

Research on Supply and Demand Deviation and Optimization Strategy of Catering Service for the Elderly in Bengbu

Yingning Qin

School of Finance and Public Administration, Anhui University of Finance and Economics,
Bengbu, Anhui, 233030, China
228277709@qq.com

Abstract

With the aging and fewer children leading to the level of aging in China is not optimistic, the traditional pension model is not suitable for today's era, unable to meet the diversified needs of the elderly. The government's provision of catering services for the elderly can effectively solve the dining problems of elderly groups with living difficulties, such as empty nests, living alone, left behind, and the elderly. In the process of promoting catering services for the elderly in Bengbu, there are supply and demand deviations in quantity, quality and structure. Based on this, this paper puts forward optimization strategies for the supply and demand deviation of catering service for the elderly in Bengbu, which is of great significance to improve the local catering service system for the elderly and meet the dining needs of the elderly.

Keywords

Bengbu City; Catering service for the elderly; Supply and demand deviation.

1. Introduction

People's Daily reported that by the end of 2021, China's elderly population aged 60 and over had reached 267million, accounting for 18.9% of the total population. Around 2023, the population aged 60 and above will exceed 400million, accounting for more than 30% of the total population, entering the stage of severe aging. The degree of aging in China is gradually deepening, and the burden of social pension is increasing. As an important measure to open up the last kilometer of convenient elderly care services, the development trend is good, but there is still room for improvement.

There are four modes of catering services for the elderly, namely, the "community canteen for the elderly" mode, "the" central canteen+catering point "mode," the "pension agency catering" mode, and the "socialization" mode of entrusting catering enterprises and other social institutions to provide catering and services for the elderly in the community[1]. In recent years, the practice of catering service for the elderly has been in full swing in many regions. Some scholars have made a comprehensive analysis of the current situation of catering service for the elderly in specific regions. Rao Jing investigated the implementation effect of Huangshan City's endowment catering service policy based on Smith's policy implementation model. The overall effect of policy implementation was good, but the profit objectives of catering enterprises and the low utilization rate of government investment reduced the quality of endowment catering service[2]. Gao Miao proposed to narrow the gap between supply and demand, provide personalized services, and improve the regulatory system[3]. The current laws of the state have relatively comprehensive provisions on the protection of community pension and meal assistance services, but there are still some legal problems. First, the service orientation is not clear, and the scope and business model of service development are set unreasonably; Second, the scope of key security groups is not unified; Third, preferential

policies are not attractive to social capital; Fourth, it failed to fully protect the rights and interests of consumers[4]. The implementation process of the policy is a dynamic adjustment process. According to the feedback results of the policy implementation, Hunan Province has made new provisions on the community home-based elderly care meal assistance service. Families should bear the meal expenses other than preferential or subsidies, encourage social forces to participate in the elderly care service, and provide services for the elderly at home through online and offline channels[5].

At present, the relevant research on the elderly catering service mainly focuses on the aging framework, mode discussion and comparison, and performance evaluation. Domestic scholars mostly analyze the practical effect of the elderly catering service from the perspective of the government, but as the recipients of the elderly catering service, the satisfaction and expectation of the elderly will directly affect the smooth implementation of the policy of the elderly catering service[6]. In addition, the government's purchase of public pension services is a major measure of administrative reform. Providing services guided by the needs of the masses is an inevitable requirement for transforming government functions and obtaining the satisfaction of the masses.

2. Development Status of Catering Service for the Elderly in Bengbu

2.1. Current situation of demand for catering services for the elderly in Bengbu

Quality and environment are very important factors for elderly diners. First of all, quality is one of the focuses of residents' diners. The freshness and diversity of food materials are important standards to measure the quality.

Residents' diners hope that the canteen can provide fresh and high-quality ingredients to ensure the taste and nutritional value of food. In addition, food matching and nutritional balance are also the focus of residents' diners. They hope that the canteen can provide a variety of dishes to meet their taste and nutritional needs. For example, provide low salt and low fat dishes, or provide special dietary arrangements according to individual health status. In addition to the ingredients and collocation, the service attitude is also an important aspect of residents' diners' attention. They hope that the staff in the canteen are friendly, warm and able to provide considerate service. Good service attitude can bring pleasant dining experience to residents' diners and increase their satisfaction with the elderly catering service. Canteen staff should listen patiently to the needs and opinions of residents' diners, and solve problems in time to ensure that they get a good service experience. Secondly, the environment is also very important for residents and diners. The facility hardware of the canteen is one of the key factors. The canteen shall provide a comfortable, clean and tidy dining environment, including the quality and hygiene of tables, chairs, tableware and other facilities. The comfortable dining environment can improve the dining experience of residents and make them feel at home. In addition, the design and layout of the canteen is also an important part of the environment. The canteen should pay attention to details and take into account the special needs of the elderly. For example, provide easy-to-use tableware and dining tables, and provide comfortable seats and lumbar backs so that the elderly can eat more comfortably. The air quality and light brightness of the canteen also need to be paid attention to in order to provide a pleasant dining environment. In short, residents' diners are highly concerned about the quality and environment of the elderly catering service. They expect the canteen can provide fresh and diverse ingredients, match nutritionally balanced dishes, and provide good service attitude. At the same time, they also hope that the facilities, hardware and design layout of the canteen can provide a comfortable, clean and tidy dining environment. By continuously improving the quality and environment, the elderly catering service can meet the needs of residents and provide high quality catering service will improve their quality of life.

2.2. Subsidy policy, effect and current situation of catering service for the elderly in Bengbu

Bengbu Civil Affairs Bureau has taken three measures to promote the sustainable operation of catering service institutions for the elderly. The catering service for the elderly has established multiple financing channels through the multi support mode of "individual contribution, enterprise concession, government subsidy, charity donation and volunteer". Among them, the elderly canteen and food aid approved by the Civil Affairs Department of each county and district will be given a one-time construction subsidy of 30000 yuan and 100000 yuan according to the new (reconstruction and expansion) building area; A one-time construction subsidy of 30000 yuan will be given to the elderly food aid[7]; For catering enterprises to set up tables for the elderly and property service enterprises to carry out catering services for the elderly, appropriate subsidies will be given according to their construction costs. Tax relief policies will be given to eligible elderly catering service institutions. According to the degree of financial difficulties and age of the elderly and the principle of "high is not low", the elderly aged 60 to 69 will be given appropriate preferential treatment when dining (delivering) in the catering service institution. The elderly over 70 years old will be given a meal allowance of 1 yuan per day To 3 yuan, the designated elderly package is free for people over 100 years old. For the elderly living in scattered poverty-stricken families, the objects of subsistence allowances, key preferential care objects, and families with special difficulties in family planning, those who eat in the catering service institution or are delivered by the catering service institution will enjoy a meal subsidy of 3 yuan per person per day. 18 provinces across the country have fully implemented the elderly catering service. From 2021, Bengbu will take about three years to complete the construction of the city's home-based and community-based "meal aid project". At the end of 2021, each district will carry out the pilot of "meal assistance project" with a coverage rate of 30%, and reach 60% and 100% coverage and service capacity in 2022 and 2023, respectively. At present, 13 community catering outlets have been operated in the six districts under the jurisdiction of the city to meet the catering service needs of the elderly with special difficulties, such as living alone, widowed, old age, loss of independence and disability. After the implementation of the action of "catering service for the elderly", Bengbu will build 420 elderly canteens (catering outlets) in 2022, serving about 320000 elderly people. In 2023, the city will add 69 urban elderly canteens and catering outlets for the elderly, and 93 rural elderly canteens and catering outlets for the elderly. By the end of 2025, we will strive to build a catering service network for the elderly that covers urban and rural areas, has a balanced distribution, is convenient and accessible, and involves multiple subjects.

There are three modes of catering service for the elderly in Bengbu. The first mode is the government built canteen, which is an operation mode of the elderly canteen directly invested and managed by the government. However, this model has some challenges and limitations. First, the cost of self built canteens by the government is high. In addition, labor cost is also an important consideration. The canteen needs to be equipped with professional chefs and service personnel, as well as delivery vehicles, which increase the fixed cost. Secondly, the staffing of government built canteens may be insufficient. Due to budget constraints and recruitment difficulties, the canteen built by the government may not be equipped with enough staff. This leads to mixed use of personnel and no fixed division of responsibilities. In particular, the shortage of meal delivery personnel is large, which may affect the timeliness and service quality of meal delivery. The second is the enterprise listed community canteen, which is an operation mode of elderly canteen jointly built by enterprises and communities. Although this model has some advantages, there are also some problems. First of all, the degree of marketization of the community canteens listed by enterprises is high, which mainly attracts young diners and fewer elderly diners. This deviates from the original intention of the community canteen. The elderly population is large, and their food needs and taste preferences are different from those of young

people. Therefore, special attention should be paid to the needs of elderly diners. Secondly, there are many kinds of dishes in the community canteens listed by enterprises, and the prices are on the high side. In addition, the community canteens listed by enterprises are usually well located and attract more diners, thus achieving a certain income surplus. At the same time, this mode usually has enough staff, high service efficiency, and can provide a good dining experience. The third mode is that the government introduces enterprises to jointly build canteens, which is a mode of joint operation between the government and enterprises. However, this model also has some problems and challenges. First of all, the canteen jointly built by enterprises introduced by the government mainly attracts young diners, and the dining environment may not be conducive to the elderly. Young people tend to eat in a fashionable and fast way, while the elderly pay more attention to the comfort and quiet of the dining environment. Secondly, the government often pursues market-oriented operation and profit when introducing enterprises to jointly build canteens. This may lead to a certain deviation between the business philosophy and objectives of the canteen and the needs of the elderly. The elderly pay more attention to the health, nutrition and taste of food than the pursuit of commercial profits.

3. Performance and Reasons of Supply and Demand Deviation of Catering Service for the Elderly in Bengbu

3.1. Supply and demand deviation performance

First, quantity deviation. There is a supply-demand deviation in the number of facilities for the elderly in Bengbu. The number of facilities for the elderly in some areas is insufficient, which is difficult to meet the dining needs of the elderly, while there is a surplus of facilities in other areas. In some old urban areas with dense elderly population in Bengbu, due to the early completion time and insufficient consideration of catering service facilities for the elderly in urban planning, the number of catering services for the elderly is insufficient. During peak dining hours, the buffet is often overcrowded. The elderly need to wait in line for a long time to eat. Some elderly people even give up eating at the buffet because of the long waiting time. However, in some old communities, due to the lack of suitable venues for the construction of food aid, the surrounding food aid is far away, and it takes more than 20 minutes to walk. For the elderly who have difficulty in moving, it is very difficult to go to the food aid, resulting in their dining needs can not be effectively met. In contrast to the old urban areas, some new urban areas or areas with relatively small population have a surplus of catering service facilities, resulting in serious waste of catering resources and high operating costs. Due to the lack of passenger flow, some catering establishments cannot maintain normal operation, so they have to reduce the supply of dishes, shorten the business hours, and even face the risk of closure.

Second, quality deviation. In terms of dietary quality, some dishes provided by the elderly catering service failed to fully consider the physical characteristics and dietary needs of the elderly. Some of the dishes in the auxiliary restaurant have a single taste and do not change the menu for a long time, which leads to a decline in the freshness and satisfaction of the elderly. In terms of nutrition collocation, there are also unreasonable conditions in some auxiliary meals. Some dishes are too greasy and there are too many meat foods, while vegetables, fruits and other foods rich in vitamins and dietary fiber are less, which can not meet the needs of the elderly for balanced nutrition. For the elderly suffering from diabetes, hypertension and other chronic diseases, the help meal failed to provide special low sugar and low salt dishes, which affected their healthy diet. Service level is also an important factor leading to quality deviation. The service attitude of some food helpers was poor, lacking patience and enthusiasm, and did not respond in time to the needs of the elderly. There are also some problems in the operation and management of the catering service, such as disordered dining order and slow checkout speed, which reduce the dining experience of the elderly. In terms of facilities and conditions,

some elderly catering service places have outdated and aging facilities, which can not provide a comfortable dining environment for the elderly. The tables and chairs of some food helpers are worn-out, uncomfortable to sit, and there are potential safety hazards; The poor ventilation and lighting conditions in the dining area, hot summer and cold winter, affect the dining mood of the elderly. In terms of sanitary conditions, some food helpers have problems such as poor hygiene, incomplete cleaning of tableware and poor kitchen hygiene. The barrier free facilities of some catering establishments are not perfect. For the elderly who have difficulty in moving, it is difficult to get in and out of the catering establishments and use the catering facilities, such as no barrier free passage, no handrail in the toilet, etc.

Third, structural deviation. The supply structure of catering services for the elderly in Bengbu does not match the demand structure of the elderly. The catering needs of the elderly in different regions and at different consumption levels have not been fully met.

From the perspective of regional differences, the catering needs of the elderly in urban and rural areas are obviously different, but the current catering service supply has not been effectively differentiated. In cities, the elderly have high requirements for the convenience and diversity of the catering service, and hope to enjoy a rich and diverse selection of dishes near home. At the same time, they also have certain requirements for the dining environment and service quality. In rural areas, due to the relative dispersion of the elderly population and inconvenient transportation, the elderly need to provide door-to-door service and are more sensitive to the price, hoping that the price of meals can be more affordable. At present, the supply mode of catering services for the elderly in Bengbu is similar in urban and rural areas, and these differences are not fully taken into account. In rural areas, due to the lack of an effective distribution system after the construction of some food aid restaurants, they are unable to provide food delivery services for the elderly living in remote areas, resulting in a low utilization rate of food aid restaurants. In terms of dish design, the city's catering service also failed to fully consider the eating habits and taste preferences of the rural elderly, resulting in the low acceptance of some rural elderly to the city's catering service. The catering needs of the elderly at different consumption levels are also different, but the supply structure fails to match it. The elderly with high income have higher requirements for the quality and personalization of the buffet service. They are willing to pay higher fees and enjoy better meals and services. The low-income elderly pay more attention to the price factor, hoping to solve the problem of dining at a lower cost. At present, the supply of catering services for the elderly in Bengbu has not been differentiated. Most of the catering services and dishes provided by catering outlets are relatively single, which can not meet the needs of the elderly at different consumption levels. Although some food aid restaurants provide certain subsidies, the subsidy standard fails to fully consider the actual situation of the elderly at different consumption levels, resulting in the high-income elderly feel that the subsidy is not enough, while the low-income elderly still feel that the price of meals is high.

3.2. Reasons for supply and demand deviation

First of all, the low efficiency of information management system and demand hotline is a dilemma. The canteen for the elderly usually uses information management system and demand hotline to handle customer needs and complaints. However, due to the imperfection of the system or unskilled operation, resulting in low processing efficiency. This may lead to customers' needs not being met in time, affect customer satisfaction. In addition, the demand hotline may not be answered manually in time or the problem may not be solved thoroughly the service efficiency and quality are further reduced.

Secondly, the canteen has high operating costs, weak market competitiveness, and even uneven income and expenditure at a loss. Old age need the operating cost of the canteen usually includes the purchase of food materials, staff salaries, equipment maintenance, etc. Due to the

elderly canteen it is difficult to increase income by raising prices because of its weak market competitiveness. At the same time, due to the high operating costs, the canteen is easy to fall into a state of loss.

Third, some residents have borrowed, scraped and fraudulently used canteen subsidies. Some residents may take advantage of the subsidy policy of the canteen for the elderly to borrow, scrape and fraudulently use it, resulting in the waste and unfair distribution of the subsidy resources of the canteen. In order to solve this problem, the elderly canteen can strengthen the verification and management of customer identity, establish a perfect subsidy distribution mechanism and supervision mechanism, and ensure the rational allocation and use of resources.

Fourth, the epidemic has had an impact on the local finance, resulting in financial tension, and there is an operation support fund approval slow phenomenon. The outbreak of the epidemic and the implementation of prevention and control measures have had a negative impact on the economy and finance. The government had to adjust its budget to give priority to the funding needs in areas such as medical care and emergency relief, leading to the aging. It takes a long time to approve the operation support funds of the canteen.

4. Optimization Strategy

First of all, we should ensure that the service is sustainable and affordable. It is stressed that the implementation should be actively and steadily promoted and adjusted to local conditions, and targeted policies and measures should be taken from the aspects of service supply, service quality, service sustainability, service regulation, etc., to explore flexible and diverse service modes, so as to promote the accessibility, economic benefits, safety, reliability and sustainability of elderly catering services[8].

Secondly, scientific research should be conducted to accurately locate the target population. Aiming at the elderly living alone, widowed, semi disabled or disabled, the younger and healthy elderly are combined with universities for the elderly and elderly care service projects, and regular courses and activities are held to attract people to obtain funds. All localities should focus on rural areas, take preferential measures in combination with the actual situation, expand the supply of catering services for the elderly in rural areas, solve the problem that catering services for the elderly in rural areas are difficult to form a market scale, and flexibly and diversely solve the catering needs of the elderly in rural areas[9]. We should guide all regions to fully conduct a thorough survey of the demand for catering services for the elderly, understand the service demand, expected mode and expected price of the local elderly, and use existing resources and channels to accurately match the supply and demand of catering services. Finally, we should refine the subsidy policy. All localities should refine the subsidy methods and standards for catering institutions and catering objects according to the local actual situation[10]. Support should be provided according to the service quality and scale of different catering institutions. For different meal helpers, subsidies should be provided according to their economic status and consumption ability.

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