

# A Study on the Public's Cognition of Aged Care Responsibilities and Its Implications on Policies

**Ruijin You**

*Capital University of Economics and Business, Beijing, China*

**Abstract:** *Since China entered the aging society in 1999, the negative impact of an overwhelming elderly and fragile population has become gradually salient while necessitating social assistance. The huge population base, the unequal social development and the family planning policy in the last century all make the aging problem in China far more difficult than other countries in the world. Therefore, it is urgent to explore an appropriate aged care mode under China's national conditions. The public's cognition of the aged care problem is the basis of China's special aging society. Conducting research on the government's aged care responsibility is a key cornerstone in effectively solving the aged care problem in our society through comparative policy changes and analysis. As such, this is conducive to social flourishing in virtue of a government which formulate relevant policies and solutions from the perspective of the market and demand-side economics. In this paper, based on the data from the China General Social Survey (CGSS), I mainly studied the public's cognition of government responsibility in China. The software known as Stata was used to analyze the formation of this cognition, the changing trend in recent years and the influencing factors. Through my research, I have clarified the specific situation of China's aged care model to hinge upon personal liquidity and family care, which is supplemented by options in diverse care, alongside the public's limited understanding of governmental models of social care. Through an analysis of the influencing factors on public cognition, I have discerned influential factors to include aspects like region and population. This research intends to establish relevant policies as a factor for consideration. At the culmination of my research, I will propose policy changes and feasible approaches for the government in addressing the aged care problem in China.*

**Keywords:** *Aging Society; Public Cognition; Government Aged Care Responsibility; Responsibility Cognition*

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

#### 1.1.1 Research Background

In 1999, China's population officially became a society with a significant number of elders; it represented a nation that was identified with an elderly population of over 60 years old in China which accounted for more than 10% of the total population. In addition, the proportion of the elderly population in China has similarly displayed a trend of increase year by year; the progressively aging society of China has been demonstrated within data and social research.

Affected by the implementation of the one-child policy in the 1980s, this generation of elders will be required to address the nation's current pension problem. Although the government has amended the birth policy, providing a sufficient amount of care for our elders will remain a challenge for the populace within the foreseeable future. Accordingly, the population base and severe aging problem are ultimately limiting factors to the efficacy of developing China's economy and society. In this respect, China has begun to fall into the trap of an increasingly old population before optimization of the nation's infrastructure and economies. Consequently, the results will comprise of a shortage of young workers, limited economic development, limited social security funds, and the population will face a growing pressure to support the elderly. Naturally, these conceivable and negative effects of this trend should inspire our government to adjust accordingly. Ultimately, attention and research should be emphasized onto our aging society in order to appropriately alleviate the consequences of this problem.

### **1.1.2 The Aged Care Model in China**

Historically, China's economy and society has centered on a relatively small-scale peasant economy with families as the unit. Moreover, coupled with the profound influence of traditional "filial piety culture" on people's pension view, the majority of the populace conceptualize supporting the elderly as a fundamental responsibility of children.

With the abolition of private ownership of land, the traditional model was impacted, and the self-sufficient small-scale peasant economic model slowly changed. The establishment of the people's communes and collective economy allowed the government to gradually play a role in the responsibility for the elderly. From the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to the reform and opening up in 1978, China implemented a collective aged care mode guaranteed by the state-unit, and the government's responsibility in aged care was gradually reflected.

With the development of the economy and the improvement of policies, diversified aged care modes have begun to appear and develop in China. The traditional model of family-based aged care has been critiqued and replaced by socialized and diversified models of aged care. Consequently, the effectiveness of service has become the pursuit of elderly care services and people's notion of elderly care has gradually transformed.

The evolution of China's aged care models reflects changes in the nation's model of economic development; the public's views on aged care services are simultaneously affected by the economic development model. Therefore, starting from the public's cognition of governmental aged care, we can propose the direction of improving the government aged care system.

## **1.2 Research Significance**

### **1.2.1 Theoretical Significance**

This article focuses on people's cognition of their responsibilities in aged care. The analysis of people's cognition is conducive to understanding China's specific national conditions, which provides a perspective on the market economy, as well as providing the government or relevant social enterprises with corresponding data to support the development path and direction that directly pertains to China's national conditions through the analysis of government policies on aged care and people's thinking on related policy issues.

### **1.2.2 Practical Significance**

The negative impact of an aging society is not only a result of the elderly population itself, but also due to its society, economy, politics, and culture. In the context of peace and development, the issue of aged care should not be allowed to become a stumbling block on the road to development, thus research and consideration of the issue of aging cannot be delayed; this study provides ideas and ways to alleviate the constraints of aged care on social development under the current demographic structure.

## **1.3 Research Review**

Research and exploration of aged care policy and the cognition of aged care responsibility have been studied since the implementation of the family planning policy, with research on the state of the population's cognition of aged care responsibility gradually increasing from the end of the last century, in line with the national situation of coping with China's aging trend. Since the turn of the century, more and more scholars have focused on precise and systematic analyses of people's cognition of aged care, as they are one of the most fundamental elements in the composition of China's aging society and aged care market. With the development of social science, Zhang Bo, a scholar, in his paper "Who should retire in China? -Based on the Analysis of Chinese People's Cognition of Old-age Responsibility and its Influencing Factors" (2018) in which he exhaustively analyzes the data from CGSS2010-CGSS2013 and thoroughly analyzes the changes in Chinese people's cognition of aged care responsibility, the constituent factors and influencing factors through logistic regression analysis, which provides a strong basis for policy formulation. Liao and Liu (2020) similarly provide an empirical analysis of intergenerational support, institutional provision, and the elderly's cognition of aged care responsibility based on CGSS2015 data.

In addition, developed countries can provide us with many experiences and lessons in the practice of aged care policy. After World War II, the welfare state system in Western Europe began to emerge, and the idea that government was fully responsible for aged care was also promoted at that time, but

with the emergence of national stagflation at the end of the last century, more and more scholars began to study government responsibility and the public's responsibility. Singapore's founding father, Lee Kuan Yew (1980), opposed the 'government-run' state of the welfare state as early as the last century, defining the scope of government responsibility and arguing that socialization and marketisation of aged care services could only be efficient. Giddens, a Western scholar, shares the same view and advocates a "third way" (1998), changing the "social welfare state" to a "social investment state" and marketisation of the elderly care industry as an effective solution to the problems of aging and the welfare state. Beveridge's basic ideas and main policy recommendations have been the guiding principles of the welfare system in Western Europe, based on a unified administrative management, the construction of an integrated urban and rural aged care system, the adherence to the concept of fair establishment, and the role of efficiency. The idea is to build an integrated urban and rural aged care system based on a unified administration, to adhere to the concept of an equitable system, to uphold government leadership, and to encourage social cooperation.

The study and analysis of cases from different scholars can effectively provide the way to solve the problems of China's aging society, and China's national conditions should be combined with the practices of other countries to find a suitable aged care mode in China.

#### ***1.4 Writing Ideas, Main Content and Research Methods***

This research paper is divided into two main parts. The first is the study of the government's responsibility for aged care. In this part, I will look for official data and study the rationale, necessity and policies of the government for the aged care and their changes, and through the discussion of proposals, bills and policies.

The second part of the paper is the study of public cognition. This part of the study is mainly based on private surveys, and I will search and read a wide range of relevant reports, surveys and literature to study the differences in the cognition of different people about the government's responsibility for aged care, so as to identify the problems of cognition and the factors that affect them.

## **2. Explanation and Analysis of China's Aged Care Mode and Policies**

### ***2.1 Explanation of China's Aged Care Mode***

The providers of aged care services in China can be divided into family, society and government. Therefore, modes of aged care in China can be classified accordingly by providers into the traditional home care mode, the commercial care mode and the government care mode. The traditional home care mode can be further divided into the traditional family care mode and the stay-at-home care mode. The commonality of these two modes is that the elderly people spend their retirement time inside their families, while the difference lies in what other family members provide to the elderly people: they offer directly the aged care services that the elderly people need in the traditional family care mode, but provide only financial support in the stay-at-home care mode, with the needed aged care services coming indirectly from aged care professionals on the market, such as housekeepers or domestic helpers;

The commercial care mode is divided into the community care mode and the commercial institution care mode. The community care mode is made available through neighboring communities forming mutual-aid organizations and hence helping each other on aged care routines based on such neighboring organizations. On the other hand, the commercial institution care mode refers to the market providing specialized venues and services based on aged care needs, which has a relatively more reasonable overall planning of the aged care issues. Both of these two modes are regarded as collective care modes. The government care mode refers to the mode in which the government provides funds or services to the elderly population. Considering that developed welfare states have shown through their practice that relying entirely on the government for aged care is an infeasible mode, it is likely that this mode will be even more unsuitable for the social reality of China, which consists of the large population base and the uneven economic development. Therefore, the requirement of the future elderly care mode in China is that it must be a mixed mode consisting of both governmental and non-governmental responsible entities. And in such a mixed mode, the governmental policies play a decisive role, and thus the aged care policies serve as one of the most important factors to determine the national aged care mode and the aged care environment.

## **2.2 Analysis of Aged Care Policies**

### **2.2.1 The Responsibility of Government in Aged Care and Its Policies**

Aged care is a legal responsibility imposed on the government by <the Constitution of the People's Republic of China> and <the Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly>. Article 45 of <the Constitution of the People's Republic of China> stipulates that the citizens of the People's Republic of China have the right to receive material assistance from the state and the society in cases of being elderly, illness or loss of labor capacity. The government is the competent authority for macro-control, and the issue of aged care is one of the important livelihood issues. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the government to guarantee a basic standard of living for the elderly population.

In my opinion, the responsibility of the government on aged care is specifically divided into two parts, which are the responsibility of establishing a social protection program on aged care and the responsibility of overseeing and regulating that program. First, regarding the establishment of the social protection program, the responsibility of the government lies in the input and allocation of fiscal revenue; concerning the implementation of social protection policies, the government should ensure that both the established system and related policies can meet the needs of society. Second, the government also takes on a great responsibility in the supervision of the program, which is essential in the guarantee of the normal operation of the program and needs to be continuously improved by the government through legislative and administrative means.

The term "policy" stands for the code of action and behavior developed by the state or the Party organization within a certain period of time to achieve a specific purpose, and the aged care policy of the government represents the set of guidelines and plans formulated in order to settle well, take good care of, and support well the elderly population. The aged care policy in China specifically refers to the Party and the government making scientific plans, implementing reasonable arrangements, and providing thoughtful services for the elderly population regarding the protection of their rights and interests and their elderly life under the guidance of Marxism and within the period of socialist construction and reformation, so that all elderly people can better enjoy the welfare brought by social development.

### **2.2.2 The Necessity and Rationale (of the Responsibilities and Policies)**

The necessity should firstly be demonstrated based on the fundamental national realities of China. According to the census data released by the National Bureau of Statistics of China in the past years, it is estimated that by 2020 there are approximately 180 million people aged 65 and above in China, accounting for about 13% of the total population; by 2025 when the 14th Five-Year Plan is completed, there will be more than 210 million people aged 65 and above, accounting for about 15% of the total population; if aging 60 years old and above is set as the standard for defining the elderly population, the number of elderly people in China will be close to 500 million by 2050. If 60 years old and above is used as the standard for classifying the elderly population, the number of elderly people in China will be close to 500 million by 2050.

The three basic facts of China, which are the huge population base, the great impact of the family planning policy implemented in the last century, and the identity as a developing country, have made the solution to the problem of aging population in the country particularly hard. If the aging population problem in China is compared to a steadily accelerating train, these basic facts imply that the inertia of the train is extremely high. Given that the aging problem in China appears to be more difficult to handle compared to aging problems of other countries in the world, scientific research of policies must be needed in order to let that train slow down or stop.

In addition, the Chinese government has gradually implemented policies to encourage childbirth based on research, such as the two-child policy and other policies, with the aim of increasing birth rate and young population, which thus provide a fundamental guarantee for the future supply of young labor force in the society. On the other hand, however, the government also needs to provide relevant protection to hundreds of millions of elderly people for their elderly life, which is not only a protection for the elderly population itself, but also the liberation of the young labor force. By partially taking on the responsibility for the offspring to support the elderly, the government will ease the burden of the young labor force, which will thus better promote the healthy development of the society.

Secondly, the needs of the people also reflect the necessity for the government to be responsible for the aged care. The first generation of couples influenced by the family planning policy last century is

soon facing the problem of aged care themselves, but the only offspring in families do not have enough energy to support the elderly, and therefore the problem of aged care is becoming more and more stressful for the young population. Since China entered the stage of aging society, the market demand for aged care has been constantly increasing, and relevant industries have received more and more attention. The demand of China's aged care market is huge, so the government is obliged to gradually establish a reasonable and legal order of Chinese aged care market as well as to regulate and supervise these commercial enterprises, and in this way, it is improving the environment of aged care and relieving the pressure of aging society through the hands of the social enterprises.

China's small-scale peasant economy has gradually disintegrated since modern times, and a collective economy was gradually established after the founding of New China in 1949. The government's responsibility in aged care has since become increasingly clear and significant. There are several important justifications for the government to undertake aged care issues in the society specified as follows.

First is the fundamental tenet of the Communist Party of China, "Serving the people". Since its establishment, the Communist Party of China has taken "Serving the people wholeheartedly" as its fundamental tenet, which is also determined by its nature as a proletarian party. Since the founding of New China, the Party has always put the interests of the greatest number of the people first, adhering to the political methodology of "from the masses, to the masses" and attaching great importance to the needs of the people.

"Serving the people" as the fundamental tenet has long permeated every aspect of the governance by the Communist Party of China at different stages. Starting from Mao Zedong's "Serving the people" proposed in the political line of armed struggle, Deng Xiaoping's theory of common prosperity, Jiang Zemin's "Representing the interests of the people", Hu Jintao's idea of "People-oriented", and Xi Jinping's elaboration of "Never forget where you started" are all ceaseless insistence and development of that tenet of the Communist Party of China. And since the issue of aged care is one of the essential livelihood issues, to settle the aged care issues well is just to serve the people.

Therefore, the government should actively take on the responsibility for the people regarding the aged care, whilst the people should also have a clear understanding of the government's responsibility in aged care. In the face of the difficulties brought by the aging society, the government should always stand with its people and insist on serving the people as well as being responsible for the people by giving the elderly people and their families' appropriate protection and support in policies, hence alleviating the social problems brought about by the aging society. This is also one of the fundamental ways for the government to improve its people's happiness level and to promote harmony and development in the society.

The second is the important decision to "deepen the reform comprehensively". At the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the Party proposed the important decision of "deepen the reform comprehensively", which is the necessary decision based on the prior development stage and the inevitable logic of historical development. The purpose of deepening the reform is to promote the comprehensive development of people and society, as Xi Jinping said, "We should continuously promote the modernization of the national governance system and the governance capacity, and resolutely eliminate all anachronistic ideologies and disadvantages of institutional mechanisms." This is also a redefinition and rethinking of governmental responsibilities and governing methods, which requires the Communist Party to be resolute in seeking truth from facts and moving with the times, and to think repeatedly about governmental responsibilities and governing methods at different stages of social development and in different social situations.

Nowadays, China is facing serious challenges regarding aging society. Government should pay more attention to the systemic, holistic and coordinated nature of the reform, and adhere to the tenet of "deepening the reform comprehensively". From the perspective of the market system, the government should first have a grasp of the basic needs of the people regarding the aged care issues and adjust from the demand side, in order to meet the desire of the market; from the perspective of governmental functions, the government should build a law-based and service-oriented government and effectively alleviate or even solve the problem of aging society from the perspective of the people, providing novel vitality for the development of China's economy and society.

### **2.2.3 The Change of Policies**

The change of China's aged care policy has gone through two different stages, namely the planned economy stage and the market economy stage. The reason for dividing the period of aged care policy

change by the change of economic development is that productivity always plays a decisive and fundamental role. The economic development of a society determines the policy, while reciprocally the policy is also made on the basis of and for economic development.

During the period of planned economy, China's economy was mainly in the form of collective economy, and the two policies "five-guarantees" and "urban-rural differential aged care" were implemented between 1951 and 1978. After the founding of New China, the Party and the government preliminarily established a plan for the development of family, state and collective policies of aged care. Based on the realities of China back then, such as the low productivity level, the socialist economic system that had not yet been established, and the underdeveloped industry, the state introduced policies to implement aged care actions based on retirement, land and "five-guarantees". Meanwhile, it encouraged aged care based on families and gave a certain level of preferential treatment, such as Articles 45-48 of the Rules for the Implementation of the Labor Insurance Regulations (1953): "The workers' pensions shall be provided by the state. Article 45-48 of the Regulations on Labor Insurance (1953): "The immediate family members of workers and employees, whose main source of life rely on the supply given by the workers and the employees and who meet one of the provisions of the following paragraphs, may be listed as the worker's immediate family members for support and shall enjoy labor insurance treatment."

Family-based aged care can largely reduce the burden of the state or communities. Under the guidance of national policies, China has implemented the aged care strategy that consists mainly of family level aged care and is supported by state-level and community-level efforts. The differential aged care policy between urban and rural areas refers to the fact that in urban areas, in order to adapt to the development of the urban Chinese economy, aged care policies based on retirement have been implemented for some government offices and state-owned enterprises, and several regulations have been issued to set the standards and methods of retirement policies; while in rural areas, only the prescriptive documents on the provision of five guarantees were issued in 1956, forming an aged care mode in which family-level aged care provision is the main effort while collective-level support is supplementary.

In the period of market economy, since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, China's aged care business has entered a period of systematic development with the reform of the economic system. In 1984, China started to implement social coordination of aged care insurance in many places on a trial basis, and in 1986, the Seventh Five-Year Plan of China's National Economic and Social Development proposed to establish a socialist insurance system with Chinese characteristics in a step-by-step manner during the Seventh Five-Year Plan. Meanwhile, the demand for aged care services in China's market has become diversified and specialized. On the one hand, various commercial enterprises have started to provide diversified aged care services according to market demands. On the other hand, the market has exhibited more specialized requirements for aged care services.

Under this environment, China has gradually formed an aged care welfare system, whose main body is the social welfare institutions for the elderly run by the state and communities, whose growing points are aged care welfare institutions run by the societal power, who relies on community-based aged welfare institutions, and who based on family-based aged care services and protection.

### **3. Analysis of Public Cognition**

#### **3.1 Current State of Public Cognition**

##### **3.1.1 Current State of Aged Care**

The aged care mode in China is mainly composed of three parts: the family care mode, the community care mode and the institutional care mode, among which the family care mode, which refers to the elderly and other family members living together, is the most popular and common aged care mode. However, with the change of the social system, the appearance of the new 4-2-1 family structure has caused many problems in the family care mode. Middle-aged family members are faced with the situation of having both the elderly to support and the children to look after, and the pressure of supporting the elderly and looking after the children while having a job in the society all together makes the family care mode no longer a feasible option, the result of leads to the gradual development of the community and the institutional care mode.

The community care mode is a transition mode between the family care mode and the institutional care mode, in which people in neighboring communities help each other on aged care routines. This aged care mode is very popular in some old neighborhoods, which shares the pressure of aged care from the family care mode. However, such a community care mode is still not a comprehensive solution to the problem of aged care, which leads to the development of the institutional care mode.

This aged care mode has more significant professionalism and serviceability. For example, elderly people with disabilities or illnesses can receive professional care and nursing care in elderly care institutions, and single elderly people can also find companions in such institutions to lessen their loneliness. With the development of the economy, more and more cases of the institutional care mode are being accepted by the general public, as well as the fact that such mode, to a certain extent, effectively solves the physical and psychological problems faced by the elderly. The institutional care mode has thus become an important part of the aged care system in modern society.

At present, the aged care in China is going through a diversified period with the main focus being the family aged care mode, which is determined together by the fundamental national conditions, cultural background and economic development stage of China. The study of the current situation of aged care is beneficial to the analysis of current public cognition, because the current situation is itself a reflection of the current public cognition. Through the analysis of the current situation in which the family aged care mode is in the majority position, it is possible to gain a preliminary understanding of the public cognition, which is that the public cognition towards the aged care responsibility is mainly still based on the support provided by children and families, thus lacking an understanding of the government's responsibility in this area. However, in order to accurately analyze the public cognition of the responsibilities of government regarding aged care issues, it is still necessary to start from reliable social data and analyze the changes in public cognition during social development periods, based on the time variable, so as to draw more accurate conclusions.

### **3.1.2 Current State of Cognition**

The main source of data on current public cognition comes from the China General Social Survey (CGSS). This survey project started 2003 and is one of the authoritative sources of comprehensive social data in China. It observes and summarizes the changes of society through questionnaires and involves a variety of questions at multiple levels such as individuals, families, communities and society, which is comprehensive and systematic. I chose the data of the China General Social Survey questionnaire from 2013 to 2017 (CGSS2013-CGSS2017) to study the temporal changes of this data, and then analyze the current situation and changes of public cognition towards the government's responsibility on aged care.

In the questionnaire of the China General Social Survey, there is the same question in every year from 2013 to 2017, which is A41: Who do you think should be responsible for the aged care of the elderly people that have offspring? The four answers to that question are: mainly the offspring; mainly the government; mainly the elderly themselves; and equally shared by all the subjects mentioned above. Each year, 100 districts and counties in 32 administrative regions are selected, and the total number of samples ranges from 10,000 to 20,000 each year. After analyzing without considering geographical and demographic characteristics, based on the data analysis, the following trends are found:

First of all, the option of the offspring to take the aged care responsibility is most frequently chosen, and the percentage of choosing this option has been around 50% for all the five years, which shows that the traditional concept of Chinese people is still influenced by the "filial culture" and Chinese people think that it is still the duty of offspring to support the elderly in families. This is also the reason why family care and home care have long been dominant in China's aged care mode. However, from 2013 to 2017, the ratio tends to float down, from 53.7% in 2013 to 46.8% in 2017, indicating that under the new economic conditions, there are new options for the mode of aged care, and offspring support and family care are no longer the only ways.

Second, the percentage of choosing the option of equal sharing aged care responsibility by offspring, government, and the elderly has been around 35% for all the five years, and this sharing option is also the second most frequently chosen option after the offspring support option, showing that nearly 40% of the public believe that the responsibility aged care is multifaceted rather than belonging to a single subject. In terms of temporal change, the percentage of choosing this option has increased from 34.7% in 2013 to 36.1% in 2017, which also gives a direction to the reform of China's aged care mode: it is difficult and inefficient to have a single responsible body, therefore it is necessary for all parties to jointly take the responsibility to form a complementary distribution of the responsibility, thus

effectively sharing and alleviating the pressure of aged care.

Moreover, the percentage of people choosing the option of having the government be responsible for aged care has increased slightly over the 5-year period, from 9.6% in 2013 to 11.3% in 2017. Although the government's responsibility in social construction and development is increasingly recognized by the general public, the overall data show that only about 10% of the population believe that the government should take on the responsibility of aged care for its people, which is also the most intuitive data of the public cognition of the government's responsibility on aged care. The general public does not have a clear and definite understanding of the government's responsibility on aged care and there is also no much demand for relevant policies and welfares, which is also in line with the current situation of aged care in China: when families encounters difficulties on aged care issues, it is more likely for them to look for solutions from family members themselves or from social institutions, and such way of practice forms the basis of China's aged care mode, in which family care is the majority supplemented by diversified social institutions.

Finally, the number of people who choose the option of having the elderly be responsible for their own care has fluctuated slightly within 5% over the past five years, with no significant upward or downward trend. This part of data shows that the vast majority of the Chinese population is very responsible for the aged care problem, and therefore they are more active in facing it. Such a responsible attitude and belief are very helpful to the government and society in solving the aging society problem.

### **3.2 Main Features of the Current State of Public Cognition**

From the analysis of the data, the general public still has a great adherence to the concept of offspring-based aged care, while their understanding of the government's responsibility for aged care is not clear. On the one hand, because of the influence from the traditional filial piety culture, the Chinese people regard supporting the elderly as the responsibility of offspring from the bottom of their hearts. The intergenerational family relationship has been the foundation of Chinese society since ancient times due to the influence of the small-scale peasant economy, and therefore the bond between parents and offspring is stronger in Chinese than in Western culture. Such social customs and ethical norms have been handed down to the present day, creating such fixed popular cognition;

On the other hand, due to the fact that the government's aged protection program or aged care policy is not very perfect and clear, the government's system and policy are not well known by its people, and thus people do not know ways for aged care except for support by offspring. Such a fact calls on the government to put more emphasis on publicizing relevant policies to its people by encouraging modes of aged care other than home care modes, which can not only meet the diversified demands on aged care but is also helpful in reducing the aged care pressure on families.

## **4. Analysis of the Factors that Influence Public Cognition of Aged Care**

The above analysis, which only uses time as a variable to observe changes in the overall public cognition of aged care, does not classify public cognition into specific categories. However, many factors could affect public cognition: demographic factors, geographical factors, offspring conditions, personal income level, and so on. A closer study of these variables would benefit refined governance, providing a concrete basis to solve China's aged care issues.

In order to study the factors that would influence public cognition of aged care, this paper takes the results of the CGSS2017 questionnaire as the source research data, and investigates the following questions and their answers:

Dependent variable:

(1) A41: Who do you think should be responsible for aged care for elderly people who have offspring? (Government/ offspring/ self)

Independent variables:

(2) A3: What is your date of birth?

(3) A7a: What is your highest level of education? (illiterate/ basic literacy/ primary school diploma/ junior high school diploma/ high school diploma/ vocational school diploma/ undergraduate degree/ postgraduate degree and above)



(4) A8a: How much is your annual personal income? (CNY)

(5) A27d: Where was your place of birth? (Rural/ urban)

(6) D2: How many siblings do you have?

Among all the questions and answers, the answer to the first question will be taken as the dependent variable for public recognition of aged care. Answers to questions 2-6, then, respectively correspond to the five independent variables of age, education, income, geographical factor and household size.

Before pre-processing the questionnaire data through Stata, this paper has coded the independent variables data through the following methods:

(1) Age: The data is obtained by subtracting the participant's year of birth from the year of the survey (2017). The age of the participant is the variable value.

(2) Education: The data is coded as follows - 1 for illiterate, 2 for basic literacy, 3 for primary school diploma, 4 for junior high school diploma, 5 for high school diploma, 6 for vocational school diploma, 7 for undergraduate degree, 8 for postgraduate degree and above.

(3) Income: The figures for annual personal income are too large, so this paper scales down the income data by taking its common logarithm value.

(4) Geographical factor: The data is coded as follows - 1 for rural and 2 for urban.

(5) Household size: The actual number of siblings will be taken as the independent variable value.

Table 1: The results of the analysis are shown below

Variable Name	Reference Group = Government-Responsible			Reference Group = Offspring-Responsible		Reference Group = Self-Responsible
	Offspring-Responsible	Self-Responsible	Jointly-Responsible	Self-Responsible	Jointly-Responsible	Jointly-Responsible
Personal Income	0.007	0.008	0.004	0.002	-0.002	-0.004*
	(0.84)	(1.05)	(0.53)	(1.28)	(-1.04)	(-1.66)
Age	-0.036***	0.023***	-0.019***	0.059***	0.017***	-0.043***
	(-8.60)	(3.71)	(-4.60)	(10.31)	(5.39)	(-7.45)
Education	-0.114***	0.027	0.064	0.141***	0.177***	0.036
	(-2.85)	(0.47)	(1.56)	(2.74)	(6.22)	(0.70)
Place of Birth	-1.020***	0.109	-0.270**	1.129***	0.750***	-0.380**
	(-7.56)	(0.56)	(-2.03)	(6.37)	(7.42)	(-2.16)
Number of Offspring	0.009	-0.012	-0.033	-0.020	-0.042*	-0.021
	(0.28)	(-0.25)	(-1.01)	(-0.49)	(-1.74)	(-0.50)
Constant	4.895***	-2.370***	2.102***	-7.265***	-2.793***	4.472***
	(14.51)	(-4.52)	(6.16)	(-15.15)	(-11.60)	(9.35)
N	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203	3203

Z statistics in parentheses

\* P < 0.1, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01

Respectively, the analysis takes the answers to question A41 (government-responsible, offspring-

responsible, and self-responsible) in turn as the reference group and compares the remaining options to analyze the factors that influence public recognition of aged care. By multiplying the coefficients with the variables, this paper concludes that

(1) Personal income has a slight and not significant effect on public recognition of aged care.

(2) Age has a significant effect on public recognition of aged care. The elder participants inclined to agree that aged care should be government-responsible or self-responsible, while the younger participants prefer to believe that their offspring are responsible, or multiple bodies are jointly responsible to provide care and support when they age. The data shows that the older people are, the less they would like their offspring to be responsible for their aged care burden, and the more they wish to seek commercial aged care services or to resort to the government for support. This is arguably the reason why an increasing number of middle-aged and elderly people have invested in pension insurance and private pension in recent years.

(3) Education has a significant impact on public recognition of aged care. People with a better educational background are more likely to agree that the government rather than their offspring should be responsible for aged care. This is arguably because better education brings better understanding in national pension, aged care and support policies, and social insurance system. People with a high level of education are also more clearly aware of their rights and obligations as citizens. Therefore, they have developed a certain awareness of the government's responsibilities for elderly care and support. Meanwhile, those who are better educated often spend more time outside their household and at work, which could become an obstacle between them and traditional aged care models achieved through support from their family and offspring. Such families usually rely on commercial elderly care providers to obtain necessary aged care for their family members.

(4) Geographical factors have a significant impact on public cognition of aged care. The rural areas, including towns and villages, are coded as 1 and the urban areas are coded as 2 for the analysis. The result concludes that the urban population shows a tendency to advocate government-led and jointly responsible aged care, while the rural population prefers elderly care and support from their offspring and themselves. Public recognition of aged care is strongly related to the geographical environment in which the population lives, as the urban population are under heavier pressure of life and a higher cost of living considering their work and housing. As a result, they do not have sufficient energy and time to support the elderly from their family and have to seek help from the government and commercial care services. The non-urban areas, on the other hand, have relatively less pressure and cost of living, so the offspring of the elderly will have the time and energy necessary to care for the aged. Commercial aged care institutions are less well-built in rural areas, too. Therefore, the aged care model through family support is rather common in non-urban areas.

(5) The number of offspring has a slight effect on public recognition of aged care. The more offspring one has, the more likely they tend to believe that their offspring should be responsible for their aged care. This is arguably because those who have multiple siblings are able to share the responsibility of aged care through taking care of their parents or grandparents in shifts, while those who are the only child of their family could not share such stress with others.

Through a regression analysis of the statistical data, this paper has identified a few factors that could significantly influence public recognition of aged care as mentioned above. It suggests that the making and implementing of aged care policies should focus on practicality and pay attention to local conditions, implementing different policies and models for aged care according to demographic characteristics of different populations and geographical conditions, and developing aged care service systems that meet the requirements of local conditions.

## **5. Inspiration: Policies for Aged Care and Elderly Support**

### ***5.1 Making Locally Appropriate Aged Care Policies***

Through the analysis of changes in China's aged care policies, this paper has spotted that the urban and rural aged care service systems are completely different. When the government promotes urban diversification and a multi-source aged care system, it should also provide more policy support for rural areas. As rural aged care covers two-thirds - the majority - of China's population in need of elderly support, solving rural aged care issues will bring great progress for China's aged care system. It should improve the basic pension insurance system for urban and rural residents, establish a

mechanism for determining the basic pension insurance standards for urban and rural residents and the corresponding adjustment policies, integrate urban and rural social assistance systems, and improve the minimum subsistence guarantee system.

Through the analysis of public recognition of aged care, this paper has noticed that many factors could affect such recognition. Apart from the five independent variables this paper has selected, there are more other factors that affect public recognition of aged care responsibility more or less. Therefore, the government should consider the differences in recognition of aged care between different populations and regions as much as possible to provide corresponding aged care services and policies. It should strengthen the provisioning system of elderly care, promote a multi-source aged care system, and systematically solve the issues of provision of aged care, including unbalance, insufficiency, lack of services, mismatches between supply and demand, and waste of resources, so as to meet the growing and diversified needs for aged care. In the 1970s, the UK has learned a profound lesson that the government should not shoulder full responsibility for aged care. After the 1970s, it has been spotted that the UK government gradually transferred the responsibility for aged care to private non-profit organizations and charities, giving them abundant financial and policy support. Eventually, the UK has developed an aged care model with commercial enterprises as the mainstay. Well-known aged care enterprises, like Age UK and Extra Care, were developed during that specific period. Hence, the route that the Chinese government should take should be a route towards a multi-source aged care system. For aged care, the government is responsible for guaranteeing basic rights and support and doing its part in supervising and regulating enterprises, rather than shouldering full responsibility. A multi-source aged care system should be the main goal for China to work towards, as China's aging condition is characterized by a large population base and profound public recognition. In order to solve the aged care issues, it is not enough for a single body to take responsibility; instead, it is necessary to make full use of each source of care and support to fully bring complementary advantages and responsibilities into play to effectively alleviate issues brought by population aging. This paper argues that encouraging enterprises and promoting the establishment of the aged care industry is what the Chinese government should pay more attention to in its next steps of solving aged care issues. China's economy enjoys a huge market and huge domestic demand, including huge demand for commercial aged care services. Enterprises thus should gradually grow into the backbone of solving the aged care service issues. The government, in the meantime, should step by step guide enterprises to establish an aged care service model that meets market requirements. This will not only promote the development of the aged care industry and effectively solve the issues of aging, but also contribute to local employment and market vitality, promoting a steady economic development.

### ***5.2 Improving the Establishment and Regulation of the Aged Care System***

The government's responsibility for aged care lies first and foremost in the establishment of a basic support system. The construction of the aged care system in China is not yet completed. Since the transformation of the pension insurance system, the Chinese government has published regulating documents each and every year. According to the information from the People's Forum, since 1986, China has promulgated more than 300 documents on social insurance. The majority of those, nonetheless, are opinions, suggestions, notices, regulations and rules, all of which have no legal effect. Thus the degree of implementation of these documents is very low, and they could not fundamentally regulate the aged care system in China.

Secondly, the Chinese government should be more responsible for the supervision of the social security system and the aged care service system. Misappropriation of social insurance funds, false claims of funds and fraudulent insurance claims are still common, and the use of pension insurance funds by government finances has not been effective and clear. These issues must be solved by improving the legislation and legal system, strengthening the legal procedures for supervision, clarifying the procedures for receiving and using pension insurance, and optimizing the process of aged care services. On the other hand, it is the government's responsibility to supervise the market, regulate commercial aged care services, clarify market entry thresholds and operational standards, eradicate unprofessionalism and impatience in commercial aged care institutions, regulate the market of aged care services, and formulate legally enforceable market standards.

### ***5.3 Strengthening Public Awareness***

Public concepts and cognition of aged care in China are unique, which are formed through a long historical, cultural and social development. Public awareness has formed the basis of the aged care

market in China. In order to effectively solve the issues of population aging, aged care services should meet the public awareness and cognition. Thus, the government should promote correct and scientific concepts of aged care. Traditional concepts of aged care might lead to a life of lower quality for some elderly people and bring burdens for their families. The government should take up the responsibility of promotion and encourage the public to adopt commercial aged care services, so as to form a system where commercial aged care service and home aged care could complement each other. This will not only develop and improve the commercial aged care service system but also reduce the burden of the offspring of the aging population and ease the social issues of aging.

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