

Study on the Mental Care of Rural Empty Nest Elderly under New Urbanization

Wenbin Wei *

College of Humanities and Laws, Inner Mongolia University of Science & Technology, Baotou, Inner Mongolia China

* Corresponding author Email: 18806703114@163.com

Abstract: Today, with the continuous acceleration of new urbanization, the number of rural empty nests is also increasing year by year. The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposes to improve the basic old-age insurance for urban and rural residents, improve the elderly care system, and ensure that the elderly have a place to take care of. Under the development of this era, it is necessary to protect rural empty nest elderly this group, but we not only pay attention to their material guarantee, but also notice their spiritual care. For the spiritual care of rural empty nest elderly, we should analyse their spiritual demands monolithically, and build a three-dimensional comfort system that is "government-led, fund investment, social worker intervention, self-regulation, and neighbourhood assistance" to solve their spiritual demands.

Keywords: Rural Empty Nest Elderly; Spiritual Care; New Urbanization; Psychological Nursing; Spiritual Needs of the Elderly.

1. Introduction

With the development and progress of the times and the continuous development of China's urban and rural economy and society, the development of China's new urbanization and the accelerated ageing of the population has become the inevitable result, and China's urbanization has reached more than 60 per cent, and with the continuous acceleration of the urbanization process, many young and middle-aged labourers are gradually moving to the cities to set up their homes and careers in the cities. However, the elderly in rural areas are often less adapted to urban life, and are even reluctant to change their lifestyles and identities, leading to the increasingly serious phenomenon of empty nests in rural areas. There are more and more empty nesters in rural areas, and their children are too busy with their work to spend much time with their parents in the countryside, and usually just send a little bit of living expenses to their parents every month or buy some necessities of life to satisfy their material needs, which has led to the problem of the spiritual and emotional needs of many empty nesters in the countryside to become more and more prominent.

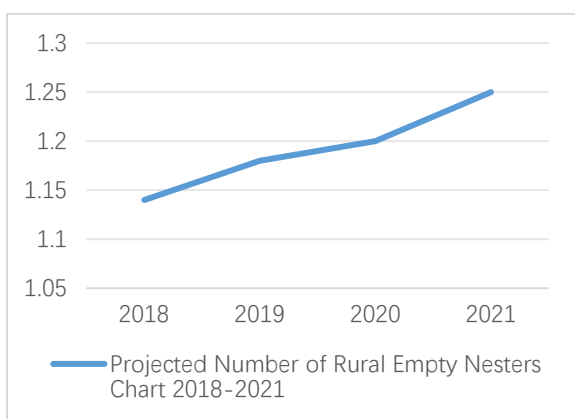


Figure 1. Projected number of empty nesters in rural areas 2018-2021

According to Figure 1, we can learn that from 2018 to 2021, the number of rural empty nesters has grown from 110 million to 125 million, with a very rapid annual growth rate.

The report of the 19th National People's Congress especially proposes to improve the basic pension insurance for urban workers and urban and rural residents and to improve the care and service system for the elderly, to ensure that the elderly have a sense of security. Under the guidance of the Party and the government, all parts of the country, including ethnic areas, are accelerating the construction of an old-age service system according to local conditions Lin Caihong. The new urbanization process in Guangxi rural empty Nest elderly pension service problem analysis and path choice [1]. Bohai economic understanding. The elderly population in China is growing rapidly, increasing at the rate of 1 million people per year, which has formed the first peak of growth of the ageing population. As of 2020, the number of elderly population has reached 234 million, of which about 80 million are empty nesters in rural areas. This data highlights the seriousness of the problem of the elderly in rural areas in China.

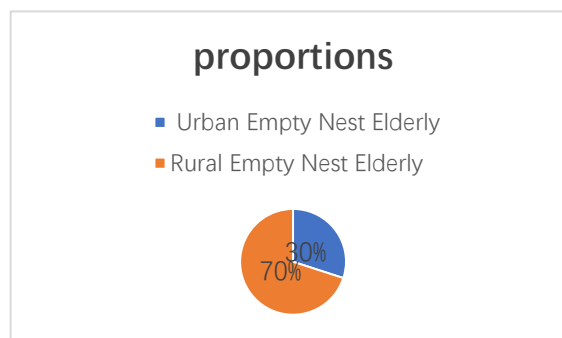


Figure 2. Proportion of urban and rural empty nest elderly

So how can rural empty-nested elderly people spend their twilight years in peace and have a spiritually fulfilling old age has become an issue of widespread concern to society as a whole. Compared with the number of empty nesters in urban areas, the number of empty nesters in rural areas is even more

worrying, as can be seen in Figure 2, which shows that the proportion of empty nesters in rural areas reaches 70 per cent.

2. Literature Review

The fourth sample survey on the living conditions of the elderly in urban and rural areas in China has revealed a worrying trend, namely, that the problem of empty nesters in China has become serious. According to the survey, the number of empty nest elderly has exceeded 100 million, accounting for half of the country's elderly population. The problem is particularly serious in some large cities and rural areas, where the proportion of empty nesters exceeds 70 per cent in some places.

This phenomenon has aroused concern in many aspects, due empty nest elderly faced with many difficulties in life. First of all, older persons, who are usually younger, are more prone to loneliness and loss, as their children have usually left the family to find work or live elsewhere. This leads to their mental and emotional restlessness. They need emotional comfort and support but often lack such emotional fulfilment.

Rural empty nesters face more challenges than their urban counterparts, as they often do not have the more comprehensive social security systems enjoyed by their urban counterparts. In addition to the inconveniences of ageing, they must also cope with the psychological crises caused by their "empty nest" status. This includes psychological problems such as loneliness and a sense of loss. They long for someone to listen to and understand their emotional needs, but because of the distance of their children, these needs are often not effectively expressed and met. Therefore, for this large group of rural empty nest elderly, we need to pay timely attention to their emotional problems and emphasize research on mental care. This could include the establishment of community support networks, the provision of mental health services and the encouragement of relatives to keep in touch with the empty nesters to alleviate their emotional burden and reduce potential mental health risks. This is an important social issue that requires comprehensive solutions to improve the quality of life and mental health of empty nest elderly.

At present, some scholars have carried out extensive research on the old-age problem of rural empty-nesters. Domestic scholar Shi Jinyu pointed out that, due to the absence of children, resulting in the lack of family atmosphere in rural empty-nesting elderly, long-term lack of emotional exchange and emotional outlet, so they lack hope in life, spiritual needs can not be satisfied [2]. Li Fang and Li Zhihong also found through their research that the absence of children is the essential feature of rural empty-nesting families, which makes the empty-nesting elderly gradually become lonely, and it is difficult to satisfy their spiritual needs [3]. Wang Zheng and Chen Yuanyuan, on the other hand, analyzed the impact on the life and spiritual care of the rural elderly from the perspective of changes in family structure [4]. On the other hand, Chen Fangsheng observed that the lack of cultural facilities in rural areas and the single way of entertainment for the elderly have resulted in their spiritual needs not being satisfied [5]. However, these scholars mainly focus on the analysis of external factors on the spiritual needs of rural empty nesters, without paying sufficient attention to the analysis of the causes of rural empty nesters themselves.

Wang Ying pointed out that empty-nesting elderly may have adverse emotions such as anxiety and depression because they worry about their children being away, but these emotional problems are often not paid enough attention to,

leading to dysfunctions in the endocrine system and central nervous system of the elderly, which can lead to psychiatric problems [6]. Chen Yao, on the other hand, emphasized the relationship between the mental needs of the elderly and their health management, pointing out that unmet mental problems may harm physical health [7]. On the other hand, Kang Weilin and Luo Dan proposed the theory of energization, which emphasizes the stimulation of the potential of rural empty-nesting elderly and their families to strengthen the construction of a social support system for mental support at multiple levels, including personal, family, interpersonal, community and environmental [8]. In addition, some other scholars have proposed various comforting strategies from a professional perspective, such as social work intervention and government-led professional service models, to address the spiritual needs of rural empty nesters. Zhang Lingquan proposed the "one, two, three, four" professional service model for rural empty nesters, which provides spiritual comfort through one centre, two professions, tripartite cooperation, and four community linkages [9]. Su Ke et al. proposed a three-dimensional emotional comfort strategy system to address the emotional needs of the empty-nesting elderly, starting from four perspectives: the government, the social third party, the townships (villages), and the empty-nesting elderly themselves, to ensure that the empty-nesting elderly will no longer feel "empty-hearted." [10].

Summarizing the above, we can deeply understand that there are many problems in the spiritual needs of rural empty-nesters, and these problems undoubtedly have a serious impact on their daily life and physical and mental health. Therefore, next, we will deeply explore the spiritual needs of these empty-nester elderly and the reasons for them from different angles. At the same time, we need to propose a comprehensive and systematic three-dimensional comfort mechanism from a holistic perspective, including government leadership, fund input, social worker intervention, as well as self-regulation and mutual assistance in the neighbourhood, to care for and satisfy the spiritual needs of the elderly in an all-round way.

3. Research Methodology

(1) Data sources

In this study, the China Knowledge Network (CNKI) was selected as the source of literature data retrieval, and meta-analysis was used as the main method to find relevant data.

(2) Meta-analysis

In addition to summarizing existing findings, meta-analytic methods can also be used to acquire new knowledge. The meta-analytic statistical method is an effective research tool whose main purpose is to statistically analyze the existing empirical literature again to gain insight into the data and information contained therein. This method relies on statistical indicators from the existing literature and uses the corresponding statistical methods to re-analyze these indicators. The key to meta-analysis is its ability to integrate data from multiple independent studies, thus providing a more comprehensive and objective perspective to assess the research question.

Through meta-analysis, this study can better reveal the true correlation between two variables. This not only helps to elucidate the general trend of "mathematics teaching and local economic development", but also identifies possible heterogeneity, i.e., differences between different studies. Meta-analysis can also help this study to better explain

complex relationships by analyzing information such as statistical significance.

4. Spiritual Aspirations of Rural Empty Nest Elderly

(1) Loneliness, the problematic need for anxiety

The most prevalent mental health issue among the empty-nest older adult population is loneliness. As they leave work and enter retirement, the departure of friends and loved ones, the reduction in social activities and the decline in cognitive abilities lead to a state of loss in the relationships of empty-nesting older adults. With their children also absent, their social circle becomes relatively simple. However, empty-nesting older adults are more eager for support and companionship from their children to help them de-stress psychologically and mentally. This heightened sense of isolation may cause empty nesters to become increasingly anxious, as their mental stress cannot be properly released.

(2) Claims for enrichment of one's spiritual world

Rural empty-nesters are subject to multiple restrictions on their recreational options, which pose challenges to their mental health and quality of life. First, there are relatively few cultural facilities and equipment for cultural activities in rural areas, including theatres, art galleries, and libraries, making it difficult for rural elderly to access diverse cultural experiences and recreational activities. This lack of cultural resources may lead to boredom and loneliness among rural empty nesters [11]. Secondly, rural elderly people usually have a low level of literacy, which limits their understanding and mastery of emerging recreational methods. They may not be familiar with modern technology and do not know how to use the Internet or smart devices, which prevents them from spending time, obtaining information and socializing in these ways as urban elderly do. Furthermore, the social circle of rural empty nesters has become limited due to the departure of their relatives and friends, and this social barrier not only exacerbates their sense of loneliness but also restricts their social activities, making it difficult for them to establish new social relationships or participate in group activities. In addition, the scarcity of recreational resources makes the rural empty nesters usually have a single way to spend their leisure time, and they may only spend their time playing cards, mahjong, chatting, or resting in a shady place at home [12]. This singularity may lead them to feel that life lacks fun and innovation. Finally, some rural empty nesters may be addicted to gambling, especially in the form of underground hexagrams. This may harm their financial situation and mental health, increasing mental stress and anxiety. To improve the quality of life and mental health of rural empty nesters, measures are needed to provide more diversified recreational and cultural activities, promote social interactions, enhance their cultural literacy, and provide support and assistance to prevent possible gambling problems. This will reduce their sense of isolation and enhance their enjoyment of life while improving their mental health and well-being.

(3) The need to realize self-worth

Most of the rural empty nesters in their youth rely on physical labour, which also makes them belong to the vulnerable groups, and social interaction is not particularly close when they reach a certain age can not work, there is no particular thing to do, can not realize their value, they grew up the main energy is to put on the child to cultivate the child

to the old age is also the same, the majority of people when their children go home, will put their full energy on their children, every day for their children to cook and chat with them. Most people, when their children come home, will put all their energy into their children, cook for their children every day and chat with them about family life, a day to live a very fulfilling life, and can feel that they are still needed, not abandoned by society, but when their children leave, they will return to their original life, and they don't know what to do every day, and that sense of loneliness will come again, and life becomes aimless and directionless.

5. Analysis of the Causes of the Spiritual Aspirations of Empty Nest Elderly

(1) Children's indifference to the spiritual needs of the elderly

Under the wave of new urbanization, although the rural economy has been developed to a certain extent, compared with the city there is still a certain gap, most of the rural young adults in the wave of urbanization have been in the city for a long time and even settled in the city, but due to the fierce competition for work, they can not afford to bring their old people to their side to live, for the elderly is only to provide material support, and seldom care about their spiritual needs, which makes the rural empty-nesting old people around the perennial absence of children's companionship from the family can not get the spiritual solace.

(2) Lack of rural spiritual old-age service facilities

In the process of new urbanization, the spiritual needs of rural empty-nesters are often not given sufficient attention. In cities, the Government and all sectors of society have invested considerable resources in building a variety of spiritual services for the elderly, such as activity centres for the elderly, bookstores for the elderly, and associations for the elderly, which provide a platform for the elderly to enrich their spiritual life and communicate with one another emotionally. In rural areas, however, these facilities are relatively scarce, and rural empty-nesters are often unable to enjoy the same treatment as urban residents. Their lives often lack sufficient recreational activities, and communication with their families is made difficult by reasons such as distance and time. This situation leads to a situation where their spiritual world is often unsatisfied and they may develop negative emotions such as loneliness and depression.

(3) Empty-nesters in rural areas are at high risk of the disease.

Rural elderly people often face health problems. Their physical functions have declined, with a perennial prevalence rate of more than 70 per cent, and many of them suffer from a variety of diseases. The gradual deterioration of the body's functions with age, including changes in vision, hearing, mobility, expression and metabolism, causes many problems in the lives of the elderly.

6. Strategies for Caring for the Spiritual Aspirations of Empty Nest Elderly

(1) The Government should encourage people to spend more time with their parents at home.

While advocating urban development, we should also encourage our children to visit their homes more often and

maintain close contact with the elderly, especially to offer condolences and support at the psychological level. While it is vital to meet the basic needs of the elderly, merely addressing the issue of food and clothing cannot satisfy all their needs. What the elderly crave deep down is spiritual comfort. Therefore, it is very important to visit your parents in their hometowns regularly. When their children are at home, the elderly will serve them wholeheartedly, full of busyness and joy; however, when their children leave, the elderly will fall into loneliness again, and their homes will seem to be unusually cold as if they have lost the goal of life again. The Government should step up publicity to emphasize respect for the elderly and care for their inner needs, especially in terms of spiritual comfort. At the same time, we should advocate that young people who go out to work should fulfil their moral responsibility of "going home to see their parents", and raise the awareness and importance of the younger generation in the rural areas of filial piety to their parents, to satisfy the emotional needs of the elderly empty nesters in terms of affectionate communication. Such initiatives will help to improve the mental health of the elderly and reduce their sense of isolation, while at the same time promoting the harmonious development of the family and society.

(2) The Government should increase the investment of the fund in rural areas

As a socially vulnerable group, the Government should play a leading role in ensuring that rural empty nesters, as a vulnerable group, receive appropriate services and support in underdeveloped rural areas. Governments can consider setting up a special fund dedicated to solving the problem of spiritual comfort for rural empty-nesters, which can be earmarked in the budgets of governments at all levels. In addition, hardware facilities for the spiritual care of the elderly can be established based on community resources, including activity centers for the elderly, libraries for the elderly, fitness venues for the elderly and communication rooms for the elderly. At the same time, institutions such as associations for the elderly and psychological counselling centres for the elderly should be established to provide the necessary support and counselling. These initiatives will help to enrich the spiritual and cultural life of rural empty-nesters and address the mental health of the elderly while strengthening community care and support systems.

(3) Establishment of a network platform for elderly care services in communities and villages, and promotion of the intervention of social workers

Villages can collaborate to formulate plans based on the overall service requirements of the network and build mobile service points of the Emotional Comfort Project and grassroots service points of the Sharing Project of different sizes according to the number and distribution of local empty-nesters. These service points will focus on a detailed analysis of the individual needs of each empty-nester elderly person to create a personalized service model, and the village government will carry out effective deployment of resources. Based on the data provided by the government, social workers will provide one-on-one professional support to ensure that each rural empty-nester is provided with appropriate assistance. These social workers will not only be supporters but will also actively organize empty-nesters with common interests to build mutual support and emotional support groups while building a resource integration platform to promote emotional support, social interaction and participation in social activities [13]. By designing the content

of activities according to the emotional needs of the empty-nested elderly, as well as reasonably deploying the resources of the service network, we can help them overcome various problems in their lives and realize the goal of mutual assistance and win-win situation, to satisfy the spiritual needs of the rural empty-nested elderly.

(4) Building awareness of self-regulation among rural empty nesters

First of all, empty-nested elderly people should cultivate a sense of self-emotional adjustment. If they passively accept the empty nest status, their emotional adjustment will be adversely affected. On the contrary, an optimistic mindset will help maintain their physical and mental health, thus improving their quality of life. Self-awareness of emotional adjustment helps empty nesters actively seek a healthy lifestyle and avoid the breeding of negative emotions.

Secondly, empty nesters should enhance their adaptive ability. Since it is difficult to change the situation of rural empty nesters in a short time, they should not close themselves off when coping with the challenges in their lives but should look at the empty nest phenomenon with a correct attitude. They do not have to seek care and attention from others but should understand and tolerate their children's work pressure and living conditions. Therefore, instead of resenting their children, they should face the reality that their children are unable to accompany them on a long-term basis with a positive attitude, adjust their mindset promptly, and overcome negative feelings, such as loss, loneliness and low self-esteem.

Finally, empty nesters need to maintain inner peace. Maintaining inner peace and a positive attitude are important dimensions in life. Maintaining inner peace and optimism will help keep the older adult physically and mentally balanced and stable. This inner peace will help to cope with life's challenges, leading to better adaptation and enjoyment in later life.

(5) Proactive contact with neighbors

Neighbours' help, support and emotional ties belong to the social group support of social support theory. Interaction with neighbours and friends can help rural empty nesters discharge bad emotions and release loneliness and is also a means of obtaining another form of spiritual satisfaction. The establishment of a neighbourly friendly relationship is easier than the establishment of other relationships, for example, the greeting when meeting outside the house, the mutual help of neighbours in daily life and confiding in each other's worries can help the establishment of a neighbourly friendly relationship. Some old people are introverted and feel that even if they are willing to communicate with others, they may not have the time to chat with her. Some old people are afraid that others will talk about them behind their backs if they know that they are empty-nested old people; they have to get rid of this kind of thinking and try to take the initiative to communicate with their relatives and friends in the neighbourhood, which may lead to unintended results. In addition, the empty-nested elderly live alone or with their partners, usually do more small dishes or plant vegetables that can be shared with neighbours and friends, to increase emotional ties.

7. Results and Discussion

In the context of ageing, rural empty-nesters are a special group of elderly people, with more complicated plights than urban empty-nesters, and how to realize spiritual care for rural

empty-nesters has been a widespread concern of society and the government. With the advance of urbanization, many rural young adults choose to set up their families in the cities and rarely return to the countryside to be with their elderly people. This has resulted in the spiritual needs of rural empty nesters not being met and a lack of confidence and care. To solve this problem, it is necessary to establish a more comprehensive emotional comfort system through the coordination and cooperation of the government, social workers, townships (villages) and the empty-nesters themselves. We must pay attention to the spiritual aspect of their care so that they will have an empty nest but not an empty heart.

References

- [1] Lin Caihong. Analysis of pension service problems and path selection of rural empty-nested elderly in Guangxi in the process of new urbanization[J]. Bohai Economic Outlook, 2018 (08).
- [2] Shi Jinyu. Rural empty-nested elderly pension dilemma under new urbanization [J]. Agricultural Economy, 2020(06).
- [3] Li Fang, Li Zhihong. Strategy Selection of Rural Empty-Nested Elderly Rights and Interests Protection--Rethinking in the Perspective of Urbanization[J]. Social Security Research, 2014 (03).
- [4] Wang Zheng, Chen Yuanyuan. Reflections on the change of rural family structure in the context of new urbanization--Based on the perspective of social security for the elderly[J]. Rural Economy and Science and Technology,2016,27(17).
- [5] Chen Fangsheng. Exploring the Problem of Rural Empty Nest Elderly in the Process of Urbanization [J]. China Urban Economy,2010(08).
- [6] Wang Ying, Yu Xiaoyu. Mental health status of empty-nester elderly in the context of new urbanization [J]. China Training,2016(18).
- [7] Chen Yao. Application of social work in health management of the elderly[J]. Popular Standardization, 2020(22).
- [8] Kang Weilin, Luo Dan. Social Support System Construction of Spiritual Support for Rural Empty-Nested Elderly under the Perspective of Enrichment[J]. Journal of Taiyuan City Vocational and Technical College, 2022(06).
- [9] Zhang Lingquan, Chen Xi. The Path of Social Work Involvement in Rural Empty Nest Elderly[J]. Journal of Hebei University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition),2017, 42 (06).
- [10] Su Ke,Li Fuxing,Li Yueen. Emotional appeals and comforting strategies of rural empty-nested elderly [J]. Journal of Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University (Social Science Edition), 2018, 18(05).
- [11] Jingjing Xu. Research on the pension problems of "empty nest" rural families in Shizhang Village, Hefei City [J]. Modern Vocational Education, 2021(41).
- [12] Xing Bo. Research on Spiritual Comfort and Realization Path of Rural "Empty Nest Elderly"[J]. Economic Research Journal, 2017(12).
- [13] Zhao Dahai. Exploring the optimization of social support network for rural empty-nested elderly under the background of rural revitalization[J]. Southern Agriculture,2021,15(21).