

Co-Care for the Elderly and Children: The Challenges and Tactics in Constructing Professional Workforce

-- A Case Study of L City Elderly Care Service Institutions

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Abstract

As the world's population structure is changing, the aging population is becoming more and more prominent, and the number of old people is growing significantly, and the number of new births is decreasing. This demographic change presents new societal challenges, particularly for the elderly and the care of children. Co-care for older people and young people, with the goal of providing "one stop" service for older people and children, has emerged as a new type of service. On the basis of an on-site survey of the co-care facilities in L city, the present study found that, although the co-care model provides comprehensive and effective comprehensive services, such as "double care", "inter-generational interaction," and "resource integration," and some of the challenges associated with caring for older people and children, there are still a number of practical problems in its functioning, especially in developing specialized personnel. Among these problems are the lack of qualified workers, the ageing of the labor force, and the lack of social acceptance, which are the main obstacles to the sustainable and sound development of the country. To solve these problems, the following strategies are proposed: first, to broaden the recruitment channels to attract more young and professional talents; second, to improve the skills and skills of staff; and third, to increase the recognition and acceptance of co-care by the public, so as to improve the professional pride and social status of the service providers. Based on the survey and observation, the author proposed the methods of recruitment, the improvement of the technical training system, and the social acceptance of more.

Keywords

Elderly Social Work; Co-Care Institutions for the Elderly and Young; Talent Development in Elderly Care Institutions.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

In recent years, the world's population, especially in China, has experienced a rapid growth, and the share of the elderly continues to rise. Old people's care has become the focal point of public concern. The National Bureau of Statistics estimates that more than 260 million people are over 60 years old, or 18.7 per cent. Not only does this reflect an increase in the number of older people, but also an increase in demand for older people. At the same time, the steady decline in the number of new births has raised concerns about childcare. Owing to the significant fall in fertility rates, there is an increasing demand for high-quality childcare services for families, especially those with dual income. In this context, co-care institutions for the elderly and young have emerged as an innovative service model, aiming to provide both elderly care and childcare

services within the same space, offering a one-stop solution for families with both elderly and young members. [1]

On December 31, 2023, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and 11 other departments issued the "Opinions on Strengthening the Development of the Elderly Care Service Talent Team," which explicitly stated that "by 2025, the scale of the elderly care service talent team, with a focus on skilled personnel, will be further expanded, their quality steadily improved, and their structure continuously optimized. The leading and supportive role of talented people in the quality of senior care services will be greatly improved. By 2035, the policy environment, industry environment, and social environment supporting the development of elderly care service talent will continue to improve, and the systems and mechanisms for talent cultivation, utilization, evaluation, and incentives will become more mature and well-established." [2] This opinion proposes methods for strengthening the development of the elderly care service talent team. However, there is still limited research on talent development in co-care institutions for the elderly and young. What challenges does the talent development in these institutions face? What are the solutions to these problems? These problems have a close relationship with the development of social work for older people, the occupation of social work, and social justice and inclusion. Exploring and analyzing these issues has both theoretical and practical significance. [3]

1.2. Research Significance

1.2.1. Theoretical Significance

There is considerable theoretical value in addressing the practical issues of the development of talented persons in joint care institutions for the elderly and youth. The further study of the model can enrich the theory frame of the old people's social work and offer a new angle of view and theory support. Through the analysis of the strategies to enhance human resource development, we can offer empirical support for the development of related theories. In practice, this research can offer scientific guidance for social workers, promoting healthy living for the elderly, safeguarding their rights, and fostering the healthy development of children.

1.2.2. Practical Significance

For example, in L city, the old people's care centers have been merged into kindergartens, moving from child care to senior citizens, where older people and children share a common space for activities. There are, however, a number of challenges, including a lack of talent, an ageing workforce, and a lack of social acceptance. This can be tackled through better skills for older people and young people. The study of co-care mode has a positive effect on the sustainable development of society. Through proper allocation of resources and effective utilization of resources, co-care facilities can meet the needs of older people and young people, and effectively utilize these resources, thus laying a solid foundation for building a green society. In addition, co-care facilities provide a wide range of social and recreational activities for older people, which can improve the quality of life and the well-being of the entire community.

1.3. Research Methods

First, the literature research method. By collecting relevant survey data released by the National Bureau of Statistics, the National Health Commission, and other departments, as well as reviewing a large number of domestic and international research literature on talent development in elderly care service institutions, this study conducts research and analysis based on this foundation.

Second, the comparative analysis method. Based on the literature review at home and abroad, the author compares the theoretical analysis with the practical operation condition to find out the improvement and offer the reference for the family care industry.

By comparing the theory with the practice, we find out some problems which can not be carried out in practice, and mobilize all kinds of forces to deal with them.

2. Practical Challenges in Talent Development for Co-Care Institutions for the Elderly and Young

2.1. Shortage of Professional Talent

Co-care, an innovative service model designed to meet the needs of older people and children's education needs, has been introduced to ease the burden on families. However, this model places extremely high demands on the comprehensive qualities of practitioners. They must not only master the professional knowledge of elderly care, including the key points of care for common elderly diseases, rehabilitation training techniques, and methods for addressing the mental health of the elderly, but also be proficient in childcare-related skills, covering child psychology, educational principles, and teaching methods and activity designs for children of different age groups, to stimulate children's interest in learning and promote their physical and mental health development. However, the current supply of this kind of talent in the market is not optimistic. Due to the differences in the training system and career path of the elderly and the care of their children, there is a serious shortage of qualified personnel. This imbalance between supply and demand makes it extremely difficult for co-care institutions to recruit qualified professionals, greatly limiting the promotion and development of the co-care model. [4]

2.2. Aging Workforce

The survey shows that in L City, 60% of the population is over 50 years old, and there are fewer young doctors. In terms of long-term system development, there are obvious limitations to an aging care team. Older people's age structure has great influence on service quality. Although people in their 50s may have a wealth of life experience, they often find it difficult to keep pace with the rapid changes in the concepts and techniques of older people. For instance, in the introduction of intelligent elderly care facilities, elderly carers are often unable to master their skills quickly, which prevents them from making full use of the facilities and affects their service experience. Young practitioners, on the other hand, have a strong ability to think and learn, which will enable them to adapt rapidly to a new environment and bring new life to the care industry. However, because of their small share, it is hard to fully exploit their creativity.

Looking at the long-term system development, the ageing workforce is a major constraint. With the gradual retirement of senior care workers, if new talents are not added in time, the organization will face a crisis of talent shortage. Furthermore, young professionals are often very creative, enabling them to develop new services and develop new markets. However, because of the constant aging of the staff, the speed at which the organization innovate and expand the market is slow.

2.3. Low Social Recognition

Nowadays, as an integrated service model, co-care model is still in its infancy. Most people are not familiar with the concept of co-care, how it works and how it works, and how diverse it is. Due to this lack of awareness, the public is not sufficiently aware of the importance of co-care services in addressing the challenges of an ageing society and early childhood education. It is therefore difficult for professionals in the community to receive appropriate recognition and respect from society. In the long term, due to a lack of professional pride and social status, there is a growing psychological gap between professionals and non-professionals. In this context, a lot of people leave the industry and look for work in which they can make a difference and gain external recognition. This has a direct impact on the high turnover of co-care facilities, hampering the healthy and stable development of the sector.

3. Recommendations

3.1. Broaden Talent Recruitment Channels

1. The establishment of cross-disciplinary programmes in Elderly Care + Child Education, in cooperation with universities, to foster composite talents. On the one hand, the integration of comprehensive knowledge of elderly care professionals, including the prevention, care and recovery of common old illnesses, for example long-term care centre for older people; mental health information for older people, including ways to deal with loneliness and anxiety effectively. On the other hand, include a wide range of specialized and varied programs, for example, on child psychology, to help students understand the characteristics of their mental development at various stages of their life and to develop appropriate education strategies; pre-primary education, which covers teaching methods and curricula for young children, ensuring the mastery of science education skills.

2. The government should invest more in the care of the elderly and give more support to the sector. Regarding the employment support policy, the government can make a concrete policy to provide employment subsidies to the youth who enter the care industry. In addition, in the civil service and public institutions examinations, special posts should be reserved for those who have worked in the senior care sector for some time, thus broadening their career prospects and providing them with more opportunities to develop and improve their future.

3.2. Strengthen the Skill Training System

1. Set up a comprehensive training system of "theory + practice + internship". Theory teaching is carried out by specialists who impart specialized knowledge; practical training is carried out in simulated situations to practice practical skills; an internship is arranged for the students to work in the relevant institutions, where they are exposed to the real world of business, to help them turn knowledge into skills, and to improve their overall competence. Through this cross-disciplinary training mode, not only can supply a lot of specialized composite talents to the co-care industry, but also promote the innovation of academic disciplines, help to solve the social and living problems, and achieve mutual benefit.

2. Regular training of specialists in the field, with the participation of senior health, rehabilitation and psychological guidance specialists. Through case studies and simulation exercises, the staff can apply what they have learned to improve the level of service.

3.3. Enhance Social Recognition

1. Intensify publicity to raise social awareness and acceptance of co-care. Make use of television, internet, and other media platforms to broadcast engaging educational videos and real case reports; organize community workshops; invite experts to answer questions; and organize a comprehensive program of parenting and elderly care in partnership with schools, so that the public can experience this model firsthand, dispel misunderstandings, and recognize this innovative model.

2. Make full use of TV, radio, newspapers, and the Internet to promote the achievements and examples of the co-care industry, setting a standard for the industry and demonstrating their professionalism and dedication. In addition, the establishment of "Best Caregiver", "Most Beautiful Childcare Teacher" and "Professional Pride and Honor" through industry reviews and awards. Through media coverage, documentary, and interview, we will spread the passion and value of co-care to the public, enhance the recognition and respect of the industry, attract more talents, and promote the healthy and sustainable development of the industry.

4. Conclusion and Outlook

Co-care for old people and young people is a new kind of social service which combines the old and the young, so as to make effective use of social resources and meet the needs of old people and young people. It is a new type of social service with great potential. But talent development is still an important obstacle to the sustainable and sound development of private enterprises. Currently, co-care facilities are often faced with a shortage of qualified staff, a high turnover rate and a low level of social acceptance. In order to solve the shortage of talent, it is necessary to extend the channels for recruiting talents, strengthen the training system, and increase the recognition of society. This includes, for instance, developing special courses in cooperation with universities and vocational schools to foster a pool of talents; the development of a comprehensive staff skill training system to enhance professional competence and service standards; and, in addition, through policy support and social publicity, to enhance social standing and professional recognition in order to attract more talents. In addition, it is necessary to further explore the development model of co-care institutions, for example, to establish career development paths, to improve pay and welfare systems, and to bring in volunteers and social forces to provide reliable human resources for long term development.

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