



The Service Path of Social Work Intervention in the Elderly Families of Mentally Disabled People Based on Social Support Theory

—Based on the Reflections on the Pilot Project of Y Institution in Guangzhou

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Abstract. Given the increasing severity of China's aging society and its potential intensification, it is expected that more two-elderly families will face the dual challenges of elderly care and guardianship in the future. However, the current domestic social work system has not yet fully adapted to the specific needs of this special group, and there is an urgent need to develop more precise and comprehensive intervention measures and support strategies. This study took the two-elderly families pilot project implemented by Guangzhou Y Institution as the research object, and used the social support theory framework to deeply analyze the multidimensional needs of two-elderly families with mental disabilities. On this basis, this paper proposes a comprehensive service intervention model covering three key dimensions: "professional services", "community support" and "policy advocacy", aiming to provide more systematic and effective social support for two-elderly families in order to improve their overall well-being and quality of life.

Keywords: mentally disabled people, elderly couples, social work, social support theory.

1 Introduction

Data from the second national sample survey of people with disabilities showed that China has a population of more than 85 million people with disabilities^[1], of which 12 million have mental disabilities^[2], accounting for 14.1%. Adults with mental disabilities face many challenges in life, education, employment and social participation, and their caregivers also bear a huge burden. As people age, the problem of "double aging" becomes more serious. A survey in Guangzhou in 2019 showed that there were about 24,131 people with mental disabilities aged 16 and above in the city, and the employment rate of job seekers of the right age was only 4%. Most families rely on government relief, and social service support is weak^[3].

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L. Chang et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2024 8th International Seminar on Education, Management and Social Sciences (ISEMSS 2024)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 867,

https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-297-2_144

Research shows that social work has a significant effect on the rehabilitation and adaptation of people with mental disabilities. Social work services for two-elderly families can effectively solve their difficulties and provide personalized support. As the first organization to carry out a pilot project for two-elderly families with mental disabilities, Guangzhou Y Institution's experience is worth studying. Through interviews and observations, the author evaluates the project, aiming to explore a disability social work service model that suits local needs and provide more effective support for two-elderly families with mental disabilities.

2 Literature Review

People with intellectual disabilities experience aging problems earlier, and face difficulties in old-age care at around 40 years old^[4]. Adults with intellectual disabilities have difficulty participating in social life due to intellectual or mental disabilities. Their life expectancy increases year by year, and some even exceed the life expectancy of their caregivers^[5]. Caregivers are worried about their placement after their death. Employment ability is an important requirement for ensuring life and realizing value, but the actual situation is not ideal. Long-term care work causes great pressure on caregivers, and affects their emotional and physical health^[6]. Studies have shown that elderly caregivers hope that their children can learn daily living skills to reduce the burden, and they need diverse and sufficient social and emotional support^[7]. There have been some forward-looking practical explorations in China, such as Du Jing's use of empowerment theory to promote the participation of people with intellectual disabilities in social life^[8], and Chen Chen's use of cognitive behavioral group intervention to improve caregivers' coping skills and reduce psychological pressure^[9]. The comprehensive intervention program developed by Han Yangdi promotes multi-party dialogue and promotes reflective practice^[10]. Gao Jing's reciprocal group support program strengthens family relationships and promotes related theoretical research^[11]. Overall, people with mental disabilities and their caregivers face complex challenges, and the difficulties in elderly care are particularly prominent. Although forward-looking practices in China have improved the well-being of elderly couples, research on social work practice is still insufficient. Future research needs to focus on service paths and sustainable impacts to provide more effective support.

3 Theoretical Overview

The concept of "social support" was first proposed by Cassel and Cobb^[12], and Raschke defined it as care and support from others in the 1970s^[13]. After social work was introduced to China, Ni Chidan proposed a practical model of social support based on practical experience, assuming that social problems stem from the rupture of the support network, and based on Fei Xiaotong's interpersonal relationship differential pattern, proposed that the social support of individuals or families should be centered on the family and develop around the concentric circle support pattern of the community, the state, and social organizations^[14]. Under this framework, social workers play the role

of "weavers" of the support network to help clients restore their social functions. Based on this theoretical framework, this article starts from the needs of elderly families with mental disabilities, and discusses the service path of social work intervention from the three aspects of policy advocacy, community support, and professional services, targeting the three subjects of the state, community, and social organizations.

4 Survey and Analysis of the Needs of Families with two Elderly People with Mental Disabilities

4.1 Demand Research

This study selected participants of the Y institution's dual-elderly project (people with mental disabilities and their caregivers) and project social workers as research subjects. The inclusion criteria for people with mental disabilities include: age over 30, mental disabilities, receiving services from Y institution, clear cognition and voluntary participation. The inclusion criteria for caregivers are: long-term care for people with mental disabilities, reaching retirement age, receiving services from Y institution and voluntary participation. The criteria for project social workers are: working in Y institution, familiar with the content of the project and voluntary participation. Through purposive sampling, a total of 14 respondents (6 people with mental disabilities, 5 caregivers, and 3 social workers) were recruited. The research methods included semi-structured interviews, telephone interviews, and non-participant observations. The purpose of the survey was informed before the interview, and the entire process was recorded and recorded. The average interview time was 35 minutes, and information collection was anonymous to ensure privacy.

4.2 Requirements Analysis

Families with two elderly people have long been under life and social pressure, and the emotional needs of caregivers are significant. Chronic stress caused by long-term care can easily lead to anxiety and depression, especially when health declines. At the same time, the dependence of people with mental disabilities and the lack of social support from caregivers make them feel isolated. Adults with mental disabilities face isolation in social participation. Their lack of self-care ability and employment skills limits their independent life. Social prejudice and discrimination exacerbate their social isolation. Caregivers are deeply worried about future placement. As they age, they are particularly concerned about the long-term care of their children with mental disabilities. They urgently need stable future planning and systematic social support, covering living arrangements, emotional support, social participation and legal rights protection. However, currently resources and support are limited, and caregivers lack professional knowledge in property management, legal trusts, insurance planning and will making, and feel helpless and confused.

My child stays with me all day long, and I have to keep an eye on him all the time. It's really stressful. I hope we can provide some respite services for us parents. (C04)

Sometimes I feel very upset but I still have to take care of my children. I often want to talk to others, but I rarely have the opportunity. If I can talk about it or chat with other parents who have the same experience, I think I will be happier. (C01)

I am very worried about Jiajie's employment. Now the family is supported by my pension alone. Jiajie needs to use the money for medical treatment. His kidney function is not very good, and he spends more than 1,000 yuan every month. I am actually under a lot of pressure. (C05)

I have tried to get him involved in social activities, but I often failed because of others' misunderstanding and rejection. What he needs is not only sympathy, but also equal opportunities and respect. (C02)

I think my health is getting worse day by day. If I am gone in the future, what will happen to my child? He is different from others and needs more care and help. Who will take care of him when we are gone? (C05)

I hope my child and I can grow old together, because I am very worried about him and even hope that he will die before me. (C03)

5 Social Work Intervention Service Path for Elderly Couples with Mental Disabilities

5.1 Professional Services: Customized Support and Individualized Care Strategies

Social workers first conduct home visits and needs assessments for families with mentally disabled elderly couples, and develop case management and individualized services for each household. Specific services include: providing comprehensive consultation for caregivers, covering property planning, trust management, insurance consultation and will making, etc., and developing long-term care plans through cooperation with professional lawyers to ensure the future protection of children with mental disabilities; providing life skills training and career guidance for people with mental disabilities, offering social skills courses and vocational skills training, and matching them with suitable employment opportunities; paying attention to family emotional needs and mental health, providing psychological counseling and stress management services, and preventing and alleviating psychological problems such as anxiety and depression.

5.2 Community Support: Building a Mutual Aid Network and Raising Public Awareness

The community plays an important role in building a comprehensive social support system. The community support network connects individuals, families and social resources to improve the quality of life of elderly families. The core is to establish a comprehensive assistance system to provide daily support and emergency assistance through neighborhood mutual assistance, community centers and volunteer organizations, relieve the pressure of caregivers, and create a stable and caring living environment. Community education activities enhance the public's understanding of people

with mental disabilities, eliminate prejudice and promote an inclusive atmosphere through special lectures, seminars and interactive workshops. In addition, we cooperate with enterprises to provide employment training and internship opportunities for people with mental disabilities to enhance social participation and personal value.

5.3 Policy Advocacy: Promoting the Construction of an Inclusive Social Policy System

Social work responds to the challenges of two-elderly families and their adult children with intellectual disabilities through policy advocacy and promotes systemic change. First, social workers reveal the specific challenges of two-elderly families through pilot projects and empirical research, collect data and make policy recommendations. Second, social workers promote policy formulation and improvement through proposals and petitions, and strive for economic support and social security, such as tax exemptions, subsidies and long-term care insurance, to reduce the financial pressure on caregivers. Finally, social workers promote legislative changes through communication with policymakers, protect the rights and interests of people with intellectual disabilities in basic areas such as education, employment, medical care and housing, and promote social acceptance and equal treatment. Through these comprehensive efforts, social work strives for more support for two-elderly families and people with intellectual disabilities in terms of policy advocacy, and builds a fair, inclusive and supportive social environment.

6 Conclusions

This study, based on the pilot project of Guangzhou Y Institution, proposes a comprehensive intervention model for two-elderly families with mentally disabled members. It highlights the need for professional services, community support, and policy advocacy to address their multifaceted challenges. Tailored support and community networks can improve their quality of life, while policy advocacy is essential for creating a more inclusive and supportive environment in China.

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