**The Positive Role of Religious Attendance to Health of Older Adults in China**

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Religion attendance means the attendance of the activity held by religious group. “Religion Attendance” can improve physical and mental health is widely recognized in epidemiology and sociomedical science in the West[[1]](#footnote-1). A statistic shows that the risk of dying for frequent attenders was 46% lower than for those attending less often in United States.[[2]](#footnote-2) But, there remains a debate of whether the conclusion is also suitable to Chinese people. This essay will argue the positive effect of religious attendance to health in China. Evidence and Statistics related to health as a result of frequent religious attendance will be presented, and comparison made with those attending less often.

As a socialist country, religious attendance is not popular in population of China. As evidence, according to China Family Panel Studies 2014 survey results, 73.56% population of China have no religion belief. The main part of religious group in China is the elderly, about quarter of them are over 65 years old[[3]](#footnote-3). Therefore, in order to figure out the role of religious attendance in China, we should focus on the elder group.

Some researches show that the main effect from religious attendance is about the mental health[[4]](#footnote-4), hence, researching about is how the religious attendance affects the mental health of the elderly in China is very important to our topic. A research based on CHARLS2018 suggests the elderly in China who has religious belief would decrease the odds of depression, there are about 47.8% of them have never or rarely felt depression, 3% lower than the elderly who has no religion. The research also results an interesting consequence that the elderly who has psychological problem would carry a higher rate of taking religious belief, and the problems would be significantly reduced eventually, which shows a positive role of religious attendance in eliminating psychological problems[[5]](#footnote-5). According to “13th Five-Year” plan related to the elderly, there are 118 million empty-nesters in China, it gives another way to maintain their mental health.

In addition to psychosocial influence, religious attendance also has positive effect on health behaviour. Ellison and Levin presented that religious belief can change people’s behaviour into more health way in 1998[[6]](#footnote-6), it also applies to us. In a study from Zhang and Jiang, religious attendance can effectively decrease excessive alcohol consumption and increase participation of social event, religious belief let the elderly’s health mark increase 1%-5% in average. The strict dogma of some religion, especially muslims and some of Christian, would restrict unhealthy behaviour.[[7]](#footnote-7) Another study shows 50.7% of the people over 60 years in China have drinking habit[[8]](#footnote-8), religion attendance would be available to reduce the rate, helping the elderly find a better life in physical. The result above shows the positive role of religious belief in changing lifestyle and finding a place to belong.

Lastly, there is a close contact between religious belief and family well-being. As data shows, religious family often get more harmony and happier, the GHQ score (evaluating the level of well-being) of religious family, especially Christian family is 0.4 marks higher than nonreligious in average, whether Asian or Western families[[9]](#footnote-9). Ozan said it may because frequent religious attendance contributes communication between family members, moreover, religious service may have a role in improving population-wide mental well-being too. There are many studies have proved that the close relationship between the health of the elderly and the well-being of their families[[10]](#footnote-10), religious attendance can keep the health of the elderly by improving the well-being of their families. The study shows religious belief also plays the positive role in family well-being.

In summary, religious attendance can promote better mental and physical behaviour, and family well-being, all the resource I mention above related to our local case, we should recognize its positive role to health of older adults in China, the consequence is not only suitable to the West but also us.

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