

The Role of the Government in the Framework of Elderly Care Service in Rural: a Literature Review of Relevant Research

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Abstract:

Although previous studies have been conducted from different aspects from the perspective of "construction of old-age care service system", a comprehensive study on old-age care service strategies from the perspective of "integrity" can lead to more scientific conclusions. Therefore, it is the focus of future research to systematically sort out and explore the organization, transportation and delivery process of community old-age care services. With regard to the function of the government in the old-age system, the specific strategies have been proposed from the scenario of "government purchases of services" in previous studies, either from the perspective of laws related to government purchases of old-age care services or government purchases. In practice, the government must follow the systematic thinking and "remodel" from the concept of "service-oriented government".

Keywords: *Old-age care service system, Government, Roles and Functions, Rural, Review.*

I. INTRODUCTION

China, like the current international community, is also in a period of deepening aging^[1]. According to the seventh national census, the number of old-age people aged 60 and above reached 264 million, accounting for 18.70% of the total population, and the situation of rural population aging is more severe, that their social security and service levels are far lower than those of cities and towns, and they still rely mainly on family support for the old-age, while "community support" is not yet widespread, and "the combination of medical treatment and endowment supplemented by institutional caring for the old" is far from being realized. Accordingly, the strategic focus of improving the old-age care service system in the 14th Five-Year Plan should be placed in rural areas. On December 30, 2021, the State Council issued the *National Plan for the Development of Aging Undertakings and Old-age Care Service System in the 14th Five-Year Plan*, marking the beginning of the specific implementation stage of China's national strategy to actively respond to the aging of the population^[2]. In this study, the domestic and foreign related researches on China's rural community-based old-age care system will be thoroughly investigated, and the role of the government (in a broad sense) will be "remodeled" under the framework of "multi-governance" following the theoretical source of "new public service".

II. A REVIEW OF THE ACADEMIC HISTORY OF RELATED RESEARCH

2.1 On "Remodeling the Role of Government"

Many insightful studies have been carried out on the topic of "community-based old-age care" in academic circles from the aspects of system, guarantee, path and government's role in it (paying more attention to "purchase of services"), among which there have been several changes (or even "reversals") in the role of the government (in a broad sense) in the community-based old-age care system, such as "cancelation" and "continuation" of subdistrict offices and other issues ^[3].

2.1.1 Academic review

The research on the government function and role in the old-age care service system is closely related to the three stages of the development process of old-age care service in China. The first stage is the "gestation stage" from 1949 to 1978, in which the old-age care service system is in the welfare-oriented stage, and the social old-age care resources are in short supply. Academic studies with the key words of "old-age care system", "government function" and "development strategy (path)" are rare, and individual opinions are scattered in the literature of other topics, and most of them are interpretive approach on the policies at that time. The second stage is the "exploration stage" from 1980 to 2000, in which changes have taken place in the rural social structure, the number of empty nesters and old-age people living alone has increased, and the mode that the social welfare of the old-age is arranged by the state and the collective (Yao Yuan believed that family supporting is essentially a government act) has been unable to meet the growing needs of the people for welfare services for the aged. The rural population's social security rights have failed to enter the national social security system, which is not only unfair, but also detrimental to the solution of the rural elder care problem and rural social stability. Academic research with the key words of "elder care system", "government function" and "development strategy (path)" gradually began to focus on the development path (dependent variable) of elder care service system under "service-oriented government" (independent variable), but it did not go deep. The third stage is the "formation stage" from 2000 to the present, in which the old-age care service system has accelerated the pace of industrialization, and it can be divided into two stages: from 2000 to 2018, academic research with the key words of "old-age care system", "government function" and "development strategy (path)" has increased rapidly, and gradually formed a fixed research paradigm, which is characterized by almost one-sided emphasis on "self-government" but weakening the role of government, and from 2019 to the present, some scholars have objectively viewed the role of the government and its strategic issues, and also paid attention to the stages, forms and channels of political-social cooperation ^[4].

2.1.2 Summary review

The diversification of welfare subjects makes public responsibility face the risk of loss, and provides space for all parties to transfer and shirk their responsibilities ^[5]. From the government's overall

responsibility in social governance (including elder care service system) in the period of planned economy to the theoretical research and practical exploration based on the transformation of government functions after entering the 21st century, the government's functions are tended to be "compressed". The government is considered to be facing many "ungovernability" in the field of elder care service. In the climatology of "big society, small government", the role of the government is often "underestimated", especially in rural communities, where not only the government's practice of providing security services for the aged is "absent" but also the corresponding theoretical research is less involved. During the "14th Five-Year Plan" period, the old-age population in China will exceed 300 million, but the level of social and economic development and social security sufficient to support this population is far from enough. Especially, the relevant social organizations are still immature and in an urgent need of the government's "empowerment". Not only the public's bearing capacity for the "aging" reality, but also the dislocation between the economic development level of "getting old before getting rich" and the increasing aging will prompt the government to adjust its role.

The old-age care system in rural areas is in a low level, high risk and imperfect state. The population migration brought by the rapid urbanization is making the pressure of the aged population transition to the rural areas. However, the single source of old-age care economy, the strong demand for old-age care and the high risk of old-age care in the rural areas pose a greater challenge to the government functions. In addition to the market, families and other social organizations, "educational power" and even village rules and regulations have influenced and restricted rural old-age care^[6], and the value of the latter in rural community old-age care is gradually being highly praised by academic circles. In addition, the current "double duality pattern" in rural areas has become the main cause of the uncertainty in the development of the rural old-age care system, while the long-standing urban-rural differences in the widely criticized old-age care social security still exist, which further urges the government to "rectify" thoroughly.

Therefore, it is necessary to establish the government's dominant position in old-age care^[7], and the particularity and importance of rural old-age care services determine that the government should act as both an athlete and a referee". As a "referee", the government serves as the builder of the "old-age service system", that is, it plays a leading role in managing, planning, promoting and supervising^[8], which is reflected in three aspects: legislation, supply of old-age products and supervision of the development of old-age industry, and distributes old-age resources in a balanced way to eliminate the difference between urban and rural areas. As an "athlete", the government has different roles and relationships with other subjects in different stages of governance. As a "service provider", the government plays the role of "purchaser" in the whole community old-age service supply mechanism. Li Changyuan compared the differences of three typical models in the orientation of government functions and put forward their optimization strategies^[9]. In short, during the 14th Five-Year Plan period, the government in China's rural old-age care service system can neither play the role of "all-round government" in the planned economy period, nor can it just be an ordinary member of "multi-subjects", but it must be "an important subject that plays a leading role" in rural community old-age care. The concept and role of the government need to be "remodeled" in terms of "service-oriented government" or the promotion, legislation and supervision of smart old-age care from the perspective of big data.

In short, market defects, government mission and the characteristics of rural social security all provide objective reasons for government intervention. "The development from government monopoly to government domination reflects the separation of welfare production and welfare supply. The transformation from government domination to government dominance is mainly manifested in the regulation of welfare supply, the separation of fund-raising and service delivery"^[10]. Community-based old-age care needs to realize the return of the government's responsibility from the two extremes of "government monopoly" and "market dominance". At the same time, under the impetus of the comprehensive consideration of the actual demand and the development of social policy theory, the government's role needs to be changed from "dominator" to "leader" to prevent "offside" and inhibit the development and growth of social organizations.

The existing research fields lay particular stress on the "relationship between government and social organizations" and the "community-based old-age care model", while the research paradigm lay particular stress on describing the current problems and the future development vision, without a clear positioning of the government role in the old-age care service system, or an abstract explanation and root cause exploration of problems, or an in-depth exploration of its role transformation (monopoly-vacancy-domination-leading) and ideological thread of system transformation.

2.2 On "the Construction of Old-Age Care Service System"

Many scholars have introduced the idea of community care in the West into the research on China's socialized old-age service system, and stressed to increase the government support (such as direct supply and purchase, and regulating other social subjects)^[11]. The domestic research shows that the community old-age care service is characterized by multi-perspectives and multi-disciplines. Scholars have emphasized the cooperation of government, community, family, social organizations and other multi-subjects from the perspective of "welfare pluralism". They have also begun to pay attention to the efficiency of the transportation of old-age care service resources, emphasizing the integration of service resources and organizational systems.

The issue of establishing and perfecting the old-age support system has been raised around the topic of coping with the aging population and meeting the old-age support needs. It is believed that with the weakening of the traditional family support function, we should consider establishing an old-age support system supported by "old-age support subsystem" and "old-age support external system". The problem of providing for the aged mainly includes two aspects, one is economic security to meet the material needs of the elderly, the other is service security to meet the needs of the elderly in life care, spiritual comfort, medical care and other aspects. Due to the inevitable weakening of the family-based old-age care function in China, we should explore to expand the scope of social old-age care services. In addition, we should promote the establishment of a basic structure of a diversified social old-age care service system with families, institutions, communities and the government as the main body, so as to not only abandon the government's arrangement in the planned economy period, but also reverse the orientation of abandoning the government's responsibilities in the name of social welfare socialization, and mobilize family resources,

community resources and unit resources with public resources^[12].

In conclusion, the deficiencies of the existing research are reflected in the lack of organizational analysis of community old-age care services from the perspective of research, the lack of discussion on how service resources play a role in the research content, and the lack of attention to the related mechanisms such as community service, family care and smart old-age care due to the focus on exploratory research in the research logic.

III. PROSPECT OF THEORETICAL EXPLORATION

Restricted by the existing perspective, it is urgent to make a breakthrough from the following two aspects on the basis of the existing research:

(1) It is necessary to re-examine the concept of "service-oriented government" from the reality of social development in China, expand the new academic pedigree of "new public service", and strive to form a more practical research paradigm.

(3) As an important practice of the aging development strategy, the government needs to adjust the contents and ways of "intervention" in the construction of the rural old-age service system by revitalizing the codes of conduct for citizens in rural areas, giving full play to the role of "new sages", and mobilizing and guiding political resources with rural characteristics such as "educational power", fully mobilizing multiple forces to plan and build an old-age care system, gradually bringing rural old-age care into the social security framework, so that the agricultural population can enjoy the national strategic "dividend", and advocating and promoting the "Smart Community-Based Old-Age Care". This study will systematically explore innovative strategies from this perspective to help "rural revitalization".

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