

Research on the Resource Supply Dilemma and Countermeasures of Community-Embedded Childcare Services

-- A case study of 35 community children's homes in District S of Chongqing

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Abstract: Improving the community-based embedded childcare system for infants and toddlers in China and fulfilling the fundamental task of ensuring that children have access to care is a social and livelihood demand at present. Reasonable resource supply can promote the effective development of community-based embedded childcare services for infants and toddlers. Through field visits and observations, questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews with 473 parents of infants and toddlers and 35 infant and toddler community children's homes in District S of Chongqing, an in-depth analysis was conducted on the current situation of resource supply and demand for infant and toddler community embedded childcare services in District S of Chongqing. The results show that the mismatch between supply and demand of resources for embedded childcare services in infant and toddler communities is mainly reflected in the mismatch between supply and demand of infant and toddler community childcare service models; There is a significant gap between the professional background of the teachers and the expectations of parents; There is a significant shortage in home visit parenting guidance service etc. Focusing on addressing the mismatch between supply and demand of resources for embedded childcare services in infant and toddler communities, the following solutions are proposed: Improve the regulatory mechanism for infant and toddler community childcare services; Strengthen the construction of the teaching staff for infant and toddler community childcare services; Set up a special fund for community childcare services for infants and toddlers.

Keywords: Infants and Toddlers Care, Community Childcare Services, Supply and Demand for Resources, Community-embedded.

1. Introduction

Community-embedded childcare services refers to the flexible placement of care facilities for infants and toddlers aged 0-3 in community public Spaces, which can form a convenient service model of "going downstairs to care". In March 2025, the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and The General Office of the State Council issued "Special Action Plan for Promoting Consumption", which proposed to optimize the supply of services for the elderly and children, and encourage the development of community-embedded childcare services, employer-provided childcare and integrated childcare and kindergarten services. The predicament of community-embedded childcare services mainly lies in the imbalance between supply and demand of resources, including access to childcare and the various service resources required in the supply process. From an economic perspective, an effective supply of childcare resources refers to a balance between the supply and demand of childcare, that is, to meet the needs of all stakeholders to the greatest extent. The effective supply of resources for infant and toddler community childcare services mainly includes three aspects: first, the balance between the resource supply community childcare providers and the parents' demands; second, the balance between the resource supply model and the parents' demands; Third, the content of resource supply is balanced with the demands of parents. The S District of Chongqing has been vigorously building community children's homes to address the people's livelihood demand of "Ensuring Access to Early Childhood

Education and Care". Through an investigation and research on the supply and demand of resources for infant and toddler community childcare services, it was found that: In terms of geographical location, qualification background, facilities and equipment, teaching toys and other material resources, and the direction of childcare training, the supply of community childcare services for infants and toddlers in Chongqing S District is basically in line with the demands of parents, but there is an imbalance in terms of childcare models, professional teaching staff, and contents of childcare services[1-3].

2. The Current Situation of Imbalance between Supply and Demand of Resources for Infant and Toddler Community Childcare Services

2.1. Mismatch between Supply and Demand of Community Childcare Service Models

At present, the core demand of dual-income families for community childcare has shifted from supplementary early childhood education to full-time daycare services that cover working hours. Parents generally expect that infants and toddler can receive safe and reliable full-time daycare services within the community, achieving "safe childcare, high-quality childcare" to completely address the fundamental pain point of the difficulty in balancing parenting and work. But in reality, only a few private nursery classes in kindergartens or private early education institutions

can meet parents' needs. The majority of childcare providers in the market offer early years education services on an hourly basis, rather than full-day or half-day childcare and education services. The community children's home is mainly positioned as a place for parent-child activities and recreation accompanied by parents. The staff only undertake the responsibility of organizing activities and maintaining order, and are not substitute caregivers. Therefore, it cannot achieve the purpose of "parents completely letting go".

2.2. Significant Gap between Professional Background of teaching Staff and Parental Expectations

Parents' expectations for community childcare institutions are that teachers or other staff members should have a bachelor's degree or higher and a background in preschool education or related normal education. Among the surveyed providers of infant and toddler community childcare services, teachers or other staff members generally have a bachelor's degree. However, a significant proportion of personnel lack a background in teacher training or educational research. The phenomenon of low educational attainment among staff members is relatively common in community early education institutions, and the lack of professional background is particularly prominent in community children's homes. In in-depth interviews with community children's homes, the professionalism of their operation and the human resource predicament were directly confirmed. Take the community children's home where Principal A works as an example. Its core team is faced with the problems of insufficient professionalism in childcare capabilities and a shortage of personnel. Principal A stated, "We don't have any professionally qualified infant care workers or caregivers here. Personally, I have a management background and actually play a 'versatile role' in the center-being a manager, a host of activities, and a purchaser of supplies. This "one person in multiple roles" situation reflects the lack of professional division of labor in the institution[4].

2.3. Significant Gap in Home Visit Parenting Guidance Service

Parent-child relationship is the relationship between parents and children in the family. Parents believe that childcare services should not only provide care and education services for infants and toddlers. but also provide scientific parenting guidance for parents to achieve home-kindergarten co-Education. But because of the individual development differences of infants and toddlers, different families have different ways of raising children, so parents are looking forward to the community childcare service providers for infants and toddlers providing home visit parenting guidance services. However, in practice, staff numbers within community childcare services for infants and toddlers are stretched thin, and their workload is demanding. Individual home visits require a lot of human resources and time costs. At the same time, occasional home visits are not very effective. Therefore, infant and toddler community children's homes are more about collective parent-child activities.

3. Suggestions for Improving the Mismatch between Supply and Demand for Community-Embedded Infant and Toddler Care Resources

3.1. Improve the Regulatory Mechanism for Infant and Toddler Community Childcare Services

Effective government supervision is the key institutional guarantee for the healthy development of community childcare services and the cornerstone for building parental trust and social recognition. Government authorities should further establish strong measures and long-term mechanisms for the supervision of childcare behavior and quality assessment by community childcare providers: Promulgate relevant management regulations to standardize the construction of community childcare service providers for infants and toddlers; Clarify departmental functions and define regulatory rights and responsibilities. Appoint social supervisors for childcare services to conduct random supervision of the qualifications of childcare personnel, childcare content, routine work, and to collect extensive information on childcare services and suggestions. At the same time, strengthen work guidance and business training for supervisors, and for the feedback information collected, establish problem lists, responsibility lists, and rectification lists to ensure that every matter has a response and every matter is implemented to ensure that the social supervision of childcare services achieves satisfactory results for the government, institutions, and the public.

3.2. Strengthen the Construction of Teaching Staff for Infant and Toddler Community Childcare Services.

3.2.1. Establish Medium-to-long-term Practical Partnerships with Colleges and Universities to Ensure a "Breathing Space" Supply of Teachers

The imbalance between supply and demand of teachers in infant and toddler community childcare services mainly exists in two aspects: the insufficient number of community professional childcare teachers and the low professional quality of teachers. If the government takes the lead in establishing practical partnerships between childcare service providers and normal universities, allowing normal university students with relevant professional knowledge and skills, For example, students majoring in preschool education, special education, early childhood education, etc. Enter infant and toddler community childcare service providers for practical learning, or organize students to enter infant and toddler community childcare service providers in batches and on a regular weekly basis as volunteers to carry out related activities. Let students with professional backgrounds enter the community to assist community childcare workers in providing community childcare services for infants and toddlers. This can exercise students' professional knowledge and skills, and at the same time alleviate the severe shortage of teachers who are the main body of infant and toddler community childcare services.

3.2.2. Communities Purchase Childcare Training Services from colleges and Universities to Enhance Professionalism of the Teaching Staff.

The quality of the teaching staff is the core and key to the

quality of infant and toddler community childcare services. Given the special nature of the care recipients being infants and toddlers, parents have stricter requirements for the teaching staff. At present, the overall quality of the teaching staff for infant and toddler community childcare services in District S of Chongqing is not high. Teachers have relatively low educational qualifications and poor professional capabilities, and there is a situation where non-teacher education professionals are used for multiple purposes. Chongqing has made considerable efforts in training kindergarten teachers and has a wide coverage, but there is still a significant deficiency in training teachers for infant and toddler care. Community childcare service providers for infants and toddlers can establish teacher training purchase services with universities, allowing universities in Chongqing that have the ability to train teachers for infant and toddler care to conduct stratified teacher professional competence training for different community childcare service providers for infants and toddlers.

3.2.3. Establish a "Government-University-Enterprise Collaboration" Model to Ensure High-Quality of Infant and Toddler Community Childcare Services

The "government-school-enterprise" co-construction is a typical model of collaborative innovation, which not only deepens the closeness between local governments and universities and local childcare service enterprises, but also plays an important role in optimizing the educational layout and enhancing the contribution of education to the local economy. Local governments, normal universities and local childcare service enterprises establish a three-in-one co-construction model, where the three parties work together to build infant and toddler community childcare service points, sharing resources and complementing each other's advantages. Local childcare service enterprises invest in the training of infant and toddler community childcare service teachers, local universities leverage their intellectual resource advantages for talent cultivation, and local governments are responsible for supporting and supervising local childcare service enterprises. On this basis, multiple resources can be effectively utilized to add inclusive childcare service points based on existing resources such as community party-mass service centers, elderly care institutions, children's homes, and idle community resources. At the same time, property service companies are encouraged to develop "property + childcare" services, allowing parents to enjoy safe and affordable childcare services nearby. This will not only reduce the financial pressure on the government in promoting community childcare services for infants and young children, but also ensure a stable input of talents for local childcare service enterprises, and at the same time put the educational achievements of colleges and universities into practice and solve people's livelihood problems.

3.3. Establish Special Fund for Infant and Toddler Community Childcare Services

At present, funds for the construction of community childcare services for infants and toddlers are being gradually implemented across the country. In the past, the municipal and county-level finances of Chongqing allocated funds based on a certain budget per person per year according to the number of registered female and child populations. But in actual funding, there were cases where funds for community childcare services for infants and toddlers were allocated to other funds.

For example, in County F of Chongqing, the annual funds for the construction of community childcare services for infants and toddlers were allocated to the special fund for caring for left-behind children. The establishment of a special fund for infant and toddler community care services can solidify the financial guarantee and prevent the loss of funds for infant and toddler community care services due to the confusion of multiple funds[5].

At the same time, government departments should "Apply upwards and implement downwards", strengthen project planning, upward connection, progress tracking and other work, actively seek central funds to support the construction of childcare projects, promote the increase of effective supply of inclusive childcare services, and continuously develop and improve the childcare service system. Funds should be used in a practical way, and demonstration sites for childcare should be encouraged to give full play to their exemplary and leading effects, so as to further enhance the region's capacity to guarantee the childcare needs of the people.

4. Conclusion

At present, the imbalance between supply and demand of community-embedded childcare services is closely related to both insufficient supply capacity and cognitive bias of demand. Existing research on childcare models, teacher requirements, and service content is still superficial and fails to fully reveal the deep-seated contradiction between resource supply and real demand. With the deepening of the education power strategy and the proposal of the goal of building a fertility-friendly society, the future society's demand for diversified and specialized community-embedded childcare services will be more prominent. However, at present, there is no systematic and in-depth analytical framework for the factors influencing the mismatch between supply and demand, and many valuable issues, such as regional differences, changes in family structure, and policy coordination mechanisms, still lack further exploration. Therefore, there is an urgent need for more structured and forward-looking research to facilitate more precise and sustainable supply and demand matching for embedded childcare services.

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