

An Analysis of Reemployment Pathways for China's Young Elderly

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Abstract. With the increasing scale of population aging, China may face the situation of labor shortage. Exploiting the social potential of the elderly group, stimulating the social vitality of the elderly group, and letting younger elderly join the reemployment team play an important role in effectively making up for the lack of labor force and coping with the aging population. By exploring the feasibility of reemployment of the young elderly in China, it is found that the reemployment of the young elderly in China is facing a double dilemma at the personal and social levels. The growth of age, the decline of physical function, and other related factors make the young elderly unable to adapt to digitalization, few employment channels, and the impact of the traditional concept of intergenerational care on the reemployment of the young elderly, while the vulnerability of the elderly group itself brings challenges to their social participation. To effectively solve these dilemmas, this paper puts forward the optimization scheme from the three dimensions of the state, society, and the elderly themselves.

Keywords: Population aging, reemployment of young elderly, dilemma.

1. Introduction

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out that Chinese modernization is a modernization with a huge population. Building an elderly-friendly society is the proper means of realizing Chinese modernization. With the continuous expansion of the scale of China's population aging, it is an effective strategy to improve the social participation of the elderly group, develop a productive aging strategy, and let more elderly groups participate in the "silver age action" for coping with the large-scale population aging and the lack of the working population in the future.

The aging population shows that the social role of China's elderly groups has changed. The social participation of the elderly groups, on the one hand, many healthy and experienced elderly people, are eager to regain social value in social participation and obtain a sense of self-identity and social belonging. On the other hand, the communal participation of the elderly is conducive to alleviating the social contradictions caused by population aging. China's young elderly have released a huge demographic dividend to participate in social re-employment and effectively make up for the labor gap. Based on the above point of view, this study searched the current policy documents of China's elderly care services, sorted out the relevant literature on the social participation of elderly groups, explored and analyzed the feasibility of reemployment of young elderly people in China, and gave feasible suggestions.

2. Characteristics of China's Aging Population

2.1. Large Scale and Fast Growth Trend of the Elderly Population

Population aging has become an important trend of current social development. According to the latest data from China's National Bureau of Statistics, by the end of 2022, China's population aged 60 and above had reached 280 million, of which the population aged 65 and above exceeded 200 million, accounting for 14.9% of the total population. Compared with 2021, the elderly population increased by 120 million, with a proportion increase of 0.9%. It is estimated that during the "14th five-year plan" period, the total population of the elderly aged 60 years and above will exceed 300 million,

accounting for more than 20%, entering the stage of moderate aging. Around 2035, the population aged 60 and above will exceed 400 million, accounting for more than 30% of the total population, entering the stage of severe aging [1]. Compared with the time taken by developed countries for a hundred years, China has entered the stage of moderate aging in only more than 20 years, and its development speed has far exceeded that of developed countries. The aging of the population will become a basic national condition in China for a long time in the future.

2.2. Improved Health Level and a Large Proportion

With the improvement of medical and pension services, the life expectancy and health level of the elderly in China are continuously improving, and the life expectancy in China will be close to 78 years in 2022. It shows that the elderly in China are gradually becoming healthy and aging. China divides the age of the younger elderly into 60-69. According to the data of the seventh national census, 55.83% of the population aged 60 and over in China are young and old people aged 60 to 69. Most of these young old people have the advantages of knowledge, experience, and skills.

China has implemented an active population aging policy, constantly expanding insurance coverage and ensuring the basic livelihood of the elderly. In terms of elderly service supply, China has improved the supply capacity and level of elderly care services and increased the construction of elderly care infrastructure. By the end of 2022, there were 387000 elderly care institutions and facilities across the country, with a total of 8.294 million elderly care beds [2]. In terms of elderly health services, China has improved the elderly health policy, strengthened the supply quality of elderly health services, and deepened the development of the combination of medical care and elderly care. By the end of 2022, there were 6986 integrated medical care and elderly care institutions with qualifications of medical and health institutions and registered with elderly care institutions, an increase of 7.6% over the previous year [2].

Under the premise of good physical condition, they have a great latent capacity to play their role [3]. The moderate "participation" of the younger elderly is not only conducive to their continued contribution to economic and social development in various ways, but also greatly conducive to maintaining their "function", and effectively promoting the healthy aging of China in the middle of this century [4]. The young elderly population contains a huge demographic dividend. It is a positive population strategy to develop the human resources of the young elderly, tap the internal advantages of the elderly group, and give the elderly group something to do.

2.3. Transformation of the Needs of the Elderly Population

The elderly care service needs of the elderly in China are gradually changing from survival-oriented to development-oriented. The elderly are no longer simply meeting the needs of material life, but starting to pursue spiritual needs. Cong Jinzhou, Wu Ruijun, based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, through empirical analysis, found that the retired elderly with higher pension income did not blindly choose to retire in full meaning to enjoy entertainment without financial burden, but had high-level value needs to pursue career development and self-realization [5].

Population aging is both an opportunity and a challenge. With the accelerated development of population aging, the number of working people and labor participation rate in China have dropped significantly, which will pose a severe challenge to sustained economic growth. But at the same time, from the perspective of active aging, with the substantial progress of China's medical industry and pension security, the health status and life expectancy of China's young elderly have been improved. In the future, the elderly group may become a social labor force, effectively make up for the problem of insufficient labor population, and integrate the concept of active aging and healthy aging into the whole process of economic and social development.

3. The Specific Performance of the Plight

China's elderly population has a large base, showing a trend of increasing with each passing year. Under the promotion of the active aging policy, the participation of the elderly in re-employment is an important performance of the elderly. Based on literature analysis and relevant data, this study explores the reemployment path of the young elderly and finds that the young elderly are facing many difficulties in the process of participating in reemployment. In summary, the difficulties are divided into personal level and social level. The personal level mainly includes the mismatch between labor skills and supply and demand in the digital era, the impact of intergenerational care, and traditional concepts on the willingness to reemployment. The social level mainly includes age discrimination high social exclusion in reemployment, and the lack of a perfect social security system in reemployment. The reemployment of young elderly people is affected by both personal and social levels. Many young elderly people tend to waver when making reemployment choices.

3.1. Personal Level

With industrial integration, China's labor market has constantly improved the requirements for labor quality. The young elderly tend to be on the edge of the digital industry. Whether they can cross the digital divide and match the job demand is a major dilemma for the young elderly's social participation. At the same time, the younger elderly still belong to the more dynamic elderly group. After retirement, many younger elderly take the initiative to undertake family affairs such as intergenerational care and housework. They often show that they are more than willing but less able to re-employment. According to the data of China's seventh population census, the employment of the elderly aged 60-64 and 65-69 accounted for 34.43% and 27.49% of the elderly population in the same age group, respectively, indicating that most of the young elderly have health security for re-employment. With the progress of modern science and technology, the deep integration of the digital economy and traditional industries has promoted the continuous transformation and upgrading of traditional industrial chains, expanded the scale of industrial digitalization, increased the requirements for labor talents to have digital knowledge and communication technology skills, and the demand for highly skilled workers in the labor market has also increased [6]. Digital development of many technologies and products can help the elderly solve some age-related problems. Provide multiple channels and information for the elderly's re-employment. The elderly can improve their cognitive activity level through the Internet, and help them maintain their autonomy and social adaptation. The rapid development of the digital economy gives the elderly with digital skills have strong adaptability to return to work. At the same time, social development also provides a variety of new jobs for the general elderly group [7]. However, whether the elderly can effectively master digital technology overcome the digital divide, and participate in the development of the digital economy is the key for the elderly to integrate into the digital economy era. On the other hand, unlike Western countries, China is influenced by traditional Confucianism and pays attention to filial piety and family concepts. The elderly in China play an important role in mutual support and intergenerational care among families. With the retirement of the middle-aged and the elderly, the length of providing family care and housework has gradually increased and reached a peak in the 60-64 age group [8]. After retirement, the elderly group devoted most of their time to their families, which largely dispersed their re-employment energy.

3.2. Social Level

As the elderly grow older, their physical functions begin to decline. In the employment market, they often suffer from age discrimination and social exclusion. At the same time, the vulnerability of the elderly group also makes the young elderly lack social security in re-employment. Aging means the transformation of social roles, and social and ontological values are gradually missing. In many people's opinion, with the growth of age, the physical strength and energy of the elderly group are also much lower than before, and cognitive ability is also gradually declining. Therefore, many

enterprises will impose age restrictions on posts when recruiting, and the elderly group is often at a disadvantage in the employment market, which makes it difficult to find suitable jobs. The institutional dilemma of the elderly in the labor market is also the focus of social attention. On the one hand, compared with the youth group, the elderly are in a relatively weak position in the digital society, and the existing labor security law also fails to meet the institutional needs of the new employment form in the digital era. Difficulties such as rights protection and identification are perplexing whether the elderly can participate in employment fairly and get effective social support and maintenance. By comparing the differences between formal and informal employees, Khan focused on exploring the reasons why informal employees do not get adequate social security. It is believed that most of the workers who work in the unregulated informal sector in society are very young and old workers, as well as other groups in a vulnerable position in society, but they do not receive the same social security mechanism and income support or subsidies as regular employees [9]. These difficulties often weaken the enthusiasm of the elderly group in the process of re-employment to a certain extent or are forced to give up employment opportunities.

4. Optimization Scheme

In view of the plight of the elderly group's re-employment at the individual and social levels, this paper proposes the following three dimensions of the optimization scheme.

4.1. Stimulate the Vitality of the Aging Society

As a social policy maker, the state plays an important role in promoting the re-employment of the elderly. The government needs to allocate social resources reasonably to meet the actual needs of elderly-friendly cities [10]. At present, the work report and relevant documents of the Chinese government have mentioned encouraging the elderly to participate in society and giving the elderly something to do. However, there is no perfect policy system to protect the legitimate rights and interests of the elderly in re-employment. In the future, the country can make efforts in three aspects: improving the system, employment support, and system guarantee. To improve the system, the government needs to coordinate with various departments to formulate the reemployment policy documents for the elderly, protect the legitimate labor rights and interests of the elderly group, and clarify the dominant position of the elderly group in employment. It is necessary to standardize enterprise labor contracts, encourage enterprises to appropriately relax the rigid regulations on employment and recruitment, and provide appropriate tax cuts, subsidies, and other benefits to enterprises that recruit elderly groups. In terms of employment support, the government carried out timely re-employment training for the elderly in various aspects to improve their vocational skills. It is necessary to improve the system and mechanism of elderly education institutions, make the training content consistent with the actual needs of elderly employment, and improve the matching degree of population aging and the working population. Economic subsidies will be given to the reemployed elderly according to their age, to improve the enthusiasm of the elderly group for reemployment. The government can flexibly postpone retirement when formulating retirement policies. Reynolds Setal and Wahrendorfetal have studied the delayed retirement policies in the UK and 16 other European countries and found that the policy of delaying retirement age to increase the labor participation of the elderly helps the elderly maintain mental and physical health [11, 12]. At the same time, for posts with high requirements for experience, ability, and technical proficiency, the reemployment system can be appropriately modified to effectively make up for the shortage of talent resources. Improve the old-age insurance system while maintaining the organic unity of security and the labor market.

4.2. Build a Social Support Network and a Friendly Society for the Elderly

The reemployment of the young elderly shows a mismatch between supply and demand. On the one hand, there are few channels for young elderly groups to obtain re-employment, which can not meet their personal needs. On the other hand, no one cares about providing jobs for the young elderly.

The local community should establish the elderly data and information database to obtain relevant information about the elderly in time. The elderly with employment needs should be matched with the positions recruited in the elderly talent market in time so that the elderly can choose suitable jobs. The community can provide informal support. For example, giving full play to the supportive role of the family, children encouraging and supporting the elderly to realize their self-worth through re-employment, and children's spiritual support will establish self-confidence for the elderly group in re-employment to a great extent. The elderly who are in trouble and left behind will be the focus of the community through home visits, and activists such as elite elderly and energetic elderly will be recruited to participate in pair-helping activities so that the elderly can tap their value and obtain a sense of self-identity and value belonging. The community can provide formal social support to the elderly by improving the construction of the grass-roots public health system, such as carrying out free physical examinations and propagating disease prevention-related knowledge for the elderly group regularly, to improve the physical quality of the elderly group and improve the elderly group's enthusiasm for re-employment.

4.3. Maintain the Healthy Mentality of the Elderly to Regain Their Social Value

Mathews G. mentioned when writing about happy aging that individuals feel that they have the responsibility to assume social roles in their golden age. As they grow older and retire, they begin to lose these social roles and demand to reshape themselves and choose a happy way to live in old age [13]. The intelligence, personality, and memory of the elderly will decline with age. At the same time, with the change and loss of social roles, many elderly people will have psychological gaps. In the future pension life and social participation, the elderly group should learn to face up to the change of their roles and face the elderly life with a healthy and optimistic attitude. At the same time, the elderly groups should also learn to face up to their shortcomings, cross the digital divide, and better adapt to social development through intergenerational learning or mutual learning among the elderly groups.

5. Conclusion

By exploring the reemployment path of the young elderly in China, this paper summarizes that the reemployment of the young elderly is facing a dual dilemma at the personal level and the social level. As a vulnerable group in society, the elderly are often subject to age discrimination and social exclusion when they are employed due to their age, intelligence, and physical limitations. Their skills can not keep up with the development of intelligence, and it is difficult to cross the digital divide to achieve re-employment. At the same time, the vulnerability of the elderly makes the young elderly unable to get effective social security in re-employment. These difficulties limit the reemployment of the young elderly. Based on the above problems, this study puts forward feasible suggestions for the reemployment of the young elderly from the three dimensions of the country, society, and the elderly themselves. It is hoped that in the future, through the efforts of the state and society, more elderly groups can participate in the reemployment action, enrich their elderly life, and realize their life value.

Although this study has sorted out the relevant literature and policies, the willingness and field of reemployment of the younger elderly group are affected by many factors, and the trend of reemployment of the younger elderly group needs more long-term and continuous fluctuating data to support it. Future researchers can continue to explore the reemployment path of the young elderly on this basis.

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