

Optimization of Rural Mutual Assistance Pension Mode under the Background of Aging Population

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to improve the living standard and quality of rural elderly. In this study, firstly, the status quo of the main pension modes in China's rural areas under the background of population aging is analyzed. Secondly, the problems existing in China's rural pension mode under the background of population aging are put forward, and the reasons for these problems are analyzed. Finally, some suggestions are put forward to optimize the mutual assistance pension mode for the aged. That is, change the endowment concept, set up the correct values; strengthen the government's support and guidance to the cause of old-age care; and mobilize social forces to participate and diversify the service subjects. Through this study, it is expected to further coordinate the efforts of the government, society and family, improve the placement of elderly people in rural areas, and effectively improve the living standard and quality of elderly people in rural areas.

Keywords: aging of population; rural; mutual assistance; pension mode; optimization.

1. Introduction

Aging of population refers to the increasing proportion of elderly people in this age structure when the population is divided into the elderly, middle-aged and young people. Nowadays, with the continuous improvement of medical level and the extension of life expectancy of the population, the aging of the population has become the development trend of the global society [1].

As for the rural mutual assistance pension mode, there is no clear definition in the academic circle at present. It usually refers to the pension model of rural mutual assistance for the aged through the support of government funds and policies, the participation of non-governmental charities, and neighborhoods, etc. The model of rural mutual assistance for the aged can be divided into five types: government-oriented, non-government-oriented, mass spontaneous, individual-oriented and time bank [2, 3].

The problems posed by the ageing of the population are significant and straightforward. Among them, pension is undoubtedly the most important issue. With the political wave of urbanization in China, a large number of young and middle-aged labor force leave their hometown, which directly leads to the increasingly empty rural areas [4, 5]. The number of empty nesters in rural areas is amazing. The traditional family pension model has been broken, and the leading social pension attempt is facing various challenges in terms of resources, policies, traditions and human resources, etc. The lack of rural pension ability has gradually entered the public vision [6]. In view of this, it is not only of theoretical significance in the context of the new era, but also of practical significance in solving the practical problems in the current rural areas and maintaining social harmony and stability to explore a new type of rural old-age care model that is suitable for rural conditions.

2. Methodology

The status quo of the main old-age care modes in China's rural areas under the background of aging population is as follows.

Firstly, the self-support model is difficult to meet the needs of the elderly. For farmers, self-supporting mainly depends on the labor output obtained by land management or the economic returns obtained by other labor methods, and they have a certain economic surplus in their old age, so as to maintain the basic living needs in their old age. However, with the improvement of urbanization, rural arable land is constantly occupied by urban construction land. If only relying on the income from agricultural operation, then the life of farmers will not be sustainable. As can be seen from table 1,

the proportion of China's medical care expenditure in the whole consumer expenditure is growing, and this proportion has reached 10.2 % in 2018, showing a rapid growth trend. Although farmers have a certain economic surplus every year, in the face of increasing medical and health care expenditure every year, there is little money for pension, and the development of rural self-pension model is greatly restricted.

Table 1. Rural living standards and health care expenditures (Yuan)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Per capita income of farmers	7932.5	8765.2	9231.2	9452.6	9658.9
Per capita expenditure of farmers	5907.2	6853.4	7021.4	7130.5	7265.4
Economic surplus	2025.3	1911.8	2209.8	2322.1	2393.5
Per capita health care consumption expenditure of farmers	514.1	660.5	701.2	722.3	743.9
The proportion of medical care expenditure in the total per capita expenditure	8.7%	9.6%	10.0%	10.1%	10.2%

Note: economic surplus in this table = per capita income - per capita expenditure; per capita expenditure includes healthcare expenditure.

Secondly, the family pension model remains the main mode. In China's rural areas, the family pension model has survived for thousands of years, making an important contribution to China's rural pension. However, the impact of social changes and a series of exogenous factors is making this stable family pension model lose its economic and social foundation, and the sustainable and good development of family pension model is greatly challenged. As can be seen from table 2, after 2010, the dependency ratio of the elderly soared, and the burden of supporting the elderly for families is increasingly heavy. Although the burden of family members supporting the elderly is becoming heavier and heavier, family pension is still the main way of supporting the elderly in rural areas at this stage.

Table 2. Population dependency ratio

	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Total dependency ratio	34.3	34.8	36.7	37.6	38.1
Dependency ratio of child	22.1	22.3	22.5	22.7	23.1
Old-age dependency ratio	12.2	12.5	14.2	14.9	15

Note: the dependency ratio is also called the burden factor. It refers to the ratio of the number of non-working-age population to the number of working-age population.

Thirdly, the development of the collective pension model lags behind. Collective pension is a special pension mode in the period of planned economy. Rural collectives provide support to households enjoying the minimum living guarantee and households enjoying the five guarantees through institutions such as gerocomium. However, due to the limited economic strength of the village collective, the local government's financial allocation is difficult to reach the designated position, and the rural nursing homes are seriously short of infrastructure facilities. Their existence does not play its due role in the old-age care of the rural elderly. As shown in figure 1, on the whole, the development of rural collective old-age care lags behind, and it is difficult to meet the basic old-age care needs.

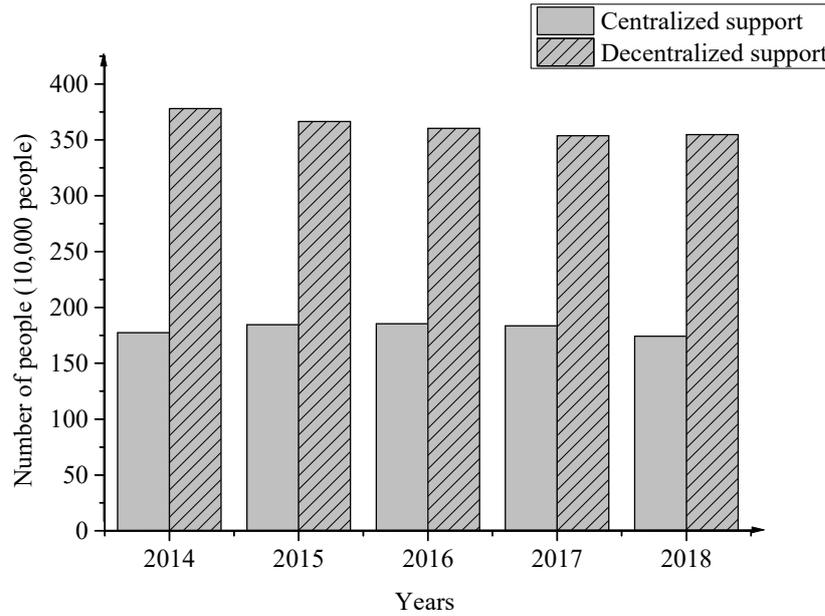


Figure.1 Centralized and decentralized support in rural areas

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Problems in the Rural Old-age Care Model in China under the Background of Population Aging

Firstly, self-pension is difficult to maintain the life. The self-pension mode has been the main one in rural areas for a long time. However, with the change of the objective environment, the self-supporting mode is also difficult to maintain the elderly in their later years. As can be concluded from figure 2, at present, the arable land operated by rural households in China presents a trend of slow decline on the whole, and the income of farmers from the arable land is bound to be not much. In addition, with the continuous improvement of China's urbanization level, rural arable land is constantly occupied by urban construction land, and the limited arable land area is affected by natural disasters and soil erosion, so that the usable land area in rural areas is increasingly reduced, and the agricultural output rate is constantly declining.

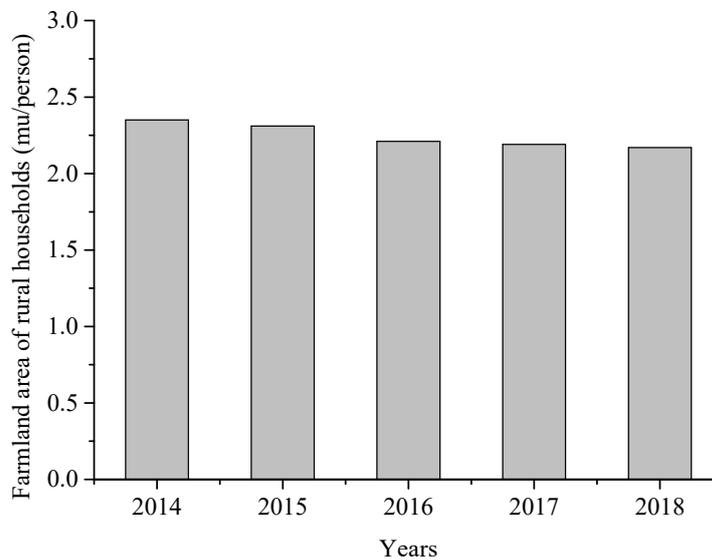


Figure. 2 Changes in cultivated land area of rural households

Secondly, the family pension burden is heavy. Family pension mode is the most traditional pension mode in China and also the main one in rural China in a certain period. However, at the present stage, the development of family pension model is also difficult. The family structure is developing towards miniaturization and core-orientation, and the reduction of family size will eventually make the family supporting mode in jeopardy. The rural labour force is constantly flowing out. On the one hand, the flow of rural labor force to cities accelerates the process of urbanization in China, greatly increases the income of farmers, and provides strong economic support for family pension, so as to better meet the material needs of the elderly. On the other hand, the transfer of rural young and middle-aged labor force results in the separation of the elderly and their children in time and space. Without the care and daily company of their children, the elderly feel more lonely, and their spiritual needs can't be satisfied. Therefore, the problem of rural family pension becomes prominent.

Third, collective pension plays a limited role. Its hardware is scarce and of poor quality. Due to the limitations of their own economic level, rural medical rooms, exercise facilities, cultural and entertainment facilities and other infrastructure are extremely lacking. The daily life of the elderly scattered for support is very monotonous and tedious. The elderly has a strong sense of loneliness, lack of enthusiasm for life, and their enthusiasm for life keeps declining. In addition, the service level of collective pension is low.

3.2 Analysis of the Cause

Firstly, the level of rural economic development is low. The village's own ability to create wealth is low, and its main source of income is the fiscal allocation of local governments. The operation of the aged care service requires huge financial resources, and it is difficult for the collective community to support such an old-age care institution. If only invested by the government, it will also bring huge financial pressure to the government, and it is difficult for the government to directly manage the nursing homes. Many government-run nursing homes have experienced management confusion and abuse of the elderly. The development of old-age care institutions in rural areas is greatly restricted. At the same time, the level of rural economic development also affects the family's ability to support the elderly.

Secondly, the number of rural pensions is large and the level of demand is increasing. At present, the rural pension demand is large. The rural elderly population base is large and shows a trend of accelerating growth. Correspondingly, the total pension demand of the rural elderly population keeps growing. Family pension is the main mode of old-age care in rural areas at present, which relieves the elderly's own pension pressure to a certain extent. However, due to the low economic ability of rural families and the lack of professional medical and nursing knowledge of family members, it can only meet the most basic needs for old-age care in general, and it is difficult to meet the needs of medical, nursing and entertainment with high costs. In addition, the spiritual needs of rural elderly are growing. The older the aged, the stronger their spiritual needs are, which are difficult to be satisfied in the self-supporting mode and the collective endowment mode.

Thirdly, pension values and lifestyle changes. With the increase of social openness, people begin to contact with more and more new cultures, ideas and values. Western liberalism and individualism begin to influence people's behaviors subtly. With the gradual change of young people's values, the function of family endowment is weakened to a large extent, and even some phenomena such as abandonment and maltreatment of the elderly occur. However, social media or public opinions are indifferent to the occurrence of these phenomena and the unfilial behavior of their children, which further indulge and breed the unfilial behavior of other children in the society. It is difficult to achieve the goal of "providing for the elderly" solely by relying on the model of family support.

3.3 Optimization of Mutual Assistance Pension Model

Firstly, change the endowment concept, set up the correct values. Due to the profound influence of traditional ideas, most of the elderly can't accept this new mutual assistance pension model. At the present stage, with the development of the national economy and the improvement of the system, China's pension mode will be gradually improved. The old people should change their old ideas,

choose diversified old-age care options in the old-age care mode, accept the new old-age care mode of mutual assistance, and meet their different needs in the diversified old-age care mode and the diversified system of supporting subjects.

Secondly, strengthen the government's support and guidance to the cause of old-age care. With the increasingly severe situation of aging population in China, the demand for old-age care for rural elderly has increased sharply. Whether the old-age care problem in rural areas can be solved in time will affect the social stability and the healthy economic development of China. Old people have played their due role in the country's economic development and social progress in their youth and maturity, and they should receive the country's material help and institutional guarantee in their old age. The government, as the manager of the mutual assistance old-age care service industry and the main provider of old-age care services, must play a leading role, earnestly perform its public service responsibilities, and provide strong support in financial input, policy formulation, legislation and public opinion publicity. Specifically, it is necessary to increase the financial input for mutual assistance old-age care in rural areas, broaden the channels for fund raising, strengthen national supervision and management, establish and improve laws and regulations on mutual assistance old-age care, and actively promote the traditional Chinese filial piety culture.

Thirdly, mobilize social forces to participate and diversify the service subjects. The huge base of the rural elderly population and the fact of the rapid growth trend make it impossible for any single provider to bear the huge pension pressure. Therefore, it is necessary to implement the diversification of pension service subjects and mobilize the power of the whole society to provide better pension services for the elderly. It should strengthen the social responsibility consciousness of enterprises and public institutions, non-profit organizations and build a professional volunteer team to provide standardized and orderly voluntary services.

4. Conclusion

To a certain extent, the rural mutual assistance pension model is actually an effective way for the administrative village itself to solve the problem of old-age care in the village. Therefore, it has the inherent advantages of adapting to the rural reality and has a strong vitality. However, the rural mutual assistance pension is still a new thing, and new problems will surely be encountered in its development. In this study, through the analysis of the provincial rural mutual assistance pension model, aiming at the existing problems and referring to the domestic and foreign experience, the optimization suggestions are put forward. That is, change the endowment concept, set up the correct values; strengthen the government's support and guidance to the cause of old-age care; and mobilize social forces to participate and diversify the service subjects. Among them, some of the proposals have been endorsed by the government and are being expedited. However, some opinions are still in the tentative stage and need to be verified by practice. Therefore, in the next step of work, the optimization of rural mutual assistance pension recommendations should be more in-depth.

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