

# A Study of the Differences Between Chinese and British Concepts of Elderly Care from the Perspective of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

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**Abstract**—As global aging becomes an increasingly pressing issue, elderly care has emerged as a focal point in public discourse, attracting significant attention in media reports. This study employs both quantitative and qualitative analyses, both selecting 12 representative articles from *China Daily* and *The Times* for comparison. By utilizing corpus analysis, the research explores cultural differences in elderly care concepts between China and the UK through the lens of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. The findings reveal that China's approach to elderly care emphasizes filial piety and is predominantly rooted in family-based caregiving, reflecting the country's collectivist values. In contrast, the UK emphasizes independence in elderly care, advocating for a socialized care model that aligns with its individualistic cultural values. This paper highlights the deep connection between language and cultural perceptions in media discourse on elderly care, offering insights that could inform the development of more effective elderly care systems. Additionally, it contributes to the practical application and further exploration of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory in cross-cultural contexts.

**Keywords**—Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, news discourse, corpus-based analysis, concepts of elderly care

## I. INTRODUCTION

Elderly care, a term that encompasses a broad spectrum of services, support systems, and personal assistance tailored to meet the needs of aging individuals, has emerged as a critical issue in the face of global demographic shifts. As societies worldwide grapple with an unprecedented increase in the population of older adults, the importance of developing effective, compassionate, and culturally appropriate care models cannot be overstated. Although many articles are on the study of old age, most of them focus on the reform of the old age system and the choice of the old age model. And less attention to the culture of old age, especially for the comparison of the old age culture of China and the UK is even more scarce. Therefore, the paper shall attempt to research the differences that exist between Chinese and British conceptualizations of elderly care from a cultural point of view to make up for the knowledge gap in this area of study.

The theoretical framework used in this study is Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, which helps us better understand cultural differences across various societies. It identifies six dimensions, but due to the features of the corpus and the word limit, this study only utilizes one dimension: individualism vs. collectivism. This dimension reflects the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. In individualistic societies, individuals are expected to look after themselves

and their immediate family. In contrast, in collectivist societies, individuals belong to tightly knit social frameworks [1].

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Previous Studies on Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory has been a focal point of academic discourse since its inception. Foreign and domestic scholars have done a lot of research on cultural value dimensions.

In China, Hofstede's culture dimensions theory is extensively and pervasively applied by scholars. In the business setting, Wang *et al.* [2] employed Hofstede's culture dimensions theory to discuss the problems of intercultural management in transnational corporations and also discussed the meanings and functions of Hofstede's theory towards intercultural management. In the education setting, Zhao [3] interviewed 47 students and got the conclusion that high uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, collectivism and high-power distance between the teachers and students led to anxiety. In the culture setting, Wei [4] found that China is a collectivist society with a long-term orientation and high-power distance.

Scholars abroad frequently and broadly made investigations on validating the culture dimensions theory, as well as applying it in various settings. Punnett [5] validated Hofstede's theory with twenty-four hypotheses brought forward and three different groups of managers investigated in three different samples. The indexes in the survey were rarely different from Hofstede's results. Thereby, Hofstede's theory was demonstrated to be reasonable. In the education setting, Smith [6] adopted Hofstede's dimensions of individualism, low power distance, low uncertainty avoidance and masculinity to study the ethnocentrism of university students in the US and the results predicted that ethnocentrism of university students in the US was irrelevant to gender, education and nationality. In the tourism setting, Huang *et al.* [7] measured two tourist samples to explore the relevance between Hofstede's six dimensions and visitors' satisfaction, showing that individualism and indulgence positively impacted the tourists' satisfaction.

While Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory has significantly advanced the understanding of cultural differences and their implications in various fields, it is

evident that culture is more fluid and complex than static dimensions can encapsulate. Future research must adapt and evolve to reflect the dynamic nature of cultures in the context of globalization and digital communication advancements.

### B. Previous Studies on Elderly Care

As the development of global aging deepens, many scholars have turned their research attention to the huge market of elderly care. Domestically, most of the research focuses on China's rural and urban elderly care systems and the exploration of new elderly care models. For instance, Lu and Wu [8] have suggested in their article that there are still many problems in China's rural old-age care, and that exploring the effective integration of mutual old-age care and institutionalized old-age care will help to improve the quality of old-age care in rural areas in a comprehensive manner. Overseas, most of the research focuses on the pension systems of different countries and the means to improve the elderly care situation. For example, Do [9] presented the development of a robot-integrated smart home that can be used for research in assistive technologies for elderly care in his article. There are also studies comparing the differences in old-age care between countries, but few of them have been placed under Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### A. Research Questions

Focusing on a comparative analysis of *China Daily* and *The Times* news reports, this paper will therefore explore the following research questions:

(1) What conceptions of elderly care in China and Britain are reflected in the data derived from the processing of news reports through the corpus?

(2) From the perspective of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, what are the cultural differences between the concepts of elderly care in China and Britain as reflected in news reports?

### B. Data Collection

Due to their large readership, news media is an effective medium for disseminating ideas [10]. News articles were primarily sourced from prominent newspapers, including *China Daily* and *The Times*. These publications were chosen due to their wide readership and influence, ensuring a representative sample of media representations on elderly care in the Chinese and British context.

*China Daily* is a state-run newspaper in China that often reflects official government positions. While this limits its ability to fully represent the diverse perspectives of the broader Chinese population, its discourse can still offer insights into the ideological framing promoted by institutional voices, especially on topics of national interest such as elderly care. Importantly, analyzing such a source allows us to assess how government-aligned narratives articulate cultural values such as collectivism and filial piety to both domestic elites and international audiences. *The Times*, while based in the UK and known for its centre-right editorial stance under the ownership of News Corp, offers detailed coverage on social policy issues including healthcare and pensions. With a relatively modest readership compared to the UK population, it may not represent the entire national

discourse. However, it remains a leading opinion-shaping outlet among policymakers and professionals. Including *The Times* thus allows us to capture how elder care is framed within a mainstream yet ideologically identifiable segment of the British press. To enhance the robustness of the study, future research could incorporate a broader set of media sources with varying editorial leanings and languages, including vernacular outlets in China and tabloids or public service broadcasters in the UK, to provide a more comprehensive cultural snapshot.

The corpus in the research is specialized to derive possible ways of describing the specific nuances of discussion on elderly care by means of the Factiva database. The words "elderly care" or "support for the old" were used to make the gathered articles relevant and more specific within the research area. Ultimately, the writer selected 12 reports from both *China Daily* and *The Times* that were most relevant to our research topic. In total, there are 24 reports. The total word count of the selected reports from *China Daily* reached 45089 words, while the selected reports from *The Times* amounted to 75541 words. The time span covers the period between 2010 and 2024.

The drawback of using the Chinese English-language news media instead of the Chinese language one for analysis is that the English-language one may not provide a complete understanding of Chinese culture and society. Some aspects of Chinese news may only be fully understood by native speakers of the Chinese language [11]. However, using the English-language data, the analysis and discussion of this research can be positioned within broader global discussions of elderly care, serving as a foundation for comparative studies examining the variation and commonality between Chinese and British societies.

### C. Research Procedures

This paper, merging both quantitative and qualitative analysis, will unfold in three principal phases to explore the differences between Chinese and British concepts of elderly care, as reflected in news reports, from the perspective of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory.

In the first step, Factiva is used to collect news articles on elderly care from *China Daily* and *The Times* within a specific time. The first wave of text will be collected to identify and aggregate all articles that either discuss or mention elderly care. Subsequent to text cleaning, AntConc 4.0.0 will be used to conduct an analysis of the articles collected in relation to high-frequency words, thereby giving a quantifiable measure to what the articles focus on. The study will further look at the keyness of terms to check whether they are statistically significant and to what extent they contribute to the framing of the discussion on the subject of care for older people of each country.

In the second step, statistical data from AntConc is analyzed using Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory to uncover differences in elderly care perceptions between China and the UK. Keyword index lines are qualitatively examined to explore how cultural contexts shape discussions on the topic.

In the third step, the study explores insights, suggesting elderly care system could learn from each other while validating and advancing Hofstede's theory. Moreover,

limitations are acknowledged, and future research directions are proposed.

#### IV. RESULTS

Due to word limit, only the word lists of both that includes the top 25 words in word frequency ranking with a keyness index greater than 10 are displayed in this part.

Table 1. Word frequency and Keyness in China daily reports

Rank	Keywords	Frequency	Keyness
1	parents	114	355.84
2	children	89	345.16
3	filial	65	336.37
4	piety	62	234.93
5	people	49	66.11
6	China	35	35.27
7	Chinese	23	37.32
8	care	21	78.12
9	elderly	20	73.22
10	need	18	14.18
11	good	17	18.16
12	take	16	10.42
13	society	16	21.12
14	home	16	46.57
15	family	15	33.80
16	love	13	53.39
17	aging	13	69.41
18	code	13	58.73
19	life	13	31.05
20	visit	13	56.74
21	mother	12	37.37
22	Beijing	11	53.39
23	guideline	11	36.11
24	social	11	37.40
25	older	11	26.85

Table 2. Word frequency and Keyness in the times reports

Rank	Keywords	Frequency	Keyness
1	care	125	212.06
2	pension	111	123.01
3	home	35	87.58
4	state	33	27.58
5	pay	26	201.11
6	work	36	56.54
7	cent	32	76.60
8	hospital	22	16.54
9	life	19	115.85
10	elderly	19	125.64
11	need	18	115.85
12	old	17	79.46
13	social	16	67.09
14	council	16	87.09
15	staff	16	97.09
16	retirement	16	97.09
17	tax	15	79.46
18	legal	15	88.13
19	company	14	79.46
20	income	12	63.06
21	benefit	12	55.34
22	general	12	63.06
23	service	12	63.06
24	system	12	63.06
25	provide	12	63.06

#### V. DISCUSSION

The dimension of individualism and collectivism significantly distinguishes the cultural disparities between China and the UK. According to their definitions, their difference relies on the emphasis of the individual or the group. This section will specifically present the differences between Chinese and British concepts of elderly care as reflected in news reports from the perspective of collectivism and individualism.

##### A. Collectivism in China

Collectivism in China emphasizes the importance of group goals, social harmony, and interdependence within the community, particularly among family members. The numbers in the parentheses in this section will all indicate the frequency of occurrence of the words. In the Chinese context, as from Table 1, the high frequency of words such as “filial (65)”, “piety (62)”, “home (16)” and “family (15)” in *China Daily* reports illustrate a deeply ingrained collectivist value system. “Filial” and “Piety” are central to the Confucian ideal of “filial piety”, which traditionally emphasized the reverence and obligation owed to parents and ancestors. The concepts of “home” and “family” in Chinese culture seem to, from a collective standpoint, embody the ideals of unity, stability, and mutual support. They show the society’s expectation that an individual will act for the benefit of the family and the larger community, most of the time considering the aspirations of the individual less important than the goals of the group. This orientation not only defines family dynamics but also sets the tone for broader social interactions and institutional practices within Chinese culture.

Extract 1: For thousands of years, the Chinese have relied on their **children** to take **care** of them in their old age. The Chinese saying, “Of all virtues, **filial piety** is the first” demonstrates the primacy of respecting one’s elders in the culture. (*Filial Piety Fund Emerges to Help Make Virtue Thrive*, *China Daily*, 22 February 2018)

The segment provided offers a clear illustration of collectivist values in Chinese society, particularly through the keywords, which are “children (89)”, “care (21)”, filial (65)” and “piety (62)”. The “children (89)” reflects the expectation that children will care for their parents in old age is a manifestation of collectivist values, emphasizing the role of the family unit over the individual. In this system, the welfare of older generations is seen as a communal responsibility, particularly assigned to the children. This expectation is not merely a personal choice but a societal obligation, underlining the importance of family continuity and intergenerational support. And in terms of “Care (21)”, this concept has already been analyzed in the previous excerpt, and will not be elaborated on further here. Moreover, as for “filial (65)” and “piety (62)”, the phrase “Of all virtues, filial piety is the first” encapsulates the essence of filial duty and respect in Chinese culture. Filial piety goes beyond mere respect. It is an active commitment to honor, care for, and sustain the family elders. This principle is a cornerstone of collectivism, where the needs and desires of the individual are often secondary to familial obligations and the expectations set by society.

Extract 2: **Filial piety**, considered a key virtue of traditional Chinese culture, generally means respect for one’s **parents** and ancestors, including being **good** to one’s **parents** and fulfilling one’s duty to take **care** of them. **Family** members should **care** about the psychological **needs** of their older relatives, and should visit them or send greetings on a regular basis, according to the law on protecting the rights and interests of the **elderly**, which came into effect on Monday. The law was passed to protect the lawful rights and interests of **parents** aged 60 and older, and to carry on the Chinese virtue of **filial piety**, according to the law. (*New Filial Law Sparks Debate*, *China Daily*, 2 July 2013)

In this excerpt, the bolded keywords reveal the collectivist orientation in Chinese perspectives on elderly care. As for “parents (114)”, “good (17)”, “filial (65)” and “piety (62)”, it can be learned that filial piety is highlighted as a central virtue in traditional Chinese culture, fundamentally entailing respect for one’s parents and ancestors. This respect is not symbolic but enacted through emotional and material support, reflecting a broader commitment to family values over individual desires. The concept of “care (21)” is thus closely linked to children’s duties, encompassing emotional bonding and the upholding of family honor, reinforcing intergenerational cohesion and collective well-being. The keyword “family (15)” signals the foundational role of the family as a unit of mutual support and responsibility, where each member contributes to maintaining social harmony. Moreover, the excerpt highlights China’s role in preserving traditional values through legal recognition of elder rights. Laws granting rights to parents over 60 reflect both protection and formalization of filial duties, ensuring cultural norms are observed across generations. This legal emphasis illustrates the deep-rooted collectivist values embedded in Chinese society and the state’s commitment to sustaining them.

### B. Individualism in Britain

Conversely, in an individualist country, people will regard the individual interest as the priority and individuals are supposed to take care of themselves. And the numbers in the parentheses in this section will all indicate the frequency of occurrence of the words. In the British context, as is seen from Table 2, the frequent mention of terms like “work (22)”, “pension (87)”, “income (12)”, and “state (33)” in *The Times* reports underscores a more individualistic approach to elderly care, which are connected closely with the pension system. In the UK, the amount of pension is strongly influenced by people’s work history and salary levels. This reflects an individualistic notion that personal efforts in one’s career directly correlate to the benefits received upon retirement. This system encourages individuals to actively manage their career paths and earnings to enhance their pension outcomes.

Extract 3: Lottie’s users can compare 4000 **care homes** and **retirement living services**, and the total costs of the care are explained in full. (*Brothers on Mission to Lift Elderly Care Out of the Dark Ages*, *The Times*, 9 October 2023)

In this excerpt, the bolded words are frequently occurring keywords, which are “care (125)”, “home (35)”, “retirement (16)” and “services (12)”. And from them, we can specifically understand the individualist tendencies in Britain views on elderly care. By providing a platform to compare different care homes, Lottie empowers individuals to make personal choices based on their specific needs and preferences. This choice is a hallmark of individualism, where the emphasis is on personal autonomy and the ability to decide independently what suits one best in terms of location, type of care, amenities, and cost. In a more collectivist system, choices might be more limited, with state-assigned placements based on standardized criteria rather than individual preference. It should be noted that “care” and “home” are high-frequency words in both *China Daily* and *The Times* reports. However, in Chinese reports, “care” generally refers to that provided by children to their parents, as a duty of elderly care. “Home” is also closely associated with the concept of family. In British

reports, “care” is usually provided by caregivers or community workers, and “home” more often refers to a care home or retirement center. Besides, as for retirement services, the availability of information on a wide array of retirement services further emphasizes the individualistic approach. In the UK, retirement services often include various forms of housing, lifestyle, and care options that cater to diverse needs, suggesting that retirement planning is highly personalized.

Extract 4: The **state pension** is worth just over £200 a week to nearly everyone hitting the current **state pension** age of 66. It accounts for getting on for half of pensioner **incomes** overall. Even the richest fifth of pensioners depend on **state pensions** for about a quarter of their **income**. (*State Pension System Is Not Broken, But It Still Needs to Be Made Better*, *The Times*, 18 December 2023)

Extract 5: First, we should accept that those of us with means should expect to **pay** for our care, and plan our finances accordingly. (*Dealing with the Time Bomb of Elderly Care*, *The Times*, 31 July 2023)

The provided extracts from *The Times* illustrate the individualistic approach to elder care and pension planning in the UK, particularly through the use of the keywords “state (33)”, “pension (87)”, “income (12)” and “pay (26)”. The mention that the state pension is worth just over £200 a week and accounts for nearly half of pensioner incomes highlights its role as a basic safety net. This structure reflects an individualistic system where the state provides a foundational level of support, but individuals are expected to supplement this through personal savings or other retirement incomes. Besides, in terms of “income (12)” and “pay (26)”, the fact that even the wealthiest pensioners rely on the state pension for a quarter of their income underscores the universal dependency on personal financial planning. The system is designed such that all individuals, regardless of wealth, must consider additional income sources to maintain their desired lifestyle in retirement. This promotes a culture where personal responsibility for financial planning is paramount. The advice to plan finances reinforces the individualistic ethos, suggesting that each person must ensure their financial stability in old age. The state’s role is minimized to encouraging personal planning and responsibility, rather than providing comprehensive care. These emphasize state-supported care systems, financial independence, and personal choice in care arrangements.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

By systematically extracting keywords from news corpora, the analysis reveals the distinct discursive emphases of Chinese and British media on elderly care. Keyword frequency reflects the relative salience of particular concepts within each national discourse, while keyness ensures that these terms are statistically distinctive to each corpus, thereby enhancing the validity and explanatory power of the findings. For example, the prominence of terms such as “filial”, “piety”, and “family” in the Chinese corpus points to the culturally embedded norm of collectivist familial responsibility, whereas keywords like “pension”, “state”, and “income” in the British corpus reflect an individualistic orientation emphasizing institutional and financial autonomy. Furthermore, Keyword-in-Context (KWIC) analysis facilitates a close examination of how these culturally salient

terms are situated within broader narrative structures. This integration of quantitative keyword extraction with qualitative contextual interpretation enables a nuanced understanding of how linguistic choices mirror deeper cultural values, thereby bridging corpus linguistics with intercultural discourse analysis. Besides, there are still several key insights have emerged that underscore the value of practicing cross-cultural analysis.

Firstly, it has been demonstrated that cultural dimensions such as individualism versus collectivism have a profound impact on the perception and implementation of elderly care. This reciprocal enrichment between theory and practice not only aids in a deeper comprehension of cultural nuances in elderly care but also contributes to the ongoing refinement and application of cultural dimensions theory. In essence, this study serves as a bridge between theoretical exploration and practical application, illuminating how cultural understanding can improve the delivery of elderly care across borders. By continuing to explore and understand these cultural differences, the study lays the groundwork for developing more inclusive and effective elderly care systems globally.

Secondly, this study offers substantial practical implications for policymaking and public education in both China and the UK. By examining media portrayals of elderly care, the findings highlight how cultural narratives can shape socially resonant policy initiatives. In China, where discourses emphasize filial piety and familial responsibility, targeted measures may include intergenerational support programs, fiscal incentives, and culturally grounded awareness campaigns. Public education could further reinforce collectivist values by emphasizing the affective and normative significance of elder care. Conversely, in the UK context, where autonomy and state-supported provisions dominate, policy interventions may prioritize financial planning, accessible institutional care, and the promotion of individual agency. Public campaigns could empower older adults through information dissemination and support awareness. In both settings, culturally responsive communication strategies are essential for improving policy efficacy, mitigating intergenerational tensions, and fostering equitable care systems.

The study acknowledges certain limitations, and one of the primary limitations of this study is that the selection of *China Daily* and *The Times* for the case studies may reflect specific editorial policies and cultural frames, which do not necessarily encompass the full diversity of opinions and practices within each country. Additionally, the scope of the analysis is limited to the dimensions outlined by Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. While this theoretical framework provides a robust basis for comparison, it does not account for all possible cultural variables that might influence elderly care practices and perceptions.

Looking ahead, several promising avenues for future

research could expand upon the findings of this study: First, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of global elderly care concepts, future studies could include a wider range of cultures. Second, future research could benefit from exploring other Hofstede dimensions. For instance, Power Distance may shape societal expectations regarding caregiving authority; Uncertainty Avoidance may influence the preference for structured care policies; and Long-term Orientation could affect intergenerational support systems. By addressing these limitations and exploring these prospects for future research, scholars can continue to build on the knowledge base of cross-cultural elderly care, ultimately contributing to the development of more effective care practices for aging populations worldwide.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Kaijia Yan conducted the data collection and analysis, wrote and revised the manuscript; Qian Wang provided the research instructions and revised the manuscript; all authors have approved the final version.

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