

Socially Sustainable Development of China's Aged Care Public–Private Partnership Projects

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Kun Wang, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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Abstract

The many changes in population, the economy and social structure have significantly impacted China's traditional home-based aged care and social welfare. Aged care Public–Private Partnership (PPP) projects have emerged to meet the increased demand for aged care due to an ageing population which cannot be fulfilled by only home-based care. The quality of life is a widespread concern as care services shift from being provided by the relatives of the elderly to being provided by institutions in aged care projects. The involvement of private investors in PPP projects deepens concerns about the decline in quality of life due to their profit-seeking nature. In this case, social sustainability becomes essential. It pursues the realisation of human well-being, i.e., improving the quality of life of various stakeholders involved in a project. However, social sustainability in aged care has not attracted enough attention, and its realisation status is poor.

This study aimed to establish a socially sustainable development process for aged care PPP projects in the Chinese context. There were three research questions: a) What are the indicators to measure the social sustainability of aged care PPP projects; b) What behaviours and decisions should be adopted in the project lifecycle to achieve social sustainability; and c) What are the realisation processes and managerial implications for government and private investors to achieve social sustainability.

A preliminary social sustainability indicator framework was established based on a literature review, stakeholder theory, and the characteristics of aged care projects in China. Two focus group meetings and two rounds of online Delphi surveys were conducted to finalise the framework and evaluate the indicators. Employees, the elderly

and their relatives, and local community and society were identified as definitive stakeholders. Twenty-one indicators were confirmed.

A multiple case study was conducted to identify the critical practices that should be adopted in the project lifecycle. A total of 42 first-level critical practices were identified. Government departments, private investors, and Special Purpose Vehicles were the most important decision-makers in the preparation, procurement and implementation phases respectively, adopting the most critical practices in each phase.

Twenty-one realisation paths and a consolidated realisation path were then proposed. The preparation phase was crucial. Ten of the 21 more important critical practices (i.e., critical practices that appear in all realisation paths) were adopted at this phase. In addition, the behaviours and decisions of government departments played a key and decisive role. Eighteen more important critical practices were adopted by them alone. A series of managerial implications were proposed.

This study provides a more complete picture of the social sustainability of aged care PPP projects in China. The proposed indicator framework and the realisation paths with corresponding behaviours and decisions at different project stages can enable both public and private sectors to calibrate their policies and contracting behaviours to deliver aged care PPP projects successfully. The empirical data shows the applicability of stakeholder theory in social sustainability research on aged care.

Keywords

Social sustainability, socially sustainable development, aged care, institutional care, Public–Private Partnership (PPP), quality of life, well-being, stakeholder, social impact, China

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List of Abbreviations

AUD	Australian Dollar
BOO	Build–Own–Operate
BOT	Build–Operate–Transfer
CIT	Critical Incident Technique
CNY	Chinese Yuan
CP	Critical Practice
ISO	International Standard Organisation
MCA	Ministry of Civil Affairs, China
MOF	Ministry of Finance, China
PPP	Public–Private Partnership
ROT	Renovate–Operate–Transfer
RP	Realisation Path
S-LCA	Social Life Cycle Assessment
SPV	Special Purpose Vehicle
TBOT	Transfer–Build–Operate–Transfer
TOT	Transfer–Operate–Transfer