

The Problem of Re-Employment of Under-Aged Elderly People in China and its Solutions

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Abstract. The aging of the population is a significant trend in the development of our society and the underlying background of our labor market for a longer time. Since 2022, China will add more than 12 million older adults every year and will enter a stage of accelerated aging since then. After entering an aging society, the size of China's elderly population will continue to expand, the pace of population aging will gradually accelerate, and the population structure will become unbalanced. Although the aging of the population is irreversible, it can also be an opportunity for us because the elderly population is a vast social resource, especially in the context of the increasing educational level of the elderly population. There is a segment of older people who mostly have the advantage of knowledge, experience, and skills, are still in good health, have great expectations of a happy life, and have a more significant potential to play a role. This segment of the younger age group can still be an essential part of society's workforce.

Keywords: Older people of lower age, Positive Aging, Re-employment policy.

1. Introduction

Population aging is a common problem faced by countries all over the world, and as the situation becomes increasingly severe, many countries are studying and exploring ways to solve it. As the most populous country in the world today, China is also the developing country with the fastest and longest declining fertility rate and is, therefore, the first country to enter and rapidly move towards a severe stage of aging. The aging of the population has important implications for China's demographic structure, consumption structure, industrial structure, social distribution, and employment, which will inevitably bring various pressures and challenges to our economic and social development. Since 1949, China has conducted seven population surveys, and population growth has faced a historical change from quantitative pressure to structural challenges. Implementing the full liberalization of the two-child policy has led to only a slight increase in the birth rate. In contrast, structurally, there has yet to be any essential change in the direction of the long-term development of the aging population structure [1].

The period from 2001 to 2020 is a period of rapid aging. During this phase, China will add an average of 5.96 million elderly people each year, with an annual growth rate of 3.28%. By 2020, the elderly population will reach 248 million, with a senior level of 17.17%, of which 30.67 million will be aged 80 and above, accounting for 12.37% of the elderly population. The period from 2021 to 2050 is a period of accelerated aging. Along with the second peak of births from the 1960s to the mid-1970s, when people entered old age, the number of older people in China began to grow at an accelerated rate, increasing by an average of 6.2 million per year. By 2023, the number of elderly people will increase to 270 million, equal to young children aged 0-14. By 2050, the number of elderly people will exceed 400 million, and the senior level will advance to over 30%, of which 94.48 million will be aged 80 and above, accounting for 21.78% of the elderly population. The period from 2051 to 2100 is a sound stage of heavy aging. 2051 will see the size of China's elderly population reach a peak of 437 million, about twice the number of young people. At this stage, the size of the elderly population will stabilize at 300-400 million, the level of aging will stabilize at around 31%, and the proportion of senior citizens aged 80 and above in the total elderly population will remain at 25-30%, entering a plateau period of high aging. Regarding development trends, China's population aging will continue to increase, and the problem of population aging is becoming increasingly severe [2].

In the context of population aging, with the continuous development of the economy, the age structure of China's population and the workforce design is gradually changing, so it is necessary to develop the workforce resources of the younger generation. Through the analysis of the current situation of the younger generation, this research finds that there are problems in the employment of the younger generation and the reasons for them, and propose solutions according to the analyzed reasons. The first is to abandon the traditional concept of retirement for the elderly and actively develop the labor resources of the elderly; the second is for the government and relevant enterprises to create employment platforms suitable for the elderly and provide more employment opportunities for the elderly; the third is to adjust the industrial structure and vigorously develop the tertiary industry.

2. The current situation of re-employment of under-aged older people in China

A reporter found in his investigation that several older people have already uploaded their job search information and intentions to the online job search information. The ages of these job seekers are mainly concentrated in the fifties to sixties, and there will also be a minority of people in their sixties and seventies who have posted their job search messages online. Many of them also have educational experience in well-known universities in China [3]. Although some older people have reached retirement age or have retired, they still have the desire and ability to remain in employment, such as returning from retirement, which is one of the common forms of re-employment of the older population after retirement. There are three types of situations in which retired older people need employment: the first is people with unique skills who generally do not want to leave the labor market prematurely; the second is people who can enter retirement but have to choose to continue working because of financial needs; and the third is people who do not have the burden of living and want to realize their personal and social value through their competence. The continued work of these older people facilitates the full exploitation of the advantages of human capital accumulated over time. It maximizes the efficiency of the use of society's human resources.

According to a report published by the National Bureau of Statistics of China in 2020, older people are defined as those over sixty. China has a large base of older potential workers and is proliferating. In 2020, the number of middle and senior-aged job seekers over fifty grew by 32.4 percent year-on-year, four times faster than that of 35-year-old job seekers [4]. An earlier retirement age also gives China a larger potential older working population. Older job seekers are often rejected in the labor market. Age discrimination is widespread in China's secondary labor market. Many market players set an age limit of 35 years for the recruitment of talent in personnel recruitment to expand the production and operational efficiency of their enterprises. Under the combined effect of economic restructuring, industrial restructuring, and the elimination of backward production capacity, the range of employment options for older people has become even smaller. In the context of aging, the re-employment difficulties of older people can be divided into the following categories:

2.1. Perception

China's traditional views on employment and retirement are deeply rooted, and there is a lack of shaping and nurturing a positive view of aging. The retirement age is still enforced by the previous standard of 60 years old for men and 55 years old for women. The continuation of the retirement policy has formed a traditional view of employment and old age. In other words, people have developed the inherent notion that they can do nothing once they reach retirement age, do not have to participate in social activities, and enjoy their old age without worry. This perception exacerbates the plight of older people in employment and runs counter to the concept of active aging

2.2. Policy

In the face of the new normal of China's aging development, there is a severe policy path dependence and a need for more policy innovation. Firstly, in the context of aging, China's policies mainly focus on health care, elderly services, and other protection policies and lack policy

orientations to activate the re-employment of the elderly. Secondly, there needs to be more policy formulation. There is a time lag in the formulation of relevant policies on aging, which is not in line with the rapid process of aging in China, and the lack of approach leads to a lack of policy guidance and policy protection for the re-employment of the elderly and a lack of policy system to support the gradually increasing problem of population aging.

2.3. Education

Inadequate vocational skills education system and lack of well-established employability pathways for older people. The primary requirement for the re-employment of older people is vocational ability and skills advantage, but vocational education for older people in China started late and needs to be more effective and balanced. The lack of willingness of older people to re-enter the workforce due to their education and skill levels, coupled with the weakening of social participation of older people in older people's education and the severe lack of training power for older people's skills, has resulted in a lack of effective ways for older people to improve their abilities in the process of re-entering the workforce and has hindered the advancement of older people in employment.

2.4. Market

The elderly labor market is underdeveloped, and the employment service system is imperfect. Currently, China's employment service system and labor market are mainly oriented toward young laborers, and no labor market for the elderly has been formed. The elderly group is usually excluded from the system and market. This has resulted in many quality elderly labor resources being left idle, further blocking the channels and avenues for re-employment.

2.5. Society

Employment of older people from the perspective of social exclusion leaves older people without appropriate social support. Firstly, institutional exclusion; the existing social system and governance pattern, the social system for older people is mainly based on the provision of elderly services and health care, and there is a lack of institutional support for the re-employment of older people. Secondly, psychological rejection; the social cognition of older people is that they are labeled as a vulnerable group and should be protected by society.

3. Reasons for difficulties in re-employment of younger older people

Looking at the employment of the aging population as a percentage of overall jobs between 2004 and 2017, the fluctuations in change between years show a generally upward trend. In most years, the share of older people aged 60-64 in overall employment was higher than that of older people aged 65 and over in general jobs [5]. The survey found that the willingness of younger, more senior people to take up employment is relatively high. Still, at this stage, even if they are willing to re-enter employment, they need practical reasons. Three reasons are analyzed below.

3.1. The quality of the workforce of younger and older people needs to be improved

Influenced by the prevailing social environment, the current lower-aged Chinese elderly are generally less educated and have inadequate knowledge. Among the younger older people, those with complete quality education and higher education are in the minority. Among the more youthful, more senior people, those who can keep up with the times and learn new knowledge are also in the minority [6]. Due to the different backgrounds of the times, the younger older people nowadays may be solving the problem of food and clothing at the stage when they need to learn knowledge in their twenties, when they may not have many opportunities to consider how to increase their knowledge and improve their education level. So as they get older, their ability to learn new knowledge decreases. Most younger seniors need to undergo education and training to upgrade their skills. It will take no less time and effort to develop the professional skills of older people than it does to create younger people.

In addition, many older people need a proper understanding of the concept of 'active aging' and subconsciously believe that they are farther away from the mainstream of society than young adults. There is also a perception that when they reach a certain age, they will be less able to work, participate in social activities, and need help. Many younger older people can re-enter the market as a particular labor force. This requires a positive change in how older people view their social participation.

3.2. Lack of relevant policy systems and service support

The year-on-year growth of the elderly population poses a huge challenge to China's elderly care system and services. Still, China needs more policy and legal help for the re-employment of the under-aged and practical guidance [7]. The guidelines proposed by the government are still biased towards the old-age system and do not focus on re-employment. The government has also proposed specific measures on re-employment. Still, the asymmetry in information transfer between the central and local levels may result in a time lag, resulting in some policies being confirmed when the employment situation of younger older people has changed and only applies to existing policies. Another aspect of the policy is that the government can only provide employment guidance to some younger older people who need to work. There will always be a proportion of older people who need help to remain employed for various reasons. The government needs to do its best to ensure that as many older people as possible who need work are able to find suitable employment through policy and employment guidance.

3.3. Discrimination by businesses against the employment of younger older people

In many companies, the recruitment conditions will indicate that they do not recruit workers over 35 years of age. Firstly, for companies, younger people are more active and more capable of learning new skills, whereas younger workers are more conservative and will be less receptive to new things. Secondly, there is still a lack of clarity in the legal relationship between younger older people and employers in China, a vague definition of the rights and protection of re-employment, and a weak awareness of employment rights and legal protection, all of which can easily lead to employment risks. Hence, companies are only partially comfortable employing younger older people to work [8]. Finally, younger employees may have lower wage requirements, while most lower-aged older workers will have wage requirements. A young worker may bring long-term benefits to the company through subsequent training. In contrast, a relatively short period for re-employment of lower-aged older workers can add more uncertain risks to the company.

4. Solutions for the employment of younger older people

4.1. Active promotion and guidance for establishing a positive view of aging

In 2002, the United Nations World Assembly on Aging proposed a strategy for active aging, stating that aging should be a positive and healthy participation in social development and that individual countries should build on it to actively explore ways and means of developing the human resources of older people [9]. For those who can work, access to working conditions and establishing certain social relationships are essential factors in a person's psychological health. In today's social context, the Chinese government needs to update the concept of employment and guide the public to correctly understand the value of the human resources of the elderly and recognize the concept of active aging.

4.2. Improving policies, regulations, and service systems

At present, very few of our government policies apply to the continued employment of the elderly population, focusing mainly on social health care. This policy protects the basic livelihoods of the elderly. It is recommended that China formulate policies and regulations on the re-employment of older people in light of the current situation of the aging population and improve the service and guarantee mechanisms for the re-employment of older people. The relevant authorities can give

appropriate preferential policies to employers who actively employ older workers to increase employers' motivation to use younger older people [10]. At the same time, China needs to step up its efforts to promote the employment of older people and to set up employment guidance centers for the re-employment of older people so that they are more aware of what kind of jobs they need and how to find the right ones for them. This will make it easier for older people to find employment. Encourage companies in a position to set up jobs with flexible working hours or use the relevant platforms to allow older people with similar jobs to rotate between different companies, build bridges between companies and achieve flexible employment. The decisive role of the market in allocating human resources must be brought into play to promote the active participation and provision of public employment services by various human resource agencies to help older people find employment. At the same time, older people must receive appropriate labor remuneration for their employees to improve their pensions. Employers need to sign employment contracts with older persons of lower age, specifying pay, medical care, and other rights and obligations to provide security for the employment of older persons of lower age.

4.3. Building an employment information sharing platform for younger older people

Public employment services for the lower-aged elderly mean the organic unity of the market's role in allocating resources and the government's role in effective regulation. The general idea could be to deepen the investment structure of human capital in order of social return priority and actively promote the re-employment of the elderly population. The government should incorporate the development and utilization of older adults' resources into government functions and give policy support in various aspects. Not only should it build multiple forms of institutions involving the elderly, but it should also continue to develop the employment market for the elderly, create conditions for the re-employment of the elderly and effectively support the role of elderly talents in various fields. The most urgent task is to build an information service platform for the employment of the elderly at a lower age. Currently, retired elderly people in China are still managed by their original units, and their social contacts are relatively narrow [11]. This research can draw reference from the talent development centers for the elderly set up by some local governments in Japan and set up an information bank and job promotion website for the elderly to build a platform for them to serve society again. It can take the lead in setting up an information system for elderly people's resources, using modern internet technology to provide information services for the employment of elderly people, promote the communication and sharing of information, and carry out the development and management activities of elderly people's resources in a standardized and orderly manner. At the same time, there is a need to improve legal protection for the re-employment of the elderly. Not only should efforts be made to develop the labor resources of the lower-aged elderly, but relevant legal protection should also be provided. Related incentive policies should be prepared, and policies and measures to develop the labor resources of the elderly and increase the labor participation rate should be studied and formulated from the perspectives of legislation, policies, and administration. For example, attempts can be made to take the lead in piloting a unique working hours system for the elderly, shortening their working hours, and advocating flexible and flexible employment. It is recommended to explore varieties of insurance mainly for unexpected situations (such as accidents, an unexpected illness, and sudden death) during working hours for the elderly, and to add special commercial insurance for the elderly at work, to reduce the risks to employers and solve the worries of employing the elderly.

5. Conclusion

Older people can gain positive self-awareness when faced with a new working and living environment. They can expand their social network, which is essential to physical and mental health. In China, many older people can still engage in productive life after retirement. The State should create a favorable employment environment and provide a wide range of employment opportunities,

thus giving this group of older people a platform to develop their abilities. With the advent of active aging, many older people are experienced and physically fit enough to be respected and valued by society and can even return to work. "Being busy is not only a way for the elderly to show their worth but also for society to respect and love the elderly. As can be seen in the text, the difficulties older people face in employment are, first and foremost, job-seeking discrimination. Their education and skills limit the vast majority of older people to jobs that require experience or simple hands-on skills. Secondly, there are problems such as the lack of a system for the development of older people's resources, the fragmentation of the labor market and the lack of clear objectives, and the lack of a method for assessing the value, managing, and protecting the rights and interests of older people, which is very unfavorable to the development of older people's resources. In addition, the elderly have a single channel for re-employment, have difficulty obtaining employment information, and are at a disadvantage in employment due to their conditions. Some factors make re-employment difficult, such as few employment platforms, few employment channels, inadequate institutions and employment discrimination, and situations where re-employment is impossible for family reasons or medical reasons. In addition, there needs to be more legislation at the legal level to protect the rights and interests of older people in re-employment. Overall, the difficulties faced by the elderly in re-employment are still objective, and the vision of active re-employment of the elderly will be realized in practice.

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