements for social resources, medical security and family support systems. Based on current development data:

Under the conditions of continuous progress in technology and healthcare, as well as rapid social development, the average life expectancy has generally been extended, and the fertility rate has also continued to decline, resulting in the proportion of China's elderly population reaching the standards of an aging society (Liang, 2018, p. 2255). "As of the end of 2016, there were 230.86 million elderly people aged 60 and above in China, accounting for 16.7% of the total population, an increase of 3.44 percentage points compared to 2010. By the end of 2017, the total number of elderly people aged 60 and above in China had reached 240.9 million, accounting for 17.3% of the total population" (Li; Wang, 2021, p. 1).

#### **3.1 CONSTRUCTION PRINCIPLES**

In the context of China's rapid modernization, the construction of a civilization within an aging society adheres to several fundamental principles that not only respect traditional cultural values, but also align with the realities of contemporary life. These guiding principles serve to foster a philosophical understanding that enhances and improves the process of aging and civilization.

Respecting Tradition and Basing on Reality: the transformation of China's socio-economic landscape necessitates a balanced approach in the construction of an aging society's civilization. While it is crucial to respect and preserve the essence of traditional pension culture, such as the Confucian culture of filial piety, it is equally important to adapt these traditions to contemporary social realities and modern values. This dual approach facilitates



a diverse value system that both honors the past and embraces the present, ensuring that the philosophical underpinnings of aging are continuously revitalized to meet current societal needs.

Supported by Morality and Guaranteed by Law: amidst the challenges posed by modern individualistic and materialistic values, reinforcing moral obligations towards the elderly is essential. Confucianism emphasizes moral cultivation and social responsibility, advocating respect and care for the elderly. Moral education, supported by robust legal protections, plays a pivotal role in cultivating respect and care for the elderly. This dual framework not only addresses the aging population's immediate needs, but also stabilizes societal development by fostering a culture of respect and duty towards seniors, thereby enhancing the philosophical depth of society's approach to elder care.

Joint Participation and Cooperation: Confucianism emphasizes "harmony" and "coexistence", advocating mutual understanding and support among different age groups. The construction of a modern aging society civilization requires the active involvement of all societal sectors. This collective effort ensures comprehensive cultural development and the effective interpretation of social civilization.

Through community collaboration and governmental leadership, family ethics are reinforced, the role of social organizations is maximized and a cooperative spirit is fostered among citizens. In practical applications, community service centers should be established to provide various services, such as health consultation, legal aid, child care and elderly care. Community activities should be organized, including cultural festivals, sports events and health lectures to promote communication and interaction among residents. The government has introduced family friendly policies, elderly welfare and other related policies to provide financial support for community projects, ensuring their smooth implementation. This participatory approach enriches the philosophical discourse on aging by emphasizing communal responsibility and the interdependence of individual and societal well-being.

Guided by Socialist Core Values: the socialist core values emphasize concepts, such as prosperity, democracy, civilization and harmony, which complement the Confucian concept of "harmony". Guidance by socialist core values is imperative in shaping the elderly's cultural identity and social integrity. This guidance not only promotes cultural confidence and a spirit of self-improvement among the aging population, but also strengthens the society's ideological foundation. By enhancing the country's cultural soft power, the philosophical implications of aging and civilization are elevated, contributing to a more harmonious and culturally rich society.

The philosophical enhancement of China's approach to an aging society is rooted in a deep respect for tradition coupled with a pragmatic adaptation to modern realities. The measures taken should be comprehensive, not only meeting the elderly's basic needs, but

also considering their needs for mental health, social participation and personal dignity, and fully reflecting respect and care for the elderly, as well as positive acceptance of the natural phenomenon of aging.

### **3.2 CONSTRUCTION APPROACH**

The principle of constructing civilization in an aging society has been followed. In the process of Chinese path to modernization, the aging social civilization has been constructed, which has injected more abundant connotation into the new form of human civilization and presented a more vivid development pattern. Specifically, it can be achieved from three levels:

In Confucian culture, “education” is an important concept that emphasizes the cultivation of moral qualities and social responsibility through education. To construct a civilized aging society, it is necessary to carry out public nature of elderly education and education on modern aging civilization throughout society, and establish a complete learning and education system for the elderly. Carry out public nature of elderly education refers to raising public awareness and understanding of aging issues through various channels and methods, as well as promoting positive attitudes and methods towards addressing aging. It mainly plays the role of guiding public opinion, inspiring action and shaping culture.

The first is to enhance the public nature of elderly education, promote the rational allocation of elderly education resources and provide more elderly groups with opportunities to receive education. The construction of universities for the elderly and social elderly education institutions has been increased, based on the elderly group's actual social life, to meet its different educational needs and develop and construct a diversified curriculum system, so as to enhance the elderly group's lifelong learning awareness and improve its cultural literacy.

The second is to improve the level and governance of social elderly services, and cultivate employees' proactive service awareness. The connotation of aging society civilization is a part of socialist spiritual civilization with Chinese characteristics and, based on this, a complete modern aging service system is constructed. In addition to strengthening the construction of hardware, such as personnel and facilities, a cultural atmosphere should also be created from aspects, such as systems, concepts, and behaviors, in order to form cultural soft power.

The third is to promote China's excellent traditional virtues through various forms of publicity, such as public platforms and media, create a positive public opinion environment and promote the full practice of correct values, such as respecting and loving the elderly in social development, so that the elderly group can better integrate into social life, thus forming a civilized atmosphere of family harmony, elderly health and intergenerational harmony.

The Confucian concept of “rule by ritual” advocates maintaining harmony and stability through reasonable social order and norms. Under the aging society’s development, the elderly’s social development needs have been upgraded from the most basic Survivability to the development type. To accelerate the construction of social civilization, it is necessary to build and improve relevant systems.

In addition to promoting the high-level and high-quality development of the elderly care industry, it is also necessary to continuously strengthen social security. This means that innovation and optimization of services are needed to improve the quality, efficiency and sustainability of elderly care services and meet the elderly’s diverse needs. By utilizing intelligent technology to improve service quality, setting up elderly care service stations in the community, providing daytime care, health consultation, cultural and sports activities, and collaborating with medical institutions, regular health checkups, lectures and other activities are conducted in the community to enhance the elderly’s health awareness. This is a practical and feasible way to improve the level of social civilization in the era of aging, and also a manifestation of assuming the responsibility of rebuilding the aging society’s civilization in the perspective of globalization.

The first step is to increase the care for the elderly and improve the care system and services for the elderly. At present, there are still some problems in social elderly care services, such as the imbalance between family elderly care and social elderly one. At present, problems (Chen *et al.*, 2020), such as insufficient driving force for the coordinated high-quality development of the aging industry and the aging cause, lagging construction of the elderly care service quality system, significant internal fragmentation of relevant policy values, goals and local implementation, unrecognized market entity identity, and difficulties in the operation of socialized elderly care institutions, need to be solved urgently (Malhotra *et al.*, 2019). This not only involves the top-level design of the “active aging” policy, but also involves how to optimize the allocation of market resources.

On the one hand, it is necessary to increase the number of public and private elderly care institutions, expand their scale and make them more standardized. On the other hand, the focus should be on developing community elderly care. The government should strengthen the construction of service hardware facilities for the elderly and gradually establish a community elderly service environment that is fully functional, standardized management, life services, disease prevention and cultural entertainment. The government also needs to mobilize all institutions, groups, enterprises, etc., in society, to participate in the construction, in order to maximize the utilization of social resources. By utilizing home-based elderly care resources, an effective approach to healthy aging can be explored, which can provide a good development environment for the construction of a civilized aging society (Gu; Tan, 2019).

Secondly, relevant laws and regulations should be formulated to fully safeguard the elderly's rights and interests. The formulation and improvement of relevant legislation can not only provide a value path for the dissemination of civilization in contemporary aging society, but also provide institutional guarantees for the inheritance of civilization in modern aging society. For example, there is currently a lack of sufficient economic support for low-income elderly people, especially those in rural areas. In a sound legal system, special funds can be established or government subsidies can be increased to provide living allowances and support for low-income elderly people. Encourage enterprises and social capital to invest in the elderly care industry, while fostering preferential policies, such as tax reductions and exemptions. In the legal and regulatory system, attention should be paid to the protection of the elderly's material and spiritual rights, and material and spiritual support should be included in the scope of legal provisions.

At the same time, the judicial authorities should also strengthen law enforcement. On the one hand, they should provide education on relevant legal knowledge to the elderly, so that people can understand that supporting the elderly is not just a household matter, but a responsibility. Inviting legal experts and lawyers to conduct on-site lectures at community centers, nursing homes, and other places to introduce relevant legal knowledge on the protection of the rights and interests of the elderly. Establish a legal consultation service window in the community service center, where professional legal advisors offer face-to-face consultation.

On the other hand, strict enforcement of laws and regulations is necessary, and serious violations of the elderly's rights cannot be seen as family conflicts and only mediated. This essentially condones incorrect behavior, leading to the spread of prejudicial values for the common good. Only by strictly punishing those who fail to fulfill their filial piety obligations, such as support in accordance with the law, strong legal guarantees for the inheritance of civilization can be provided in the elderly society. For example, imposing a certain amount of fine on those who violate their obligation to provide for their children can be determined, based on the severity of the illegal behavior. Blacklisting individuals who refuse to fulfill their caregiving obligations will affect their social credit rating and restrict their activities in certain areas.

Furthermore, the philosophical foundation, provided by Confucianism and Daoism, plays a crucial role in deepening the societal understanding and acceptance of aging. "Confucianism, with its emphasis on familial respect and social harmony, advocates for an integrated approach where the young and old support and learn from each other, fostering intergenerational solidarity" (Huang; Liu, 2021, p. 5). This perspective not only enhances the social fabric, but also ensures that the elderly's wisdom is passed on and valued. Such

integration encourages a continuity of family and societal values, strengthening communal bonds and ensuring that the elderly feel a society's vital part rather than isolated.

In Confucian philosophy, the concept of “innate goodness and evil” holds that human nature is inherently good, but there is also the possibility of moving towards good and evil. Confucius once said, “Even if one's nature is similar, their habits are far apart.” This sentence indicates that, although human nature is similar, people's behavior and morality will be different due to the influence of education and environment. Emphasis was placed on the importance of education. Confucianism believes that, through proper education and guidance, people with good moral character can be cultivated. This is particularly important for an aging society, as good family and social education can promote the younger generation's respect and care for the elderly.

In addition, Confucianism emphasizes the importance of personal cultivation and believes that everyone should continuously improve their moral level. This kind of self-cultivation is not only beneficial for personal growth, but also helps to build a harmonious social environment. In an aging society, this self-cultivation and sense of social responsibility are particularly important as they can promote mutual respect and support among the society's members. These are all factors that cannot be ignored in the construction of civilization in an aging society. By promoting these Confucian principles, solid cultural support can be provided for the aging society on China's modernization path.

Daoism contributes to this framework by promoting a balanced lifestyle that values simplicity and tranquility, which is particularly appealing in the context of elder care. The Daoist emphasis on living in harmony with nature and the universe encourages a lifestyle that is physically sustainable and mentally enriching for the elderly, promoting well-being through peaceful coexistence rather than conflict or competition. This philosophy can guide the design of living spaces and community programs that are more aligned with the elderly's natural rhythms and needs, ensuring environments that support their physical health and mental peace (Zhu, 2022).

In practical applications, it is possible to consider setting up small gardens in elderly communities, planting flowers, plants and trees to provide a quiet resting place for the elderly. In addition, establishing a Tai Chi square and regularly holding Tai Chi classes to allow elderly people to practice Tai Chi in a natural environment. From the perspective of living environment, warm colors and wooden furniture can be used in the elderly people's homes to create a warm and comfortable atmosphere. At the same time, ensuring sufficient natural light and good ventilation conditions to improve the quality of living. From the perspective of daily activities, it is possible to organize meditation activities every morning to help the elderly clear their mind and reduce anxiety. Through these specific measures, the concept

of harmony in Taoist philosophy can be translated into practical actions, creating a more conducive living environment for the elderly's physical and mental health.

Some cities in China have launched the construction of "elderly friendly communities" by combining the Confucian emphasis on filial piety and the Taoist concept of harmony, and taking a series of measures. In some communities in developed cities, "respect and love for the elderly" activities have been organized to encourage young people to participate in serving the elderly. These activities include volunteer condolences, health lectures and cultural performances, aimed at increasing social attention and care for the elderly. For example, during the "Filial Piety Culture Week", the community not only commended families that have shown outstanding performance in caring for the elderly, but also held relevant cultural activities to enhance intergenerational communication within the community. These activities embody the Confucian tradition of "filial piety" and effectively enhance the elderly's and even the entire family's happiness by implementing it into concrete social practices.

The "natural elderly care" projects, carried out in some provinces, also demonstrate the successful application of Taoist ideas in aging governance. The project aims to create a living environment that harmoniously coexists with nature, guiding the elderly to return to nature and enjoy a peaceful life. The project not only sets up a "retirement garden" in the community, providing sports facilities suitable for the elderly, but also encourages them to participate in gardening activities. The implementation of this project not only improved the elderly's quality of life, but also enhanced their physical health, successfully integrating the Taoist concept of conforming to nature.

Through this synthesis of traditional wisdom with contemporary governance practices, China aims to create an environment where older adults are actively engaged in community life, where their knowledge is valued, and where their needs are met with dignity and respect. This holistic approach not only enhances the quality of life for older adults, but also strengthens societal cohesion and promotes intergenerational harmony. By leveraging its rich cultural heritage, China is paving the way for a sustainable and inclusive society that values all its members' contributions across the lifespan.

## CONCLUSION

In the process of modernization in China, the Confucian guiding ideology for building an aging society has important practical significance and profound historical value. The Confucian philosophy emphasizes the concepts of "benevolence", "filial piety" and "harmony," providing valuable cultural resources and moral support for addressing the challenges brought by an aging society. By respecting tradition, focusing on reality, strengthening moral and legal protection, and promoting intergenerational harmony,



Confucianism has laid the foundation for improving the elderly's quality of life and overall social harmony.

This approach involves bolstering the elderly care service system and establishing pertinent laws and regulations (Donizzetti, 2019, p. 1329). Such frameworks aim to provide both a robust material base and a rich cultural atmosphere to support the elderly's wellbeing (Diehl; Smyer; Mehrotea, 2020, p. 577). However, while studies on the construction of aging social civilization provide valuable insights for enhancing governance and strengthening societal structures, they also reveal certain limitations.

Low social acceptance is a key issue. Especially in areas with rapid urbanization, the younger generation may lack a sense of identification with traditional Confucian and Taoist culture, leading to a weakening of governance effectiveness. In addition, changes in family structure have made it difficult for young people to take care of the elderly due to their busy work schedules, further exacerbating the failure of the concept of filial piety in practice. The applicability of policies is also an issue that cannot be ignored. In different regions, due to differences in socioeconomic development levels and cultural backgrounds, the practice of Confucianism and Taoism should demonstrate flexibility. The development of an aging civilization is intricately linked to the varying economic and cultural landscapes across regions, suggesting that strategies need customization to local developmental stages.

To address this challenge, education and promotion can first enhance society's sense of identification with Confucian and Taoist culture. For example, courses on traditional culture can be added to schools, allowing the younger generation to receive the influence of traditional culture from an early age. At the same time, utilizing new media platforms, relevant online promotional activities will be launched to combine filial piety and the concept of respecting and loving the elderly with modern life, bringing young people closer to traditional culture.

When formulating policies, local governments need to consider the actual situation of the area and make targeted adjustments based on the grassroots communities' characteristics. For example, some remote areas may be more suitable for implementing home-based elderly care, while cities can focus on the construction of community elderly care services. Future research must therefore focus on refining governance models and offering more tailored recommendations to foster a civilized aging society. By integrating philosophical analysis, this exploration will contribute not only to a deeper understanding of the unique challenges, posed by an aging population, but also to the formulation of effective and culturally sensitive solutions that align with China's modernization goals.

## REFERENCES

- BAO, C. Y. The problem of aging population in China and corresponding strategies - Taking Henan Province as an example. **Zhongzhou Academic Journal**, v. 42, n. 4, p. 82-87, 2020.
- CHEN, A. H. Interpretation of the bioethical implications of active aging. **Huxiang Forum**, v. 33, n. 2, p. 99-106, 2020.
- CHEN, T. C.; YOU, S. A. Research on the Development Trend and Strategy of Population Aging in China in the New Era. **Aging Science Research**, v. 7, n. 4, p. 11-20, 2019.
- CHEN, Y. D; GUO, F; WANG, J. C.; CAI, W. J.; WANG, C.; WANG, K. C. *et al.* Provincial and gridded population projection for China under shared socioeconomic pathways from 2010 to 2100. **Scientific Data**, v. 7, n. 1, p. 83-95, 2020.
- DIEHL, M.; SMYER, M. A.; MEHROTEA, C. M. Optimizing aging: A call for a new narrative. **American Psychologist**, v. 75, n. 4, p. 577-589, 2020.
- DONG, H. Y. From Filial Piety Culture to Care Culture, Respect for the Elderly Culture - Building a New Cultural System Adapting to an Aging Society. **Zhongzhou Academic Journal**, v. 42, n. 9, p. 68-74, 2020.
- DONIZZETTI, A. R. Ageism in an aging society: The role of knowledge, anxiety about aging, and stereotypes in young people and adults. **International journal of environmental research and public health**, v. 16, n. 8, p. 1329-1339, 2019.
- GU, C.; LI, Z. M. The Confucian ideal of filial piety and its impact on Chinese family governance. **Journal of Sociology and Ethnology**, v. 5, n. 2, p. 45-52, 2023.
- GU, Y. H.; TAN, X. D. The Enlightenment of Healthy Aging on China. **Chinese Public Health**, v. 35, n. 8, p. 941-945, 2019.
- HU, X. Y.; ZHANG, C. Q. The Causes and Countermeasures of China's Deep Aging Society. **Academic Exchange**, v. 34, n. 12, p. 110-115, 2018.
- HUANG, T. Y.; LIU, Y. K. Scientific Understanding of the Connotation and Ways to Realize Socialist Modernization in China. **Research on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics**, v. 3, n. 1, p. 5-11, 2021.
- LI, J. W.; WANG, B. W. The Structural Evolution Trend and Impact of Population Aging in China. **Journal of Chongqing University of Technology (Social Sciences)**, v. 35, n. 6, p. 1-19, 2021.
- LI, P. L.; FENG, S. Z.; ZHANG, Y. Chinese path to modernization and the construction of independent knowledge system of Chinese sociology. **Social Journal**, v. 42, n. 6, p. 1-78, 2022.

LI, Z. H. The New Mission of China's Aging Work in the New Era: Actively Responding to Population Aging and Building an Ideal Aging Society. **Aging Science Research**, v. 6, n. 9, p. 3-11, 2018.

LI, Z. Y. The Cultural Background of Xi Jinping's thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era. **Research on Ideological and Political Education** [The revision is submitted. The author addition was hectic task and it takes 2 months to journal negotiations], v. 35, n. 1, p. 14-17, 2019.

LIANG, H. Y. Criteria for Determining Aging in China. **Chinese Journal of Gerontology**, v. 38, n. 9, p. 2255-2258, 2018.

LUO, Y. N.; SU, B. B.; ZHENG, X. Y. Trends and challenges for population and health during population aging — China, 2015–2050. **China CDC weekly**, v. 3, n. 28, p. 593-598, 2021.

MALHOTRA, R.; BAUTISTA, M. A. C.; MULLER, A. M.; AW, S.; HUAT KOH, G. C. *et al.* The aging of a young nation: population aging in Singapore. **The Gerontologist**, v. 59, n. 3, p. 401-410, 2019.

NIE, J. B.; JONES, D. G. Confucianism and organ donation: moral duties from xiao (filial piety) to ren (humaneness). **Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy**, v. 22, n. 4, p. 583-591, 2019.

PAN, F.; ZHU, K. Y.; WANG, L. Impact analysis of population aging on public education financial expenditure in China. **Sustainability**, v. 14, n. 23, p. 15521-15534, 2022.

SUN, Z. F.; ZHU, X. L.; DAN, X. Z. Construction of a Friendly Environment in the Perspective of Active Aging. **Science and Technology Journal**, v. 39, n. 8, p. 44-51, 2021.

TU, W. J.; ZENG, X. W.; LIU, Q. Aging tsunami coming: the main finding from China's seventh national population census. **Aging clinical and experimental research**, v. 34, n. 5 p. 1159-1163, 2022.

WANG, S. J.; SHU, L. Strategic Thinking on Actively Responding to the Aging of China's Population. **Journal of Social Sciences of Jilin University**, v. 58, n. 6, p. 5-14, 2018.

XIE, L. L.; WANG, B. Social participation patterns and influencing factors of the elderly in China from the perspective of active aging. **Population Studies**, v. 43, n. 3, p. 17-30, 2019.

ZHAI, Z. W.; LIU, W. L. Population Aging: Current Situation, Trends, and Responses. **Journal of Henan University of Education: Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition**, v. 38, n. 6, p. 15-22, 2019.

ZHU, H. The Advantages of Digital Aging in China: Releasing the Digital Dividend. **Research on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics**, v. 4, n. 2, p. 79-88, 2022.