

Study on the Difficulties and Countermeasures of Community Elderly Care for Empty-Nested Elderly in the Context of Aging

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Abstract: With the rapid development and changes in society, aging has become a hot issue of concern to all walks of life, and aging has intensified, so that the problem of old age for the elderly has received more and more attention from society and individuals. The empty-nested elderly as a special group of which, the problem of their old age has always been a hot topic of the research in the field of academia. This paper focuses on the old age problem of the empty-nested elderly group, from the old age model as an entry point, to explore the dilemmas and countermeasures of the community old age model in the process of providing services for the empty-nested elderly, to further explore the community old age model, and to provide more thoughts on the old age services for the future aging era.

1. Introduction

With the arrival of an aging society, the problem of old age has become a problem that people have to think about, and various kinds of old age services and modes of old age care are being constantly updated and changed in the light of people's real needs, so as to better serve different groups of elderly people. With the growth of the empty nesters group in recent years, it is crucial to find a suitable model for them and provide them with more targeted elderly care services. In China's elderly care system, home-based community care, which is a collaborative effort between the family and the community, plays a crucial role and shows great potential for development, and it is an effective way to deal with the problem of elderly care for Chinese residents, especially the empty nesters.

2. Current Status of Development of Elderly Care for Empty Nesters

2.1 Aging Prompts Transformation of Elderly Services

At present, with the slowdown in global economic and trade development, which has brought great challenges to population growth, global aging has shown year-on-year growth, and China is no exception. According to the 2023 Annual National Bulletin on the Development of the Elderly Program, by the end of 2023, the elderly population aged 60 years old and above accounted for 21.1% of the total population; the dependency ratio of the elderly population aged 65 years old and above was 22.5%^[1]. The arrival of an aging society will bring a series of impacts, and this phenomenon

profoundly changes the structure of human resources, breaks the balance of labor supply and demand, and brings some challenges to the social pension system. Population ageing not only triggers extensive and far-reaching impacts in the medical and economic fields, but also creates social pressure in terms of demographic structure. At present, with the increasing number of elderly people, the demand for medical resources has surged and the economic burden has increased, the original model of old age care can no longer cope with it, and the problem of old age care has become an urgent problem for the society to solve. At the same time, the aging of the population is putting forward a more urgent need for updating the demand and model of old age care.

2.2 Reasons for the Emergence of the Empty-nester Group and the Contradiction in Old-age Care

Empty-nested elderly people are those who do not have children to take care of them, who live alone or in couples, and who are generally middle-aged or elderly after their children have left home^[2]. Empty-nested elderly people and elderly people living alone have different definitions. Elderly people living alone only live alone, while empty-nested elderly people refer to elderly people who live alone with only their parents after their children have grown up and left.

The group of empty-nested elderly has increased significantly in recent years, and its emergence is caused by a number of reasons. Firstly, economic development and population mobility will cause large numbers of young and middle-aged groups to go out to work and strive for better remuneration for their work, which leads to more and more elderly people staying at home and a lack of incentives for families to provide for the elderly; secondly, changes in the structure of the family will also have an impact, as the family transforms and develops, the size of the family is changing from large to small, and there is an increase in the proportion of nuclear and one-child families, which leads to a decrease in the resources of the family in terms of providing for them and a decrease in the ability to provide for^[3]. The ability to provide for them has declined, and the traditional family model of old-age care has been challenged; thirdly, changes in ideology have further exacerbated the problem of old-age care for empty-nested elderly people; in today's society, children who have married as adults often choose to form a new family, the proportion of elderly people living with their children has declined, and the companionship provided by children to elderly people in the family has declined, so that old-age care for the elderly in the family has been hampered.

3. Comparison of Aging Models and the Outstanding Advantages of the Community Aging Model

Currently China's pension model mainly includes family old-age care, institutional care, community-based elderly care three types, these three pension model based on the composition, showing different characteristics and operational mechanisms.

3.1 Family Old-age Care

Family old-age care is based primarily on the family, with older persons choosing to age at home and family members caring for them in their daily lives. Influenced by traditional Confucian concepts and the culture of filial piety, this model of old-age care has a long history and continues to this day. Family care retains traditional family relationships, embracing the beautiful vision of family harmony and a peaceful old age, and is able to provide the elderly with more detailed care, but this model of care involves the family taking over all the responsibility for the elderly, making the burden of family care heavier, and lacking in professional health services and care.

3.2 Institutional Care

Institutional care mainly refers to the government or social forces by investing in elderly service institutions, including nursing homes, senior citizen apartments and other forms of institutions for the elderly to provide a variety of specialized services needed, the elderly facilities are more complete, institutional care is to adapt to the future of the mainstream way of old age. However, the development of institutional care for the elderly is not yet perfect, and requires substantial and sustained financial support.

3.3 Community-based Elderly Care

Community care for the elderly is a model of old-age care that combines family living and socialized home services, with the family as the core and the community as the backing. Through community-based groups providing day care, home services, leisure activities, and spiritual comfort, the daily needs of the elderly are met. This model of old age care is a new model of old age care that has emerged in recent years. According to the survey, elderly people want to receive a variety of services in the community^[4]. As shown in table 1.

Table 1: Proportion of elderly people in need of various types of community (village) services for the elderly in China, by urban and rural areas, 2021 (unit: %) (From the Fifth National Sample Survey on the Living Conditions of Older Persons in Urban and Rural Areas of China)

	Home visit service	Meal Assistance Service	Recreational activities	Home help service	Day care	Psychological Counseling
Total	29.1	22.1	22.1	15.8	13.2	14.5
Towns and cities	23.0	23.2	21.6	15.3	12.2	13.6
Rural	36.2	20.7	22.7	16.4	14.3	15.6

Taken together, these three modes of old-age care each have their own characteristics, adapting to the old-age needs of different groups of older persons. For example, family old-age care is more suitable for the elderly with a complete family structure, complete conditions for family old-age care and a traditional concept of old-age care. Institutionalized elderly care is more suitable for the disabled elderly or single elderly people who like to have a lively life. For some of the children are busy with their work and do not want to leave home to take care of the empty nest of the elderly, community care is more suitable for the elderly, it is not only in line with the objective reality of the modern old age face, but also to meet the elderly in the home to spend their twilight years in the traditional concepts. At the same time, this combined model of old-age care also helps to ease the pressure on young and middle-aged people and their families in old age, and is receiving increasing attention from the public.

4. Major Problems Facing the Community-Based Elderly Care Model

Community pension reflects the new trend of China's pension from family and institution to community, which has been developed rapidly in the reality of aging population and increasing number of empty nesters, but due to the influence of economic development, local limitations, resource constraints and other factors, some community pensions have problems in the process of providing pension services to the empty nesters, which, to a certain extent, restricts the healthy and orderly development of community pension.

4.1 Temporary Nature of Elderly Services

Due to the limited human resources in the community, there are no fixed personnel or arrangements in the community for elderly services. In terms of basic life protection, such as procurement of living materials, housework and laundry, although the community is able to provide the elderly with some meal subsidies and mutual assistance activities, the amount of these means of support is limited, and they do not cover all of them, and many of them can only be arranged temporarily to meet the specific needs of the elderly^[5]. Many of these services can only be arranged on a temporary basis in response to specific needs expressed by the elderly, and no fixed and regularized service system has been formed, making the long-term nature of the assistance clearly insufficient to meet the needs. At present, service provision is more of a reactive response, lacking initiative and foresight.

4.2 Shortage of Specialized Talents

In the current community pension model, the shortage of talents is an obvious problem. There is a shortage of professionals in the community, and many of those who provide elderly care services are community staff and some volunteers, who have not undergone professional training, including basic nursing knowledge, first-aid skills, psychological counseling, etc. There are big differences in their business skills and levels, which make it impossible to form a standardized elderly care service^[6]. In addition, for younger employment groups, elderly care work lacks attraction in terms of salary and remuneration and social status, and a good strategy for the development of specialized personnel has yet to be formed.

4.3 Uneven Regional Development

Community elderly care is affected by economic and other factors, presenting the situation of regional development imbalance. Community elderly model of infrastructure construction, personnel training, door-to-door labor services, etc. need certain financial support, and in practice, in some economic development in the big cities have more advantages of community elderly development, while for some small cities or villages, the implementation of community elderly is more difficult, there is still a lot of room for development.

4.4 Single-mindedness of Service Content

Empty-nested elderly current community services are mainly to provide material support for the elderly, while neglecting the spiritual support for the elderly. Community services for the elderly tend to care for daily life, including the procurement of living materials, household chores, etc., these actions on the service does help to improve the life of the elderly, but the elderly spiritual support is often neglected. For the empty-nested elderly living alone at home, the lack of children's company will often make them feel lonely, bored, if they do not pay attention to even the formation of mental illness. The lack of emotional support for the community elderly model fails to provide the empty-nested elderly with a comprehensive and rich experience of elderly services, showing a tendency of homogenization.

5. Countermeasures for the Community-Based Elderly Care Model

5.1 Give Full Play to the Main Role of the Community and Build an All-round Pension Service System

Give full play to the main role of the community in the provision of elderly services for the empty-nested elderly, expand the scope of services, and provide professional services, such as rehabilitation training and chronic disease management, for the special needs of the empty-nested elderly. In the meantime, a fixed and regularized service model in the community should be established, and commissioners should be arranged to be responsible for coordination and implementation, so as to ensure the level of the services, as well as the continuity and stability of the services, so that the empty-nested elderly can anticipate and rely on these services, and to improve the proactivity, permanence, and foreseeability of the provision of the services.

5.2 Strengthen the Professional Team Training, Service Career Systematization

The level of home care services, to a large extent, depends on the community service personnel's service attitude and work ability, strengthen the community elderly service professional training is committed to enhance the professional level of community elderly services and service quality. Through the development of vocational skills training, the scale of talents is continuously expanded and the level of service management is improved. For example, it is required that applicants must pass the training and assessment before they can work, and regular assessment and inspection are carried out; the wages of practitioners are appropriately raised, and a system of rewards and punishments is implemented. Promote the improvement of the function of community endowment services, and target the training of a group of key personnel with medical emergency skills, life service skills and good communication skills.

5.3 Strengthening Social Support and Making Full Use of All Resources

In order to strengthen community-based elderly care services, it is necessary for the Government to provide strong support and actively mobilize the community, families and all aspects of society to make full use of all kinds of resources. Especially in less economically developed areas, it is all the more important to adhere to the principle of adapting services to local conditions, and to use limited resources to provide the elderly with the services they need, so as to better cope with the social challenges brought about by population ageing. At the same time, social resources from the community, families, hospitals and other parties should be integrated, and volunteers for elderly care services should be recruited to promote the balanced and coordinated development of community-based elderly care in different regions.

5.4 Establishment of a Communication Network and a Broad Understanding of Needs

Adopting a variety of methods to collect the wishes of the elderly for old-age services, and formulating old-age services that meet the expectations of the elderly according to their different needs. For elderly people with limited mobility, we provide them with home services, such as the purchase of daily necessities and living care; for elderly people who are ill, we provide them with more specialized medical care and regular physical examinations.

Meanwhile, community care also needs to pay attention to the spiritual needs of the elderly and provide spiritual care services. Empty-nested elderly people need more family emotional support because their children are not around to accompany them, so the community should strive to create

an atmosphere of respect for the elderly and filial piety, and give more psychological care. In addition, it should also strengthen the guidance of the children in the family to pay attention to the elderly, the formation of community, family, relatives and friends common elderly service support.

6. Conclusions

In summary, in the context of the ageing era, by comparing different modes of old-age care in China, it is found that community-based home care with the family as the core and the community as the support is the most suitable for the empty-nested elderly. Problems in the operation of community-based elderly care are explored, and it is found that community-based elderly care puts higher requirements on the community in terms of economy, manpower, cooperation, and service content. The key lies in how to maximize the advantages of community services, stimulate the leading role of the community, encourage family participation, and attract social resources to jointly enhance the overall capacity of community care services, which is an effective way to improve the quality of community-based elderly care services. However, community improvement dose not an overnight task, the need for all stakeholders to work together to improve social services for the elderly. In conclusion, the problem of elderly care for empty nesters requires the joint efforts of the government, social force, families and individuals. Through the development and improvement of the community-based elderly care model, we can build a safer, more comfortable and convenient service for the elderly, so that they can enjoy their old age in peace.

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