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Comparative Residents' Satisfaction Evaluation for Socially Sustainable Regeneration—The Case of Two High-Density Communities in Suzhou

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Abstract: With the 14th Five-Year Plan for Development, China is promoting people-oriented urban regeneration for residential communities built before 2000. Evaluations of quality of life (QoL) and considerations of social sustainability must play an important role in defining people-oriented regeneration projects. Residents' satisfaction is an important indicator of QoL and is essential for achieving socially sustainable development. To contribute to the ongoing discussion about people-oriented urban regeneration, this paper studies the correlation between QoL and social sustainability, investigating residents' perception in high-density communities through a satisfaction evaluation approach based on the QoL index. Two high-density communities in Suzhou were analyzed: Nanhuan, a high-rise, gated community in one of the first expansions of the city in the 80s; and Daoqian, a multi-story, non-gated community in the old town. Both communities have a typical urban morphology and were selected for their exemplary characteristics. The study used a mixed research method: field investigation, on-site interviews, and a survey with over 670 questionnaires conducted and analyzed. It also applied the Structural Equation Model (SEM) to explore and define the satisfaction evaluation factors. The two communities expressed concerns about different factors: in the case of the Nanhuan community, property management and spatial scenario creation were emphasized, whereas in the case of the Daoqian community, unrestricted space mobility, poor existing conditions, and the demand for various facilities and recreation spaces were most prominent. The research found that improving community environmental quality and facilities would, as one would expect, improve residents' satisfaction in both communities. Still, our research also clearly indicated that diversified spatial activities, currently missing in both cases, and more opportunities for social interaction would enhance residents' satisfaction. The findings of this study offer some insights regarding socially sustainable community regeneration, as well as decision-making processes and design strategies.

Keywords: social sustainability; quality of life; residents' satisfaction; old community regeneration; structural equation model

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1. Introduction

Since China's 13th national Five-Year Plan, social sustainability has been highlighted as an essential component for the realization of high-quality urbanization [1,2]. With the urbanization rate in 2021 reaching 64.7%, an urban regeneration approach to development was first mentioned in the Chinese 14th five-year plan (2021–2026). Combined with the idea of people-oriented development, regeneration aims to optimize urban spatial structures and improve urban quality [3,4]. The regeneration of old and obsolete residential communities, as the basic units of social space, is a critical step to achieving high-quality urbanization.

The regeneration movement pays attention to residents' sense of happiness, improves residents' satisfaction, and finally, creates socially sustainable communities [5–7].

The regeneration of old communities is a controversial process. In fact, the community regeneration process can easily cause social problems such as segregation, gentrification and inequality [8–10]. Therefore, social sustainability is particularly important when evaluating the effectiveness of old community regeneration projects. A socially sustainable community can be defined as a place where people want to live and work in the long term [11] and where the enhanced living environment meets residents' needs and ensures social justice [12–14].

Improving quality of life (QoL) is vital for enhancing social sustainability [14,15]. On one hand, the living environment can significantly affect the QoL. The measurement of QoL includes objective indicators of the built environment, which can assist in fulfilling living requirements. On the other hand, under the guidance of the current policy, the transformation process needs to focus more on residents' satisfaction [16,17]. Measurements of QoL include comprehensive consideration of subjective feelings, personal well-being, social balance and social justice [18].

Therefore, measuring resident satisfaction is a very effective way to achieve improved QoL, to evaluate the sustainable development of old communities, to measure infrastructure status and to achieve social sustainability [19].

China's ongoing urban regeneration initiative aims to improve the QoL by improving the living environment. Nevertheless, although QoL was recently highlighted as a national goal, there is still very limited research on how to regenerate old communities. Therefore, it is necessary to study how to combine resident satisfaction with QoL and socially sustainable regeneration. In the framework of the Chinese urban regeneration movement, this study focuses on two main research questions:

(1) How to build a residents' satisfaction evaluation system based on the QoL index?
(2) What factors significantly affect residents' satisfaction in two typical but radically different residential communities?

The structure of this paper is as follows. First, based on a literature review and using satisfaction measurement methods and indicators of social sustainability, a theoretical analysis of the correlation between social sustainability, quality of life, and old community regeneration is presented. Then, the analysis framework and index system of residents' satisfaction evaluation in old communities is explained. Third, the research method is explained, i.e., details are provided about the research sites, the applied questionnaire, and the data collection methods. Fourth, according to the conceptual framework and the main evaluation, the structural equation model (SEM) method is used to evaluate residents' satisfaction and comparatively analyze the significant influencing factors. Finally, the findings are presented along with some suggestions on regeneration interventions and decision-making policies.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Social Sustainability and QoL

As social sustainability is a broad concept, the term has a range of meanings. In this paper, it describes the social goals of sustainable development [20,21]. In many explanations, social sustainability includes social capital, social equity, and public participation. At the community level, social sustainability implies a sustainable and positive QoL based on an understanding people's needs and sense of belonging [12,22,23].

QoL is a comprehensive synthesis of individual well-being and social balance, objective indicators and subjective feelings [24,25]. In the narrow sense, QoL quantifies psychological acceptance, individual characteristics, cognition, etc. on the part of the individual. In the broad sense, it encompasses social equity, including degrees of life satisfaction of different people and future generations (i.e., according to the objective material environment). The relationship between QoL and social sustainability at the community level is predicated

upon three dimensions: housing indicators, neighborhood index, and socioeconomic indicators (Table 1):

(1) Housing indicators: housing area, building quality, house type structure, ventilation, and lighting [26].
(2) Neighborhood indicators: facilities in the community, such as shops, educational facilities, and public transport [27]. Elderly care service measurements evaluate the level of elderly care and medical and health care [28], as well as public spaces [29,30].
(3) Socioeconomic indicators: individual characteristics and perception of QoL, such as gender, income level, home ownership [31,32].

Table 1. Quality of life evaluation index for social sustainability in community regeneration.

Housing Indicators	**Housing Ownership, Housing Area, Per Capita Housing Area**
Neighborhood Index	Educational Facilities, Business Services, Entertainment Services, Transportation Services, Open Space, Safety, Landscape, Social Environment (Community), Visual Perception
Socioeconomic	Age, Gender, Income, Education Level,

2.2. People-Oriented Old Community Regeneration and Social Sustainability

Current approaches to the regeneration of old communities have the following characteristics:

(1) Government-oriented development in response to the renovation of old communities, with major implementation strategies focusing on "wearing clothes and hats", that is, beautifying buildings and upgrading infrastructure.
(2) For different types of old communities, the applied approaches are the same.
(3) There are many contradictions in the regeneration process. Community planners focus on collecting and coordinating the willingness of residents to accept regeneration initiatives.

The people-oriented regeneration mentioned in the 14th national Five-Year Plan is intended to promote a sense of happiness and well-being for residents, from physical space, standardization, and implementation to social, incentive, and comprehensive regeneration [33]. The interest among old communities in a high-quality living environment and resident satisfaction were informed by assessments of QoL [20,21,34,35]. In this way, through the prism of QoL, social sustainability and community regeneration could be synchronized (Figure 1).

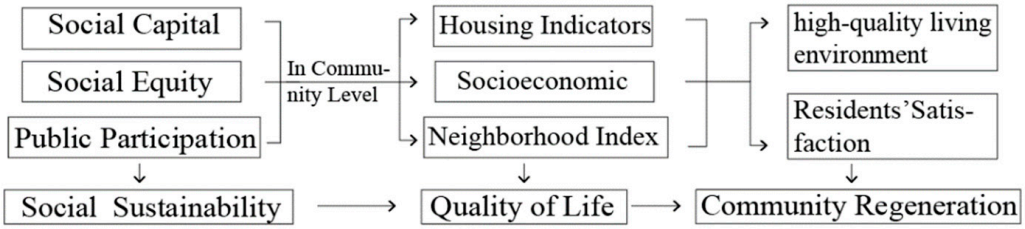

Figure 1. QoL as the mediating link for social sustainability and old community regeneration.

2.3. QoL and Residents' Satisfaction Evaluation

Residents' satisfaction usually refers to the satisfaction of residents living in a specific place [36]. It is a tool that reflects opinions about the housing status quo, planning proposals, and policy making [37,38]. Satisfaction-influenced factors are widely distributed and determined by the gap between actual and expected living environments [39]. Measurements of satisfaction can reflect residents' QoL. Such assessments must take into account the contradiction between the growing needs of people for a better life and unbalanced and insufficient development [40–43].

Based on a QoL evaluation index (Table 1) of urban regeneration, data regarding residents' life satisfaction levels can be divided into the objective environmental characteristics of residential areas [44] and the subjective feelings of residents [45–48]. Subjective feelings including individual characteristics, influenced by gender, age, and education level, are also called "internal causes". Objective environmental characteristics ("external factors") are measured at two levels:

(1) Built Environment, the impact of which on satisfaction is obvious [49], e.g., an overcrowded, polluted living environment has a negative effect on life satisfaction [50]. Individuals living in poor environments may offset the benefits of life satisfaction to community residents [51].
(2) Social Connection, i.e., social ties among community members. For example, greeting and chatting may significantly improve residents' satisfaction [51]. The shopping process accompanied by more or less communication will also affect satisfaction level [52].

Taking into account individual, environment, and social connections when assessing residents' satisfaction is essential for the development of renovation approaches which improve QoL, as well as guiding community regeneration toward social sustainability (Figure 2).

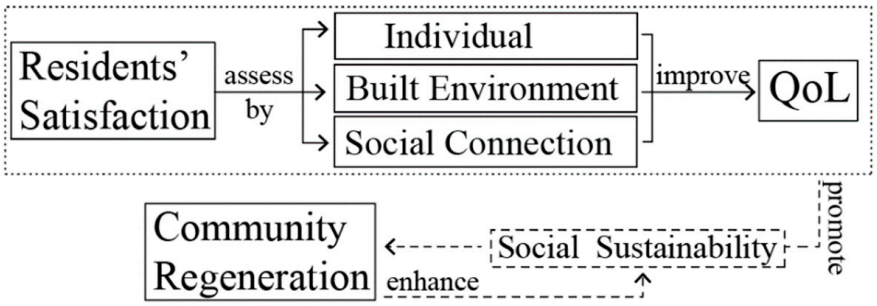

Figure 2. Resident satisfaction evaluation for social sustainability and community regeneration.

3. Data Collection and Methodology

3.1. Case Selection

Suzhou was selected as the case study for several reasons:

(1) It is one of the main historical and cultural cities in China and is comparatively affluent (its GDP in 2021 was USD $352.22 billion);
(2) It ranks 75th in the world and 1st in China in terms of "livability" (Global livable index report). It ranks 58th in the world and 6th in China on the sustainable city index [53];
(3) It was chosen by the national government as one of the first pilot cities for urban regeneration, and so is particularly relevant for an examination of sustainable urban regeneration.

Within Suzhou, two residential communities, with different urban morphology and building typology conditions, were selected to compare resident satisfaction; these communities are representative of typical neighborhoods which are replicated throughout the city. They have different spatial features: Daoqian is in the old town and comprises high-density, low-rise and compact small blocks covering an area of about 18.12 ha, whereas Nanhuan is a resettlement community, made of high-rises with public green areas covering an area of 21.54 ha (Figures 3–5). The Floor–Area Ratio (FAR) of Nanhuan is 2.58, while that of Daoqian FAR is 1.4. The greening rate of Nanhuan is 25.6% and that of Daoqian is 1.51%.

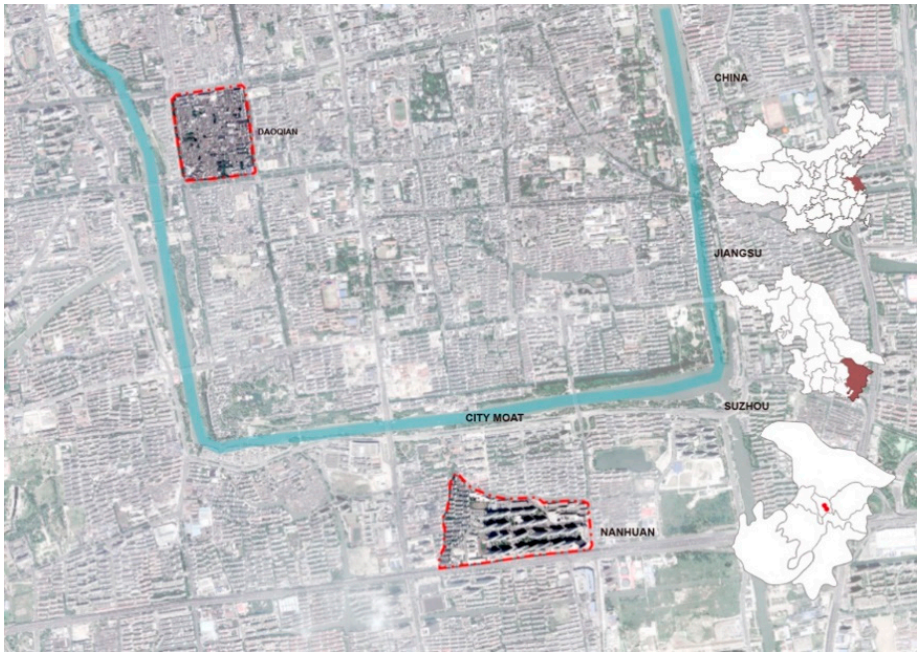

Figure 3. Locations of Nanhuan and Daoqian.

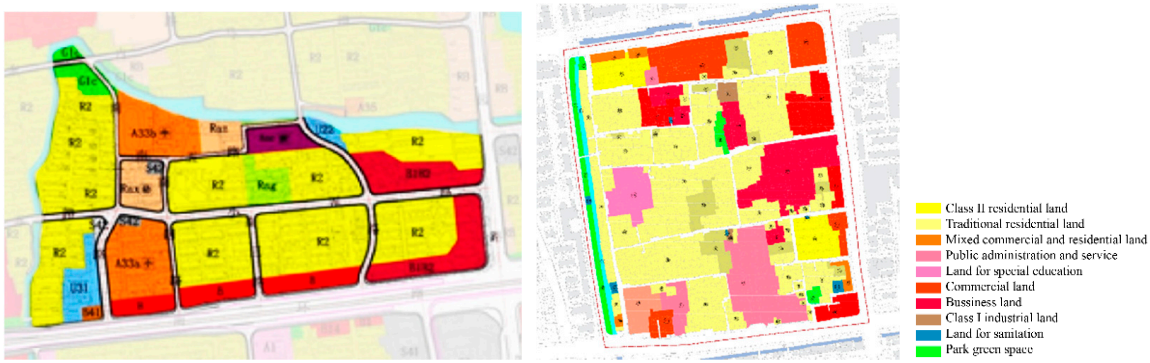

Figure 4. Land use in Nanhuan (**left**) and Daoqian (**right**).

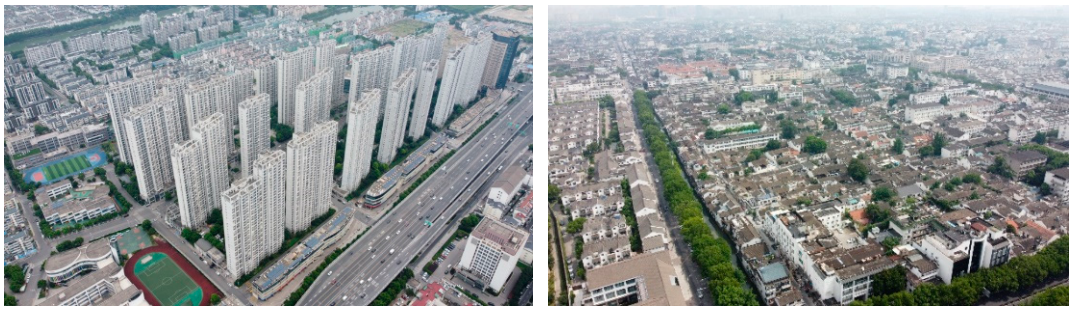

Figure 5. Aerial view of Nanhuan (**left**) and Daoqian (**right**).

Nanhuan is located south of Suzhou's ancient city (Figure 3). It comprises a sequence of multi-story buildings constructed for the resettled farmers between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. Due to poor building quality, part of it was demolished and rebuilt into high-rise residential buildings starting in 2010 (Table 2). Nanhuan new village was promoted and realized 10 years earlier than the current national regeneration guidelines and attracted attention due to its radical transformation and the densification of the preexisting community:

(1) It is the first regeneration of a resettlement area to have been planned, funded, and realized by the Suzhou local government. The project was included in the government's annual list of important tasks in order to set an example for communities experiencing similar conditions;
(2) The initiative resulted in the densification and relocation of local residents;
(3) It combines high-rise buildings with small compact blocks and mixed-use buildings, which is an unusual solution when single function super blocks are most common (Figure 4).

Table 2. Community construction index.

	Nanhuan	**Daoqian**
Total land area	21.54 ha	18.12 ha
Gross Floor Area (GFA)	555,375.76 m^2	252,450 m^2
Residential area and Percentage	391,425 m^2 (70%)	164,092 m^2 (65%)
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	2.58	1.4
Building Density	26.80%	48.84%
Greenery Rate	25.60%	1.51%
Units	4852	-
Parking lots	2526	-

Daoqian is located in the ancient city (Figure 3). It is a low-rise, high-density residential area with an overall historical style (Table 2) and is a good example of the traditional urban morphology in the ancient city of Suzhou:

(1) The community is crisscrossed with alleys and has numerous original buildings which are protected for their historic, cultural, and architectural value;
(2) The current land ownership situation is complex, with a mix of individual properties and socially owned ones (Figure 4);
(3) The population density in the old town is several times that of other new districts in Suzhou. The green space rate is only 1.5% and the population is aging. Finally, the buildings are old and provide a low-quality living environment.

An analysis of the main spatial characteristics of the two communities showed how variables such as FAR, plot ratio, and green space ratio differed in quantity and quality (Table 2).

3.2. Questionnaire Design and Data Collection

In China, initial studies to measure residents' satisfaction were undertaken relatively late, and various approaches coexisted: some used quantitative and statistical analysis methods to define the influencing factors, while others used qualitative comparisons and descriptive analyses [54,55].

According to the literature, a comprehensive multi-level index system can be used to analyze residents' satisfaction with their communities. The index system considers objective and subjective factors. Objective factors include the characteristics of the residential unit, the surrounding environment, and infrastructure [56–64], while subjective factors include personal and family characteristics, income level, house ownership, and compensation for relocation [64–69].

These factors can be grouped into three main categories:

(1) Individual attributes, such as age, education, family structure, economic level, and house ownership [66,70,71];
(2) Housing conditions, such as building quality, building area, building age, building orientation, lighting, and ventilation [72–76];
(3) Community Context, such as community management, supporting infrastructure, transportation convenience, surrounding environmental conditions, relationships with fellow residents [61,70,77–80].

In addition, as interactions within a community significantly impact its residents' perception thereof, we introduced the category of "intercommunication" [81].

The questionnaire summarized in Table 3 comprises five groups of variables to represent a range of the factors and the related degree of satisfaction. The data were recorded using a scale from 1 to 5.

Table 3. Questionnaire structure and content.

Satisfaction Index	Observational Variable
Personal characteristics	Gender Age Income Marital status Educational background
Inhabited environment	Area Number of members Building quality
Community environment	Air quality Estate management Pedestrian safety Green landscape People and cars Cultural symbols
Community convenience	Public space Leisure space Parking convenience Facility convenience Facility diversity Ageing services Traffic convenience
Intercommunication	Neighborhood interaction Shopping tendency
	Overall satisfaction

A preliminary field survey was conducted to test the questions and the structure of the questionnaire. In addition, people with different professional knowledge and involvement in the community were interviewed to gain an in-depth understanding of the current situation and to improve the accuracy of data.

From August to October 2021, the questionnaire was distributed in both communities by convenience sampling, which is a non-probabilistic sampling method whereby respondents are selected randomly at a specific time and in a specific community area. To this end, 680 questionnaires were distributed, i.e., 330 in Nanhuan new village and 350 in Daoqian community. The samples are representative because the statistics show how the residents are homogenous in terms of their demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

3.3. Data and Model Analysis

The first conclusions to be drawn from the results of the questionnaire (Table 4) were as follows:

(1) Income: 36.4% of residents in Daoqian community have an income below 5000, while 25.2% of residents in Nanhuan new village had an income of 10,000–15,000.

(2) Living area: 64% of residents live in apartments of 50–80 m^2 in size in Nanhuan; the living areas of residents in Daoqian were generally smaller, as would be expected for the houses in the old town (no accurate official data are available).

(3) Overall satisfaction: In Nanhuan new village, scores of 3 and 4 out of 5 were reported by 45.2% and 45.5% of respondents, respectively. The satisfaction scores of Daoqian community were mainly 2, 3, and 4, accounting for 14.2%, 47.3%, and 30.9%, respectively.

Table 4. Questionnaire analysis.

	Mean Value		Standard Deviation	
	Nanhuan	**Daoqian**	**Nanhuan**	**Daoqian**
Gender	1.51	1.45	0.501	0.498
Age	1.77	1.02	0.823	0.926
Income	2.42	3.26	1.109	1.473
Area	3.11	2.40	1.233	0.991
Number of members	2.76	2.62	1.213	1.037
Building quality	3.14	3.27	0.788	0.794
Air quality	3.49	3.18	0.841	1.132
Estate management	2.96	3.09	0.982	0.838
Pedestrian safety	3.44	2.99	1.071	0.961
Green landscape	3.02	3.36	1.068	0.814
Public space	2.98	3.63	0.983	0.946
Leisure space	2.87	2.69	0.875	0.723
Parking convenience	2.75	2.35	0.981	1.226
Facility convenience	3.34	3.42	1.037	1.055
Ageing services	3.25	1.63	1.106	0.954
Traffic convenience	3.73	3.63	1.007	0.950
Neighborhood interaction	3.18	1.68	1.232	1.185
Shopping tendency	1.49	1.62	0.553	0.510
Overall satisfaction	3.26	3.40	0.831	0.692

In a general overview of the average level of overall satisfaction of the residents, Daoqian, where traditional structures and urban open spaces are conserved, offers worse living conditions, e.g., smaller living areas, to an aging population with a low income than the newer Nanhuan. On account of this, the overall satisfaction was low and the distribution was concentrated (Figure 6). A further detailed analysis showed how the two communities have different expectations.

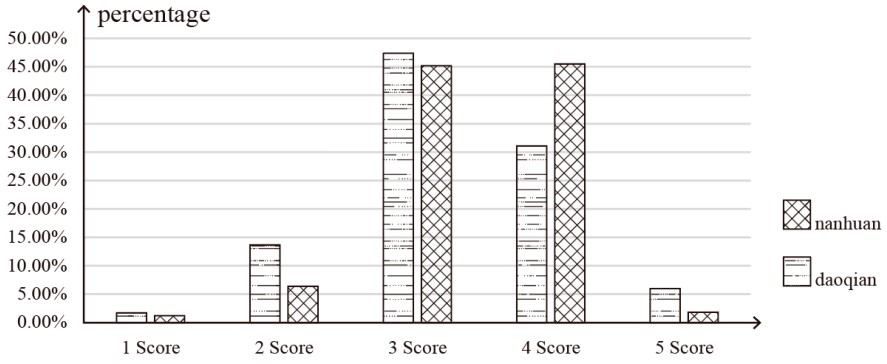

Figure 6. Frequency distribution of satisfaction.

3.4. Method Selection

The structural equation model (SEM) is a research method based on statistical analysis technology. It can deal with complex multivariable research data analyses. Joreskog proposed a multivariate statistical analysis method to analyze the complex relationship structure between multiple index variables by using a SEM; this was one of the three significant advances in statistics in recent years [82]. The SEM overcomes the limitations of traditional statistical methods, making it an important tool for multivariate data analyses. It is suitable for three-dimensional and multi-level analyses and can exist in human thinking

forms. It can analyze variables (i.e., latent variables) that cannot be directly measured, quantify the causal relationships among various factors, and carry out various subdivisions and comparisons. As shown in Figure 7, a and B are observation variables used to characterize latent variable C, and C influences H. Therefore, this paper used SEM to analyze the results from our resident satisfaction questionnaire.

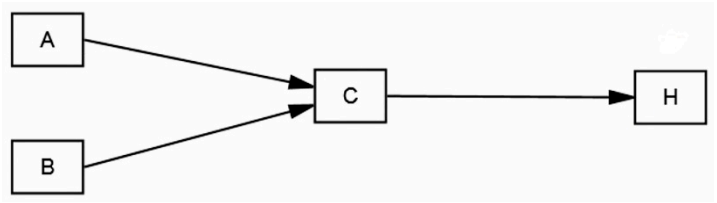

Figure 7. SEM analysis method.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Identification of Factors and Modelling

In SPSS, we applied the Kaiser Meyer Olkin and Bartlett tests to ensure that the results were in the normal range and, therefore, valid. Then, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied. Using the maximum variance method, EFA summarized the original data into several groups of explanatory elements by orthogonal rotation. These elements were called "shallow variables" in the structural program model, and the SEM was constructed on this basis (Tables 5 and 6).

Table 5. Exploratory factor analysis of Nanhuan.

Factor Name	Included Variables (Factor Loading)
Surrounding	Facility convenience (0.533), Estate management (0.784), Building quality (0.693), Air quality (0.566),
Socialize	Shopping tendency (0.841), Age (0.852), Neighborhood interaction (0.476),
Community	Traffic convenience (0.818), Public space (0.730), Leisure space (0.690),
Character	Pedestrian safety (0.688), Income (−0.775), Gender (0.578),

Table 6. Exploratory factor analysis of Daoqian.

Factor Name	Included Variables (Factor Loading)
Individual	Marital status (0.643), Age (0.802), Educational background (−0.809),
Recreation	Green landscape (0.685), Public space (0.744), Leisure space (0.739),
Management	Air quality (0.560), Estate management (0.638), Pedestrian safety (0.822),
Vitality	Facility diversity (0.628), People and cars (0.784), Cultural symbols (0.723),

Using the maximum variance orthogonal rotation statistical method, the influencing factors in Nanhuan were found to be: "surroundings", "socializing", "community", and "character". Table 5 shows the significant factors and the corresponding variables. The influencing factors obtained from Daoqian were: "individual", "recreation", "management", and "vitality". Table 6 shows these significant factors and the corresponding variables.

Starting from the influencing factors condensed by the exploratory factor analysis and the hypothesized relationships among the variables, IBM® SPSS® Amos 26, a structural equation modeling program, was used to construct the SEM. The statistical method of maximum likelihood estimation was applied to calculate the value of the variables in the model (see Figure 8).

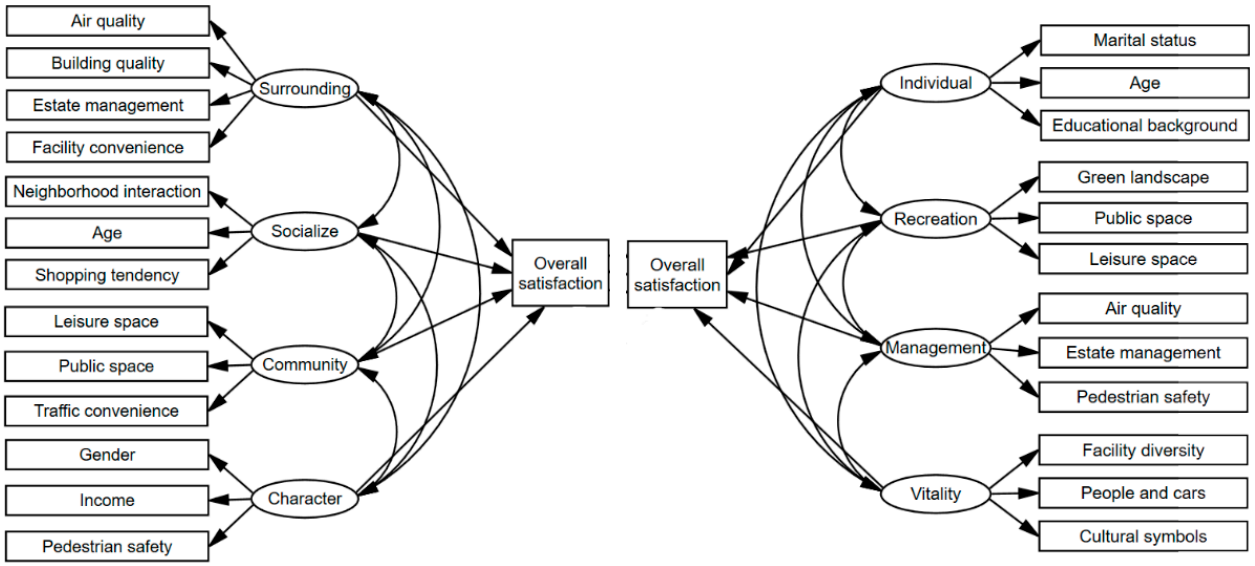

Figure 8. Model structure (**left**: Nanhuan; **right**: Daoqian).

4.2. SEM Analysis Results

On the basis of the test results of the structural equation model, and using the correction index provided by AMOS to correct the model, we observed that the "model fit" was within a reasonable range (Table 7). We then applied the coefficient results, selected the variables of C.R. > 2, $p < 0.01$, and finally, determined that the degree of life satisfaction of the residents of Nanhuan new village was determined by the parameters "surrounding", "socialize", "community" and "character" (Table 8), of which "surrounding" had the most significant impact, followed by "character". Meanwhile, the degree of life satisfaction experienced by the Daoqian community was determined by "recreation", and "management" (Table 9).

Table 7. Test results for Nanhuan and Daoqian.

Match Index	Reference Value	Model Result (Nanhuan)	Model Result (Daoqian)	Whether It Met
CMIN/DF (relative chi square)	<3.00	1.239	1.291	Yes
RMSEA	<0.05	0.026	0.03	Yes
RMR	<0.08	0.045	0.038	Yes
NFI	>0.9	0.920	0.906	Yes
TLI	>0.9	0.976	0.965	Yes
CFI	>0.9	0.983	0.976	Yes
GFI	>0.8	0.972	0.968	Yes

Table 8. Modified SEM coefficient results for Nanhuan.

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	*p*	Estimate (S)
Facility convenience	<–	Surrounding	1.000				0.324
Estate management	<–	Surrounding	2.023	0.377	5.369	***	0.825
Building quality	<–	Surrounding	1.355	0.268	5.050	***	0.583
Air quality	<–	Surrounding	1.129	0.275	4.113	***	0.340
Shopping tendency	<–	Socialize	1.000				0.604
Age	<–	Socialize	2.549	0.374	6.826	***	0.846
Neighborhood interaction	<–	Socialize	1.883	0.257	7.315	***	0.486
Pedestrian safety	<–	Character	1.000				0.494
Income	<–	Character	−2.034	0.459	−4.433	***	−0.658
Gender	<–	Character	0.363	0.074	4.881	***	0.348
Traffic convenience	<–	Community	1.000				0.846
Public space	<–	Community	0.619	0.120	5.166	***	0.527
Leisure space	<–	Community	0.399	0.081	4.934	***	0.445
Overall satisfaction	<–	Surrounding	1.836	0.361	5.093	***	0.904
Overall satisfaction	<–	Socialize	0.627	0.210	2.980	0.003	0.278
Overall satisfaction	<–	Community	−0.112	0.070	−1.611	0.107	−0.131
Overall satisfaction	<–	Character	0.842	0.245	3.437	***	0.576

*** Indicates significance at the $p < 0.001$.

Table 9. Modified SEM coefficient results for Daoqian.

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	*p*	Estimate (S)
Marital status	<–	Individual	1.000				0.504
Age	<–	Individual	1.498	0.204	7.333	***	0.737
Educational background	<–	Individual	−2.755	0.377	−7.299	***	−0.747
Green landscape	<–	Recreation	1.000				0.557
Public space	<–	Recreation	1.230	0.152	8.078	***	0.742
Leisure space	<–	Recreation	0.952	0.122	7.814	***	0.640
Facility diversity	<–	Vitality	1.000				0.729
People and cars	<–	Vitality	0.735	0.122	6.030	***	0.518
Cultural symbols	<–	Vitality	0.745	0.126	5.930	***	0.496
Air quality	<–	Management	1.000				0.616
Estate management	<–	Management	1.221	0.167	7.322	***	0.646
Pedestrian safety	<–	Management	1.143	0.164	6.953	***	0.554
Overall satisfaction	<–	Individual	0.087	0.131	0.662	0.508	0.043
Overall satisfaction	<–	Recreation	0.494	0.128	3.858	***	0.351
Overall satisfaction	<–	Management	0.391	0.144	2.711	0.007	0.242
Overall satisfaction	<–	Vitality	−0.117	0.084	−1.398	0.162	−0.110

*** Indicates significance at the $p < 0.001$.

For the observation variables, the significant factors were "property management", "age", "shopping tendency", and "construction quality".

In the Nanhuan community, "age" and "property management" had a strong correlation with resident satisfaction (Table 8), while "facility convenience", "air quality", and "gender" had low correlations. Residents also focused on some factors which are not related to space, such as "community management" and "shopping". Still, the results showed that "property management" was the main influencing factor, based on the absolute values. This finding may be surprising, but it shows the importance of factors that directly affect daily life, such as the efficiency and function of buildings and complexes. For the renewal part of the community, it could be concluded that resettlement is interpreted as an opportunity [83].

In Nanhuan, "Supporting facilities", "air quality", and "pedestrian safety" had little impact on overall satisfaction (Figure 9). It is worth mentioning that although facilities and green spaces play an important role in people's lives, their impact on satisfaction was not significant due to the high level of renovation and reconstruction that took place in 2014.

Public facilities were created between the two parts of the Nanhuan community, and are equally available for both territories. The green space along the canal and the small park in the center of the new part easily accessible to residents of both territories.

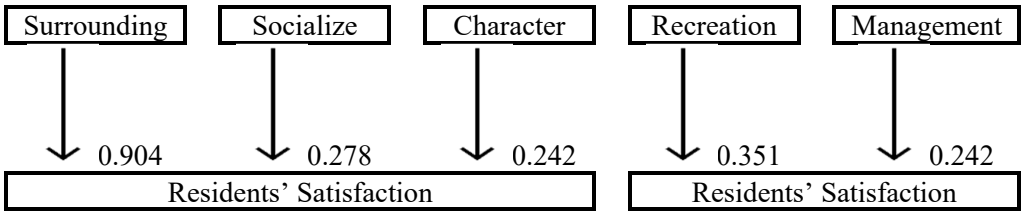

Figure 9. Final influencing factors of Nanhuan (**left**) and Daoqian (**right**).

In the Daoqian community, potential variables were only "recreation" and "management" (Figure 9). The corresponding observation variables, such as "green landscapes", "public spaces", "recreational spaces", "air quality", "property management", and "pedestrian safety", were shown to have a great impact on satisfaction.

After examining the results of the analysis, we sought to engage in direct dialogue with residents of the Daoqian community to support our understanding of their relative lack of satisfaction in comparison with the residents of Nanhuan. Members of the Daoqian community confirmed the answers given in the questionnaire and declared that they did not think that Nanhuan community provided better living conditions, although they expressed satisfaction with the size of their units. Personal attributes usually affect such assessments, but it is extremely relevant that the residents of Daoqian did not express satisfaction regarding the urban model they live in. In other words, although their living environment is defined by a completely different urban form, their satisfaction assessments about the living conditions and the size of their units were similar to those given by residents of Nanhuan. The former group was critical of public spaces and community management. Even green spaces were secondary is their assessments, despite the fact that such spaces make up less than 2% of the neighborhood. It can be concluded that the Daoqian community considers itself to be impacted mostly by what is outside of their homes, i.e., recreational spaces and the applied community management model.

The above comparison shows significant differences between the residential areas in the two environments. The historic urban area is made up of obsolete, low-rise, high-density blocks inhabited by low-income residents. Furthermore, all aspects concerning living conditions and supporting facilities were found to be far from satisfactory in this middle-class city. Despite the aging population in Suzhou, most of the residents there are long-term residents that enjoy the central location and are used to such a living environment.

The community is a typical neighborhood in Suzhou and, as such, is subject to historical-cultural protection and development control. Therefore, an acupuncture-style transformation model has to be implemented to improve the conditions and support the creation of recreational and communication spaces. Management has to be improved in order to maintain the area's environmental quality and public security. Finally, although the degree of possible transformation is limited, any action should seek to achieve social sustainable regeneration, that is to say, it should focus on increasing the livability of the local environment, considering which transformations will be accepted and focusing on the revitalization of the area, in order to attract young people and create opportunities and urban vitality.

More recent urban areas were built according to modern urban planning theory, in response to the "standardized" demands regarding infrastructure and facilities and green space–high rise settings with large areas being devoted to green spaces and public facilities. The incomes of residents are higher and their expectations are different from those of the Daoqian residents.

What is needed in such a setting is to create a differentiated communication space and to promote transformations focused on residents' perception. Regeneration strategies need

to meet the living and psychological needs of different groups, make full use of low land occupation rates, improve environmental protection measures, and to reduce urban noise and air pollution.

5. Conclusions

Evaluations of residents' satisfaction have recently become a more prominent part in the Chinese people-oriented regeneration approach to urbanization. This metric allows researchers to measure the efficacy of urban transformations and the regeneration process.

This research had the goal of assessing the satisfaction level of the residents of two communities in terms of their quality of life, as it relates to the built environment. Two typical communities with different urban forms were selected as the research objects. Within the framework of community regeneration, the goal of the research was to define a quantitative measurement method by which to obtain the most effective feedback on satisfaction, to understand the main factors which impact resident satisfaction assessments, and to provide suggestions for the design of regeneration initiatives and policy-making.

The contribution of this paper lies in the applied method, i.e., the careful adaptation to case studies of a process that is established in the literature, and in the comparison of the level of satisfaction associated with two different urban morphologies in the same city and the main indicators. This research is original and extremely relevant for the future development in China. On one hand, many projects that were realized after the initial opening-up of the nation are now obsolescent and must be regenerated. Such a process has to be discussed in detail. On the other hand, being socially sustainable implies serious consideration of residents' opinions. In addition to this, the quantity of land used for residential communities, that is to say, the density and compactness of dwellings, must be assessed. Different urbanization models must be taken into consideration and compared.

In detail, our comparison of the two communities' showed that all residents have the basic need for comfort, safety, and a variety of facilities; however, the needs of the two places were found to be different. Satisfaction in Daoqian is limited due to the current conditions, and the residents there urgently need new facilities and supporting services. The satisfaction in Nanhuan was found to be more closely related to individual and social network factors, i.e., the improvement of facilities and the diversity of space can significantly improve perceptions by residents of their urban environment. Regeneration initiatives need to create intangible community settings to enhance interactions between residents and the built environment.

Based on these findings, this research makes the following contributions to community regeneration through the prism of social sustainability. First, it establishes a community regeneration conceptual framework that links societies with QoL to achieve sustainable regeneration. Second, according to various factors influencing QoL, it proposes a systematic questionnaire method targeting the individual, built environment, and social interaction levels. The proposed method is of great significance, because there are no unified standards to analyze satisfaction in residential communities. Third, as for the resulting feedback, it was found that the people with different living experiences and individual characteristics and resources express differences in their yearning for space. In drafting policies and regeneration strategies to improve QoL for sustainable development, local satisfaction must be considered.

6. Limitations

As we were not able to obtain official population data, we could not precisely determine the correlated objects or the number of samples. Therefore, the residents' satisfaction results may have been influenced by one or more additional factors which were not tested. Future research could selectively use and input big data for more accurate analyses.

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