

Research on the Adaptability of Rural Elderly People Moving to Urban Communities

Zhonglei Zhang¹ Yu Jin²

1. College of Humanities & Sciences of Northeast Normal University, Changchun, Jilin, 130000, China;

2. School of Law of Changchun University of Science and Technology, Changchun, Jilin, 130000, China

Abstract: In recent years, under the background that the country actively promotes population urbanization, a large number of young people migrate to cities and towns through employment or schooling and take root in the urban construction. However, the left-behind elderly people in rural areas are in a dilemma, and they will face many problems in their lives whether living in cities or staying behind, the quality of life is lowered generally. After going into the city, many elderly people in rural areas, due to their own physiological and psychological characteristics, do not adapt to living in urban areas, and the qualities of lives are not improved. By investigating the status quo of the elderly in rural areas migrating to urban areas, this paper analyses the reasons for and existing problems of migrating to urban areas and puts forward suggestions for improving community adaptability from the perspective of social work.

Keywords: The transmigrant elderly; Community adaptation; Social work

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The condition for the elderly in rural areas hard adapting to living in urban areas is inevitable in urbanization and modernization. In the rapid development of urbanization and aging of population at the same time, how to improve the community adaptability of the elderly in rural areas migrating to the cities is the subject to be studied by the author.

1. The Status Quo of the Elderly in Rural Areas Migrating To Cities

The study finds that there are many reasons for the migration of elderly people in rural areas to cities, for example: retirement, favor and longing for cities and the increasing needs for relatives. However, the differences in ethnic cultures and socio-geographical backgrounds will cause many troubles to these elderly people in rural areas. In addition, the elderly migrating urban areas are also faced

with the challenges to physical and psychological conditions as they become older. They may need to learn a new language and adapt to a hugely different social culture.

1.1 As Caregivers

Mrs. Zhang, 66 years old, came to Beijing from her home in the countryside for a whole year, and she only met her husband twice or three times a year. Since her daughter was pregnant at home, Mrs. Zhang came to Beijing to take care of her daughter and then started to take care of her grandchild. Every day, Mrs. Zhang is busy about buying groceries and cooking and taking care of her grandchild, and she almost has never come to other places except the market and her home. Mrs. Zhang said: "The child is too young to go out, my daughter and my son-in-law have gone to work, and I just take care of the child at home. Life is so boring, but I am afraid to go to other places for fear of being lost. I haven't seen my husband for a long

Author's information: Zhonglei Zhang (1992-), male, Han nationality, master's degree; major research direction: family sociology, social work for the elderly ; Yu Jin (1992-), female, Han, master's degree candidate; major research direction: law of economy, marriage law

time, and I want to know whether he cooks or not."

An important reason for the elderly people migrating from rural areas to cities is to help their children, take some responsibilities as grandparents, take care of their grandchildren, and share housework. This is diametrically opposed to the needs of the elderly who want to be cared for and who want their child's supports. The elderly want comfortable lives and live their own lives with their own money. However, as they come to live with their children, they have to take care of their grandchildren and do housework without being paid. They are neither taken care of nor financially supported.

Moving from rural areas to urban areas means that the elderly are out of their original living environment. Living with their children can enhance their feelings, and the elderly can be comforted from their children, but it also means that the elderly contact less with their previous friends and relatives. Although their living environment has been improved, they still feel lonely and lose their familiar cultural environment, dialects, daily activities and social contact.

1.2 For being Taken Care of

Mr. Ge is 80 years old, and his wife passed away. Two years ago, his son and his daughter-in-law took him from rural areas to the city to live. The residence of his son's home has no elevator, and Mr. Ge walks slowly. His son's home is at the fifth floor, so he rarely goes out. Mr. Ge always keeps himself busy. When he was in his hometown, he even went to the market. Once Mr. Ge fell while he went out by bike, his son did not allow him to ride it. His son and daughter-in-law go to work usually, and Mr. Ge often stays at home alone, and his daughter-in-law will rush back from work to cook for him, she refuses Mr. Ge to cook for himself. Mr. Ge thinks that he can do nothing.

As they grow older, the elderly are exposed to various discomforts caused by physical aging, and they urgently need to be taken care of by their children in order to meet their basic survival needs. In order to take care of the daily life of the elderly and work at the same time, their children have to take the elderly to the cities from their rural hometowns. First of all, as children, it is sometimes difficult to balance these two needs. There are many unexpected situations in their work, such as overtime work and social activities. They also need to cook for the elderly at home, and it is difficult to effectively guarantee their three meals. This is a psychological and physiological challenge for every elderly person.

1.3 For Re-Employment

Mrs. Wang is 65 years old. After retiring from the primary school, she came to live with her son in Langfang from her hometown. At the beginning, she just helped her son to take care of her grandson and cook, but she found out when chatting with her female friends in the same residence that they were working, and some of them were doing public services, in their own words, they not only did good things, but also found something to do for themselves.

The elderly are unwilling to live a dismal life, and they want to re-achieve their own value in old age. The re-employment of the elderly has not only solved the problem of too dull and boring life for the elderly, created opportunities for the elderly to achieve self-identification, but also reduced the economic burden on their children and greatly promoted the creation of beautiful and harmonious society. We can often see some traffic wardens not afraid of the wind and the sun sticking to their posts, maintaining the traffic order to avoid dangers and facilitating those in need. Among these people are the retired and re-employed elderly people who come to the cities from rural areas and use their power to contribute to new cities. It's the characteristics of the elderly in rural areas that they always keep themselves busy.

2. Problems of and Reasons for the Elderly in Urban Areas Migrating to Cities

2.1 Economic Dependence and Employment Difficulties

The biggest problem that the elderly in rural areas migrating to cities is their economic dependence on their children, due to always providing childcare and housework free of charge. The economic dependence of the elderly can have a negative impact in all aspects of their lives. However, there are many practical problems in re-employment. First of all, there are restrictions on the types of employment. At present, there has not been much domestic support for the re-employment of the elderly and there is only a few rehiring of high-end talents after retirement, and there are not many agencies that can help re-employment of the elderly; Second, less economic remuneration. Some elderly people work in the form of volunteer services with little or no remuneration, and the elderly are not very efficient in their actions, they are weak in manual labor; moreover, children's dissent is also an obstacle to the re-employment of the elderly in rural areas. When children take their parents to cities, they want

the elderly to enjoy a better life. Even if the elderly are to achieve their own value and pass time, their children are also afraid that the elderly people work too hard, which will affect their physical health. Therefore, they do not want the elderly to work outside.

2.2 The Decline of Power and Social Status

Social and economic dependency affects the changes in power relations, and the elderly have less control over their new life, they experience a process of declining power and social status, and the obvious manifestation of which is that they have no voice in making family decisions. Living in a large family, family ownership can make a big difference to people living under the same roof. Ownership is regarded as a force that affects family relations. Although children have provided the elderly with more financial support and better material basis, emotional and psychological needs of the elderly are not being taken care of. In the family model of "the elderly and children", children are more likely to be the center of the family, and the needs of the elderly often rank second or often overlooked.

2.3 Declined Life Quality

Changes in the power relations resulting from migration have caused the elderly in rural areas to lose a great deal of resources. They have sacrificed their time and energy to create simpler and happier lives for their grown children, and their retirement can only be fully dependent on their children. The elderly in rural areas have a strong sense of family. They consider themselves obliged to help their children share the pressure of life; however, they are also reluctant to leave their other children, the environment, economic resources and social support.

There are many factors that affect the life quality, such as life satisfaction, physical and mental status, family relations, economic independence, and social support, community relations. At the same time, the surrounding environment, physical activities and services available all affect the life satisfaction of the elderly migrating to cities. For example, activities of the elderly are very limited. For the elderly in rural areas, working in the fields is the most common manual labor, while activities of the elderly in urban areas are generally these recreational activities, such as walking, Tai Chi and square dance; on the other hand, there is limited space for the elderly to conduct activities. Lack of communication with elderly people in urban areas, inability to participate in recreational activities, and restrictions on modes of transport, etc., all of which will become obstacles for the elderly in rural areas to adapt to

the community life. They need to be motivated, and need the support of family, friends and communities.

3. Suggestions and Countermeasures

3.1 Communities Should Encourage the Re-Employment of the Elderly.

The International Plan of Action on Aging adopted by the Second World Assembly on Aging of UN emphasized that society of all ages and for all should be established, and the elderly should be encouraged to promote social development with positive and healthy attitudes. Encouraging the re-employment of the elderly by communities not only alleviates economic dependency of the elderly migrating to cities on their children, but also reduces their concerns about the decline in their own rights and status. Social workers actively mobilize communities to form the "Alliance of Reemployed Seniors". According to the physical and cultural level of the elderly from rural areas in all aspects, comprehensively assess the abilities of the elderly and help the elderly find suitable job opportunities. Encourage the elderly to enjoy themselves and to work for passing leisure time instead of making money. Take the making money as the means to achieve their value again.

3.2 Children Are Obligated to Help the Elderly Adapt To the Community Life

It is unavoidable that the rights and the status of the elderly decline as they move to cities. As the only connection for the elderly to enter the new environment, children should face conditions of the elderly who cannot adapt to living in cities with positive attitudes and actively help the elderly. Eating their fill and wearing warm clothes should not be the only requirement of senior life, and spiritual needs are equally worthy of attention. Children should take the initiative to find suitable ways for the elderly to be taken care of. As the saying goes, it's never too old to learn. The senior life does not mean an end, but a new beginning. Some elderly people in rural areas are poorly educated, have fewer interests and hobbies and are less able to learn new knowledge, and their children should be good at identifying the specialty of the elderly to help the elderly find their own interests and encourage the elderly to contact new things and learn new knowledge. Help them to reduce their desire to control the family and help the elderly find new organizations. A new sense of belonging arises, and children can also be freed from the only dependence of the elderly, so that they can relieve their pressure, which is killing two birds with one stone.

3.3 Improve the Life Quality of the Elderly

The community shall organize activities to help the elderly adapt to the community life, improve their life qualities, and establish new networks of relationships. Organize activities in communities to facilitate participation of the elderly and reduce many resistance factors. Contents of community activities can include many aspects, for example, recreational activities suitable for the elderly, including playing billiards, chess, mahjong, etc., and lectures on health knowledge.

3.3.1 Establish Interest Groups in the Community

Social workers should start with the needs of the elderly, but label the elderly. They should serve the elderly in the entire community, focus on recruiting and paying attention to the elderly in the rural areas moving to cities and should do a good job in communicating with children of the elderly. More attention should be paid to taking care of some special elderly people who are old and have declined vision and hearing. Starting from interests of the elderly, they can understand the specific situation through communication with their family members. At the same time, they can find some elderly people experienced in community activities to encourage each other and participate in activities. There are many interest groups suitable for the elderly in rural areas, such as playing chess, cooking, and they can start from those aspects close to the lives of the elderly.

3.3.2 Establish the "Old Friend" Mutual Aid and Support Network

Tao Yuanming said in one of his poems of Migration,

"After doing the farm work, they return to their own homes, but in their spare time, they will miss each other. When they miss each other, they will get dressed and visit each other, and they will never be bored with each other while they are talking and laughing." The common discourse among the elderly is far more than the chatting between young social workers and them. Establishment of the "old friend" mutual aid and support network allows some younger elder to drive the older elder and active ones to mobilize shy ones. What social workers need to do is to help maintain and guide the establishment of such organizations and implement work philosophy of "helping people to help themselves".

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