

# Re-employment's Fluence on the Mental Health of the Elderly

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**Abstract.** Under the global aging trend, the re-employment of the elderly has become a hot topic full of controversy. This paper uses the case study method to study the influence of re-employment on the mental health of the elderly and finds that re-employment benefits the mental health of the elderly. On the one hand, the re-employment of the elderly can subsidize family expenditures through re-employment. They do not want to be a burden to their children and want to do their best for the family. On the other hand, older adults also yearn for a better life. They hope to obtain higher incomes, meet higher consumption demands, and realize self-worth and spiritual satisfaction through re-employment. Therefore, society must be more open, face up to and respect the actual needs of the older adults' requirements for re-employment and the objective facts of economic and social development, and provide more employment security for the willing and able elderly.

**Keywords:** Re-Employment, The Elderly, Mental Health, Value Realization.

## 1. Introduction

In the 1840s, human beings set off the Industrial Revolution, which promoted the population transition through technological progress and development, that is, the process of population transition from high birth, high death, and low growth in the early development of human society to standard delivery, quiet end and low growth in the higher development stage. The industrial revolution significantly promoted the development of productive forces. It profoundly announced the course of the "human" mode of production through industrial differentiation and occupational division of labor, the commercialization and mechanization of production, the gender difference in employment opportunities and the intensification of job competition, the high cost of raising children, and other factors. They resulted in the population of late marriage, late childbearing, and even no marriage sterility. The direct result is that the birth population is decreasing fewer children. China's demographic transition was completed in the mid-1970s. Since then, China's birth rate and natural growth rate have continued declined-below 11 and 4 per thousand, respectively, in 2018, further dropping to 8.52 and 1.45 per thousand in 2020. For the first time since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the birth rate has fallen below 10 per thousand, and the natural growth rate has fallen below 2 per thousand. The total fertility rate has also fallen sharply, to just 1.3 in 2020, well below the replacement level (about 2.08). In 1992, births dropped to less than 20 million, and in subsequent years, the number fluctuated to less than 15 million. In 2020, according to China's seventh census, the number of births in that census year was only 12 million.

Advances in science and technology, especially medical technology, and improving the living environment and living standards have brought about a change for the better in human health. People are living longer on average. In 1953, the average life expectancy of Chinese men and women was 39.8 years old and 40.8 years old. By 1973, both men and women were over 60 years old. In 1990, the population of men and women had increased to 66.4 years old and 70.47 years old. They are 8.6 years and 14.43 years older than 65 years, respectively. The extension of average life expectancy will increase the size of the elderly population and raise the aging level in China.

According to preliminary estimates from the seventh national census, China's total population is likely to peak and start to decline before 2025. The aging rate will reach 14 percent in 2021, beginning to enter the aging society. According to the Research Group of the Development Research Centre of the State Council, by 2035 and 2050, the number of elderly people aged 65 and above in China will reach 346 million and 449 million, respectively, with the aging rate reaching 20.5% and 37.3%

(Research Group of the Development Research Centre of the State Council, 2022). According to the forecast, by 2035 and 2050, the size of the elderly population in Japan will be 37.82 million and 38.41 million, respectively, with the aging rate reaching 32.8% and 37.7% (National Institute of Social Security and Population Issues of Japan, 2017). It can be seen that although the aging rate in both China and Japan will reach about 37% by 2050, the size of the elderly population in China is almost 12 times that of the elderly population in Japan (11.69 times).

Falling birth rates and an aging population will further reduce the working-age population. China's aging problem is expected to become more severe as the proportion of the working-age population in the country drops to 64.1 percent and 56 percent by 2035 and 2050, respectively, according to the Development Research Center of The State Council. If productivity gains in China do not offset the decline in the labor force, this will limit economic growth. To solve the problem of economic development, China will consider extending the retirement age, which has aroused a great reaction from society.

## 2. Theoretical review

Reemployment refers to having a job to do again. It is popular among middle-aged people and rare among the elderly. However, the reemployment of the elderly appeared in 1987. Japan and Germany entered the aging society earlier and paid more attention to the re-employment of the elderly. For example, Japan ensured the full utilization of the human resources of the elderly through the implementation of the Law on Stable Employment of the Elderly and the establishment of a "silver talent center" in the community [1]. In addition, the Japanese people's ideology of not giving in to the old also promoted the vigorous development of the re-employment of the elderly. The German government implements a "carrot and stick" policy, reducing unemployment insurance benefits [2], shortening the duration of unemployment insurance benefits, and increasing the conditions for receiving unemployment insurance benefits. At the same time, it implements active labor market and wage subsidy policies, provides public employment services (PES) to help the elderly return to work, and improves the re-employment rate [3]. As China's aging continues to accelerate, it is pointed out in the "13th Five-Year Plan" that the development of a national aging causes and the construction of a pension system that it is necessary to strengthen the development of human resources for the elderly and cultivate a positive outlook on aging. Re-employment, as a form of social participation for the elderly, has become popular among most retired people in recent years, but there are many problems[4]. According to the research of Jiang Xianjing and Zheng Aiwen, the reasons that hinder the re-employment of the elderly include traditional and wrong ideas (the re-employment is because the children do not support, depriving the young people of employment opportunities), poor health status, insufficient government support, few channels for re-employment, and many restrictions and high requirements of enterprises on re-employment. This series of reasons lead to increased demand for the re-employment of the retired elderly and a low actual re-employment rate [5].

According to the definition of health WHO, health not only refers to the absence of physical diseases but also to the excellent state of physical, psychological, and social adaptation. Mental health refers to developing an individual's mood into an efficient and satisfactory condition within the scope of physical, intellectual, and subjective emotion that is not inconsistent with the mental health of others[6]. For the research on the mental health of the elderly, domestic and foreign scholars mostly start from the status quo, influencing factors, related health needs, and measures, often using anxiety, depression, subjective happiness, social support, quality of life, and other relevant scales to measure. Gender, age, chronic disease, social support, economic status, and education level are the main factors affecting the mental health of the elderly [7]. In recent years, some scholars believe that the status quo of occupation and re-employment of the elderly before retirement may also impact their mental health [8].

At present, domestic and foreign scholars believe that although the purpose of re-employment after retirement is slightly different, such as obtaining economic remuneration, enriching leisure time,

reflecting personal value, etc., they all have one thing in common, that is, it is conducive to easing the burden of pension for the family and the country. However, most studies have yet to intensely discuss whether it benefits their mental health [9]. Therefore, it is still controversial whether reemployment benefits the mental health of the elderly. Some scholars believe that reemployment can regulate the daily work and rest time of the elderly and reduce the time spent alone, which can prevent mental illness induced by loneliness and is beneficial to the mental health of the elderly. However, another group of scholars found that although re-employment has the advantages of economic satisfaction and spiritual satisfaction, it also has the characteristics of poor stability and strong temporality, which has little impact on the mental health of the elderly or has more disadvantages than advantages [7]. For example, competition and working with young people will increase the psychological burden of the elderly. Some scholars believe that the mental health of the unemployed elderly is not necessarily lower than that of the re-employed elderly because such elderly people can participate in the university for the elderly [10], community art troupe, or independent travel to enrich their daily life, which can effectively avoid anxiety, depression, dementia, and other physical and mental diseases. However, through further literature review, it is found that such elderly people are in the minority, mainly those with good economic status or high education level, so they are not representative. Therefore, this study will select enterprise employees, public institution personnel, and civil servants who can generally represent retired people.

To sum up, the global aging situation is grim, and the mental health status of the elderly is not optimistic. To alleviate the grim pension situation and improve the mental health and quality of life of the elderly, the reemployment of the retired has become one of the most common ways to solve the aging problem in foreign countries. Elderly reemployment has only emerged in recent years. Therefore, our study on reemployment is limited to its status quo, willingness, and policies. Although some scholars have studied the health problems of the elderly reemployment, most of them are single and have not compared with the elderly non-employment or only analyzed a specific occupation. Aiming at the above problems, to understand and reach the mental health status of different occupational retired elderly reemployment and non-employment, to provide beneficial pension suggestions for the retired elderly, reduce the burden of social and national pension, and provide the basis for the development of human resources in the elderly and related pension undertakings and retirement system reform.

### **3. The relationship between employment and mental health in the elderly: A reduction based on four empirical cases**

Case A: All conditions are good, there is no employment, and the psychological state is not good.

Aunt Chen, 53, has been idle at home since she retired two years ago. In addition to doing laundry and cooking, she goes square dancing. Life is gratifying for a while. Aunt Wang's monthly pension is a medium level in the local area, which can fully meet her monthly living, and she has no life pressure. But as time went on, Aunt Chen felt that such a life was too monotonous, and at the thought that she might have to live like this for another thirty or forty years, Aunt Chen suddenly felt at a loss. After cooking every day, she did not know what to do and would have wild thoughts.

Case B: All conditions are good, even better than A, no employment, the psychological state is worse than A.

Uncle Wang, 62 years old, has been idle at home since he retired two years ago. In addition to playing chess, walking, fishing, and traveling worldwide, life is gratifying. With a high salary, Uncle Wang worked as a senior executive in a large enterprise before retiring, so he accumulated a lot of wealth. He gave his wealth to professionals to manage, and the annual income could cover his family's yearly consumption. But as time went on, Uncle Wang felt that such a life was too monotonous, and at the thought that he might have to live like this for another thirty or forty years, Uncle Wang felt that he was wasting his time. Therefore, he often sat alone in the park and was reluctant to communicate with others. The relationship with his children became very bad.

Case C: All conditions are good, just like A, employed and in a good mental state.

Uncle Liu, 61, used to teach at a university but was hired back to his post after retirement. During holidays, Uncle Liu would travel to different places to relax. During the working period, Uncle Liu gave lectures to college students, answered students' questions, and discussed cutting-edge issues with students. The vitality and vitality of young people affected Uncle Liu, and Uncle Liu felt that he was only in his 40s or 50s. In communicating with young people, Uncle Liu felt that his attitude towards things had become more immature, and he was in a good mood every day. Uncle Liu has been exercising for more than 20 years ago. He exercises for an hour at 6:30 every morning and is very healthy. He feels in such good physical and mental shape that he thinks he can work for another 30 years.

Case D: All conditions are good, no A good, there is employment, the psychological state is good.

53-year-old Aunt Xu retired two years ago and has been idle at home. In addition to laundry and cooking, go to the square dance. Life is gratifying. But as time passed, Aunt Chen found this life too monotonous, and the thought that she might have to live like this for another thirty or forty years made Aunt Chen feel at a loss. In addition, Aunt Xu's retirement salary is small, and the economic conditions could be better. After repeated thinking, Aunt Chen returned to the workplace to find a job and re-employment for the family subsidies. Because Aunt Chen retired as a nurse in obstetrics and gynecology, their work experience is rich, so he quickly found a nanny job to take care of children every day, nine to five, the work is easy. As a result of frequent square dancing, Aunt Xu is physically healthy. Her children have their own families, and their children have happy families, so Aunt Xu does not need to worry about other people and has no psychological burden. Because their work is easy, but they also earn some money to subsidize the family, Aunt Xu's mental state is also excellent.

The two re-employed old people and the two non-re-employed old people in the interview are suitable to be the research objects of this study for the following reasons: First, the two non-re-employed old people are in good condition in various ways. Without employment, other variables are controlled. One variable is material conditions, and the other dependent variable is a psychological state. They were controlling for other variables to study the relationship between material conditions and psychological states. In the interview, two old people were re-employed. The variable of re-employment was controlled, the independent variable was material conditions, and the dependent variable was the psychological state. In the interview, the old people who were re-employed and those who were not were a control group. The variable of the same conditions was controlled. The independent variable was reemployment participation and no reemployment, and the dependent variable was the psychological state. Among the interviewees, the independent variable is participating in re-employment and not re-employment; the independent variable is different conditions. And the dependent variable is the psychological state. Therefore, through the results of the above interviews, this research explores the mental state of elderly re-employment.

#### **4. How does re-employment protect the mental health of the elderly**

Employment brings an uptick in cognitive and psychological domains. But physical decline. A and B ratio, also no work, other conditions better, bad psychological state. A and C, other things being equal, are better off mentally if employed. A and D, being able to be used, have a more significant impact on older people's mental health than any other condition.

The older man in Case A has no employment after retirement. Even though there is no material pressure in his retirement life, his psychological state is not good, and he feels lost daily. The older man in case B has no employment after retirement. Even though he has a rich life, he thinks he is wasting his time after retirement and has not realized his value, and his psychological state is worse. Although the older man in case D has fewer material conditions than the older man in Case A, he can find an easy job. Reemployment can relieve his anxiety and make some money to support his family. The older man in Case C has similar material conditions as the older man in Case A, but he has an excellent mental state every day due to re-employment.

Poor employment status will affect the mental health of the elderly. Statistics show that in the United States, Europe, Japan, and other places, the proportion of the elderly aged 60 to 64 still participate in the labor force is more than 55%. In Sweden, which has the highest participation rate among older people, seven out of 10 60 - to 64-year-olds are still working. Currently, the labor force participation rate of the elderly aged 60 to 64 in China is only 24.3 percent for men and 15.5 percent for women.

The re-employment of the elderly positively impacts the mental health of the elderly. As people live longer on average, retirement no longer means old age but a sign of starting a new life. Not health to employment, but employment can promote health. According to a study of older workers in Japan, health is now a motivating factor rather than a limiting factor. That is to say, most older people participate in work not because they think they are in good health but because participation in employment and labor can promote their physical and mental health. According to the survey, 45.7 percent of Chinese retirees aged 60 to 69 are willing to find another job, and 8.1 percent of those over 80 want another job. Many enterprises are also willing to accept old people for re-employment, especially some skilled old people called "silver talents." "Silver talent" has accumulated rich technical and social experience and is a rare precious wealth. In addition, they often have a variety of social security, the treatment requirements are not high, and they can reduce the cost of employment. There is no denying that the re-employment of "silver talents" has achieved the achievement of the elderly, created wealth for society, and also played a role model for young people. Retirees have rich work experience and low salary requirements, so they are prevalent in the job market. There is no denying that the physical function, energy state, and reaction speed of the elderly are at a disadvantage compared with the young, but this does not mean that many elderly people cannot still be strong and agile in body and mind. In addition, years of experience in accumulation and precipitation make them more than capable of doing non-high-intensity manual labor.

Reemployment of the elderly is very beneficial to their psychology. Firstly, because of reemployment, the elderly can maintain their social role, effectively preventing retirement syndrome. Secondly, re-employment can ensure that the elderly have contact with the outside world, increase interpersonal communication, can prevent depression in the elderly; Third, re-employment of the elderly can play the surplus heat so that their life value can be realized and can meet their psychological needs. In addition, old people re-employment, the most important thing is happy. The old man can choose his favorite job as far as possible when he is re-employed. This job may have little monetary return, but it will certainly give the old man rich spiritual feedback.

In the past many years, people generally believed that what the elderly need most is "support," hence the term "pension." To this day, with the development and growth of our economy, the aging of society has deepened. Some actual situations have significantly been different from the past. Simply understanding the aging problem into the concept of the pension problem needs to be reversed. People should put forward dynamic and pragmatic aging strategies according to different characteristics of different stages. Guide middle-aged and elderly people to consciously arrange life plans, from health, knowledge, skills, economics, and other aspects of preparation for old age. Some elderly people pay more attention to quality and fashion in leisure life, eager to accept new things; Some are eager to "do something for old age"... The needs of the elderly are much higher, and society's responsibility is also heavier.

From the perspective of the family, the aging of the population leads to a heavier burden on family pension, which increases the pressure of the externalization of family pension function. Some elderly people need to work to support the family due to their life. That means intergenerational conflicts can ensue. From the social level, socialized elderly care is on the rise, the development of the aging market is relatively lagging, and many people, departments, and institutions are not ready for the changes in the social structure brought by the aging population. "Old has to raise" should be quality; "Old people have fun." Fun can be exciting and work. When people are old, people can still "do something," no matter when the "sun," as long as people want to, can continue to shine.

## 5. Conclusion

In the past, it was somewhat heavy to mention the re-employment of the elderly. The reason is straightforward, in old age, they should have some support, still struggling in the front line of work, thus the construction of the picture and scene, some contrary to the plain morality of the public. Respecting the elderly is a traditional virtue of the Chinese nation. Caring for and helping the elderly is the shared responsibility of society. However, people must also view the elderly and their employment in light of development. The re-employment of the elderly is the result of mutual selection. There are two reasons why some older people choose to re-enter the workforce.

On the one hand, life pressure. Simply put, it is re-employment to subsidize household use. In reality, there are still some elderly people, especially those from rural areas, who, due to various reasons, are not well-off, and their children's income is not high. They do not want to be a burden to their children and want to do what they can for their families.

On the other hand, it is life motivation. The elderly also have a yearning for a better life. They want to obtain higher incomes and meet higher consumption needs through re-employment. In addition, many old people have a skill and many resources, have reached a certain level of the peak, want to make life more fulfilling, and want to realize the dream that has yet to be discovered in the old to achieve happiness. With the development of The Times, the demand for pensions is also developing, so more and more elderly people choose to re-employment.

Whether ready or not, it is an objective fact that China has entered an aging society. Healthy aging and the development and utilization of human resources for the elderly will inevitably become hot topics. Therefore, society must be more open, face up to and respect the practical needs of the old people for re-employment and the objective facts of economic and social development. The market has laws, and the re-employment of the elderly results from dynamic adjustment and two-way choice. Therefore, do not use the old view of the elderly re-employment. People should understand and face up to it and provide more job security for willing and able elderly people.

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