



The Influence of Stigma for Re-employment of the Young Elderly

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Abstract. The aging trend of the global population is obvious, at the same time, the shortage of human resources is more obvious. The re-employment of the young elderly is a strategic requirement to cope with the aging population and the sustainable development of economic society. However, at present, the young elderly is stigmatized with insufficient ability, rigid thinking, and self-denial. The stigma of the young elderly is the reason for the re-employment difficulties of the young elderly. Starting from the theory of stigma, this research studied the process of stigma and the existing employment dilemma of the young elderly through long-term field observation and interview method in S Province and put forward measures to promote the re-employment of the young elderly from the aspect of weakening stigma of the elderly. From the two aspects of the young elderly themselves and social groups, to reduce social stigma on the young elderly, to promote the re-employment of the young elderly. This research can make more social groups pay attention to the group of the young elderly, weaken the stigma of the young elderly, and create a good policy and social environment for the re-employment of the young elderly. At the same time, the re-employment dilemma of the young elderly is studied from the stigma of the young elderly, supplementing and enriching the re-employment theory of the young elderly.

Keywords: young elderly, stigma, re-employment, employment intention

1 Introduction

1.1 Research background

The aging of the population is an inevitable result of population transition, it is an important issue that human society faces in the 21st century. Up to now, the world's aging population trend is obvious, as a whole, it has stepped into an aging society. Actively responding to the aging population is a crucial measure to achieve high-quality economic development and safeguard national security and social stability. It has been more than 20 years since China entered the aging society at the beginning of the 21st century. From 2010 to 2020, the number and proportion of the elderly aged 65 and over increased. At present, the demographic dividend disappears and labor supply is in short

supply. The policy of delaying retirement has been put on the agenda, and the redevelopment of human resources for the young elderly has become a good way to relieve social pressure. However, in the human resource recruitment market, it is generally believed that the elderly have no ability, so they cannot get a fair chance to compete. Therefore, stigma is the actual cause of reemployment difficulties for the young elderly.

Most previous studies have studied the factors influencing the re-employment of the young elderly, which mostly study the stigma of young elderly in re-employment and how to change this state. In terms of research methods, previous studies have been conducted both quantitatively and qualitatively, combining the advantages of both types of methods. Qualitative analysis is the main method. In qualitative methods, scholars mainly use surveys and interviews to analyze affecting factors for the re-employment of the young elderly. In quantitative methods, scholars mainly design the questionnaire based on the CHARLES database and use the Logistics Regression Model to analyze the influencing factors and supply and demand to match the development of urban young elderly. In terms of research perspectives, they include sociology and law. From the perspective of sociology, some scholars have analyzed the stigma of re-employment of the young elderly. From the perspective of law, other scholars put forward legal measures to solve the re-employment of the young elderly. In previous studies, scholars lack the theoretical foundation of stigma to study the process of stigma suffered by the young elderly and to find solutions to the problem. Therefore, taking the processes of minority stress and the theoretical framework of resilience as the theoretical foundations, this research studies the stigma of the young elderly in the re-employment and the solutions.

1.2 Research ideas and significance

Based on long-term field observation of the young elderly in S Province, the first step is to understand the stigma process of the young elderly. It is widely believed that the young elderly have low labor productivity and rigid thinking. At the same time, the elderly is self-denying and do not seek change even if they are not satisfied with their current life status. Secondly, the young elderly who have been stigmatized are facing a severe re-employment dilemma. The reemployment dilemma of the young elderly is mainly manifested in the refusal of employers and the lack of support from families and the government for reemployment of the young elderly. Finally, strategies to get stigmatized young elderly back into the workforce are sought.

Based on Stigma's theory, this research studies the stigma of the young elderly in re-employment and proposes solutions to supplement and enrich the re-employment research of the stigmatized young elderly. This research has important practical significance for policy makers, society at large, and the younger elderly. Policymakers, can pay attention to the group of the young elderly and formulate some policies to help them re-enter the workforce after retirement. For the whole society, in the face of the increasingly aging trend, the re-employment of the young elderly can increase the social labor force and promote the development of the social economy. For the young elderly, they can get a fair re-employment environment according to their own needs and find

a suitable job. After retirement, they can also realize their self-value and improve their well-being.

2 Stigmas of the younger elderly

According to the regulations of UNESCO, the young elderly is defined as those aged between 60 and 69. The young elderly have four characteristics. Firstly, the young elderly is in good health and have quick thinking. Secondly, the young elderly can be financially independent, and at the same time, they can take care of themselves in life. Thirdly, the younger elderly mainly live with their spouses and unmarried children. Fourthly, the low elderly are generally unwilling to be lonely, they need to participate in public activities, and their re-employment desire is strong. Different scholars have studied the concept of stigma from different perspectives, such as psychological, sociological, and public health perspectives. These scholars all think that stigma hurts those who are stigmatized or minority groups. The concept of stigma is derived from the Greek word "stein", meaning brand or tattoo [1]. From the sociological perspective, Goffman argues that stigma is an attribute that can be deeply discrediting, which reduces whole persons to taint and discounted others [2]. From the psychological perspective, Herek argues that stigma is inferior status and relative powerlessness that society collectively accords to people who possess a particular characteristic or belong to a particular group or category [3]. The young elderly also experience stigma, which has long been neglected by society. The stigma of the young elderly is mainly reflected in the following three aspects.

2.1 Low ability

It is widely believed that the young elderly have lost their productive capacity and are less able to work [4]. The reason for this social impression of the young elderly is that it is generally believed that the young elderly will no longer contribute to society. But that's not the case.

"Although I am sixty years old now, I think I can still work. But when I got a job, no one would take me. Even when I wash dishes in a restaurant, the boss doesn't accept me. Because the boss thought I might not be physically fit enough to do the job." — the young elderly: Mr. Chen (Number: 202201)

According to an American statistic, 25% of the elderly are still able to work and contribute to society. On the one hand, in many industries and positions, the younger elderly even has advantages over the younger ones. For example, senior scientists, writers, professors, and doctors with rich work experience and excellent professional skills can make better contributions to society. On the other hand, the young elderly have higher attendance rates and are more socially responsible than younger people. So, the young elderly is not incapable of work, they are stigmatized.

2.2 Rigid thinking

It is widely believed that the young elderly lack energy [5]. It is believed that the thought and behavior of the young elderly are rigid and will not be easily changed.

"I'm 62 years old, and I've been retired for years. Daily life is quite boring, I want to do something to enrich myself. I have rich experience as a shopping guide in a supermarket before, so I would like to apply for a similar job. However, the recruitment requirements of supermarkets and other service places require that I should be under 45 or 50 years old. I once tried to fight for it, but the boss thought that I might not be able to deal with emergencies in time, so he thought that I was not competent to work in the supermarket." — the young elderly: Aunt Zhang (Number: 202212)

However, psychological research shows that there are many types of mental rigidity, not all of which are related to the elderly. Generally speaking, the young elderly is in the good physical condition and have more flexible thinking. The aged who are rigid in their thinking are more likely to have been rigid in their early years but become more rigid as they age. Therefore, it is one-sided to think that all older people suffer from mental rigidity and lack of energy, and it is a manifestation of the stigma of the young elderly.

2.3 Self-negation

Self-stigma is caused by the stigma of the above two "others". But in turn, the Self-stigma intensifies the stigma of others.

"I am no longer young, now the society develops very fast, many things I do not understand. I don't think anyone would want to teach me, and even if they did, I couldn't. I don't think I can do anything. I'll just live with it." — the young elderly: Mr. Guo (Number: 202233)

Some older people do not seek change even if they are not satisfied with their life. They think they are too old to pursue advancement. These older people tend to be pessimistic, dissatisfied with their lives, and have no interest in life. These older people, most of whom are passive, often feel unhappy and tend to complain [6]. However, this is usually related to the personality of older people, not just because of old age. Most of the older people with weird personalities were also like this when they were young. Therefore, the self-stigma of the elderly increases the degree of stigma.

3 The employment dilemma of the young elderly

The employment of the young elderly is challenged in many aspects, mainly from the lack of support from market subjects, government departments, and families.

3.1 Employers have low demand for the employment of young elderly

According to the interview results, only 20 percent of the companies had hired or thought of hiring the young elderly [7].

"The image of the elderly is not good. Many young people want to come to the restaurant. Why should I use the elderly?" — Owner of a restaurant: Mr. Wang (Number: 202236)

Market subjects pursue efficiency and economic benefits, and any behavior they do is economic. Corporate leaders often believe that older people tend to be less able to learn, react slowly and communicate well and that barriers brought by age differences often result in substandard work. It is because of such a long-standing concept that employment discrimination often exists in the human resource market. On the social level, there is age discrimination in position. The health status of the young elderly is ignored, the physiological function of the young elderly is degraded, and their thinking and action are slow, which does not meet the employment needs of enterprises, and there is no corresponding post for the young elderly. When companies are hiring, age restrictions make it harder for young elderly to enter the workforce. This makes the stigma of the elderly more serious.

3.2 No policy supports

There are a few measures taken by the government to promote the re-employment of the young elderly. All the executives interviewed said they were not aware of any measures taken by their local governments to support the employment of younger seniors [8]. They also do not know whether the local government has organized relevant reemployment training or formulated relevant policies, or some of them believe that the local government has not taken appropriate measures to support the re-employment of the younger elderly.

"The young elderly are special and they are no longer suitable for social work. First of all, the health of the young elderly is generally weak, and they are prone to accidents at work, which is easy to cause unnecessary disputes. Secondly, there is no relevant policy to support us to recommend jobs for the young elderly. For the young elderly, our main task is to ensure their life and let them feel at ease in their old age." — Neighbourhood committee staff: Xiao Zhang (Number: 202236)

The reemployment policy for the young elderly is not perfect. The government of S province has not issued a clear policy to support the re-employment of the young elderly. The imperfection of laws and regulations leads to problems such as the inability to sign effective labor contracts and the lack of effective protection for both labor parties. Even if some regions have relevant laws and policies, the policies are too macro and abstract, and there are still disputes when it comes to specific rights and interests. In China, the re-employment of many retired people is a labor service relationship, in which the employer usually pays a certain amount of remuneration and does not have to undertake other obligations [9]. Therefore, it is difficult to guarantee the employment rights and interests of the retired young elderly in China even if they get re-employment channels and opportunities. Without policy support, it is easier for the young elderly to be stigmatized in re-employment.

3.3 Family unsupported

Family is an important factor in the re-employment consideration of the young elderly, and many children do not support their parents' re-employment.

"First of all, as sons and daughters, our parents have worked hard all their lives. We don't want them to have to struggle for life in their old age. Second, let our parents go out to work, it seems that we are not filial." — The daughter of a young elderly: Miss Wang (Number: 202248)

Influenced by China's traditional culture of "supporting the elderly", young children do not approve of their parents' re-employment, believing that such behavior makes them lose face or endangers the health of the young elderly. On the ideological level, children think the young elderly are "vulnerable groups". Influenced by traditional ideas, it is generally believed that the young elderly after retirement are the dependents of the family, and the young elderly are the objects taken care of by society and the family. They just need to maintain their health, do some housework and enjoy their old age at home. They should not engage in productive activities. Traditional ideas make it harder for the young elderly to enter the workforce. The stigma of the young elderly has been further deepened.

4 Measures to reduce stigma against the young elderly

"Active aging" is the policy framework for coping with population aging in the 21st century, which can reduce the impact of identity stigma on the young elderly [10]. Western developed countries have promoted the employment of the young elderly under this policy framework, and developed the elderly human resources through material incentives, legal reform, improving the working environment, employment training, creating the employment environment for the young elderly, and many other measures, and achieved great results. The young elderly need a society of democracy and rule of law, fairness, justice, integrity, and fraternity, oppose age discrimination and share the fruits of social development. Therefore, it is necessary to promote the re-employment of the young elderly from both their own and society, to reduce the impact of stigma on the young elderly.

4.1 To improve the ability of the young elderly

4.1.1. Training the work skills of the young elderly.

Appropriate training can make the young elderly better adapt to the needs of work and reduce the barriers to re-employment. Although the young elderly has the advantages that the young labor force does not have, in today's rapid development of science and technology, most of the young elderly adapt to The Times at a slower pace. Therefore, according to the characteristics of the group of the young elderly, we should develop an appropriate training course system, establish a lifelong education system, and develop and implement education for the young elderly, to improve the corresponding post skills, enhance the employment competitiveness of the young elderly, and help

the young elderly group better integrate into the society. The government should provide continuous support for the vocational education of the young elderly, and provide convenience for the young elderly to continue their education in community universities for the young elderly, or even ordinary colleges and universities. In addition to financial support, educators can also be employed to refine the curriculum for the elderly, enhance the training effect and make knowledge more easily absorbed by the young elderly. The improvement of the ability of the young elderly can fundamentally reduce the stigma of society for the young elderly.

4.1.2. Establishing the employment confidence of the young elderly.

For the young elderly, in addition to the ability to work, mental health is also not negligible. The psychological ability of the young elderly mainly refers to the psychological bearing capacity of the difficulties encountered in work, life, and psychology in re-employment. In this regard, the staff of the community neighborhood committee should pay attention to the mental health of the young elderly, and pay timely attention to the psychological changes of the young elderly after they encounter setbacks in their re-employment, to avoid the negative psychology of self-denial. This can effectively avoid the stigma of the young elderly in the process of re-employment, and further aggravate the self-stigma of the young elderly.

4.2 To provide employment space for the young elderly

The biggest obstacle to the re-employment of young elderly who have been stigmatized is the lack of social support. Therefore, the government and society need to support to alleviate the stigma and the reemployment dilemma of the young elderly. From the government level, it is necessary to improve the legal system to provide legal guarantees for the re-employment of the young elderly. At the social level, market subjects and social members should change their ideas and create friendly and fair re-employment opportunities for the young elderly.

4.2.1. Providing policy support for the young elderly.

First of all, laws and regulations should be improved to provide legal guarantees for the re-employment of the young elderly [11]. Relevant laws and regulations should be amended and improved promptly to eliminate age discrimination and stigma in employment and ensure the due rights of the young elderly in re-employment. Secondly, we should improve policies and measures to increase the enthusiasm of the young elderly to find new jobs. On the surface, the re-employment of the young elderly seems to be a matter of personal choice, but due to the existence of multiple resistance, only the government can promote the overall reform of the employment of the young elderly by taking advantage of "public rights". Therefore, local governments should take active and effective policies and measures based on local realities to reduce the employment dilemma caused by the stigma of the young elderly [12]. For example, the government should provide material incentives. On the one hand, it provides incentives to the employment units of the young elderly, mainly reflected in preferential policies in fiscal,

taxation, finance, and land. On the other hand, the incentive for the young elderly is mainly reflected in increasing the pension to ensure the enthusiasm of the young elderly to continue working.

4.2.2. Creating a good social environment for the young elderly.

All social subjects should make efforts to alleviate the employment dilemma caused by the stigma of the young elderly. First of all, the young elderly should be created an equal employment atmosphere, and change the concept of social prejudice [13]. Companies need to recognize that the young elderly have rich work experience and the ability to analyze problems, and the training cost of hiring the elderly is lower. At the same time, the young elderly has accumulated rich connections in the process of work, which are valuable human capital [14]. Secondly, according to the experience of the young to the old, time and network advantages, such as the combination of market and social demand for younger elderly human resource, enterprise, society, and government departments to vigorously mining jobs in the elderly, especially the technical service and consulting, public service, generational cooperation, housework and other types of jobs. Secondly, according to the young elderly to the rich in experience and human resources advantages, combined with market and social demand for young elderly human resource, enterprise, society and government departments to vigorously mining jobs in the young elderly, especially the technical service and consulting, public service, generational cooperation, housework and other types of jobs. Thirdly, rely on institutions and service platforms such as associations for the aged and universities for the aged at all levels to build a human resource market and professional talent database for the aged, to build a platform for the young elderly to participate in economic and social development [15]. Fourthly, the human resources and social security departments have set up a promotion agency for the re-employment of the young elderly to guide, coordinate, supervise and inspect the re-employment of the elderly.

5 Conclusion

Based on long-term field observation in S Province, a total of 78 people were interviewed in three months. Among them, the interviewees involved the young elderly and their children, the owners of restaurants and supermarkets, the human resources manager of the company, and the staff of the neighborhood committee, and understood the process of young elderly being stigmatized. This study believes that the young elderly suffer from the stigma of inadequate ability, rigid thinking, and self-denial, and this stigma is the fundamental reason for the re-employment difficulties of the young elderly. In order to solve the re-employment dilemma of the stigma of the young elderly, the young elderly themselves and social support should be considered. Among them, as far as the young elderly are concerned, their working skills and abilities can be improved through skills training and other means, which can essentially reduce the stigma of the young elderly. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the psychological guidance of the young elderly, so that when the young elderly is stigmatized, they can

change their social state by improving themselves. In terms of social support, the government should formulate corresponding laws and policies to support the re-employment of the young elderly and eliminate age discrimination against them in the human resource market. The government should provide financial support, social subjects should be aware of the reemployment advantages of the young elderly, and human resources departments should actively develop reemployment positions suitable for the young elderly and give them corresponding reemployment guidance. From the academic point of view, this study supplements and enriches the research on the re-employment of the young aged, which has been stigmatized. From the practical point of view, this study makes more people pay attention to the group of the young elderly and makes more social subjects and policy makers formulate policies and measures in favor of the young elderly, to create a good policy and social environment for the re-employment of the low-age elderly. There is still space for research on how to reduce the stigma of the young elderly and how to develop human resources for the young elderly who are stigmatized. Due to practical factors, the research site selected for this study is relatively limited. Future research can expand the research site to cover provinces and cities with different levels of economic development and expand the research scope to rural areas. As the rural population is an important part of China's population, most of the rural young elderly are facing greater economic pressure, which makes this group's demand and willingness for employment higher. Therefore, it is of great significance to study the plight of the rural young elderly in re-employment due to stigma.

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