

Quantitative Research on the Text of China's Elderly Service Policy from the Perspective of: “Goal-Instrument”Adaptation

You,Hongping*

School of Law and Political, Liaoning NormalUniveersity, Dalian, Liaoning,116082, China

Abstract: The data from the seventh national census indicate that the proportion of individuals aged 65 and above has reached 13.5%. This signifies that China is on the verge of entering an era of profound ageing. The issue of elderly care has emerged as a pivotal concern in contemporary society, necessitating prompt and effective solutions. This paper presents a quantitative analysis of 95 policy texts collected using Nvivo11 software. These texts relate to elderly care services and were issued by the state between 2008 and 2024. The study concludes that there is a certain degree of mismatch between the policy objectives and instruments in China. This is evidenced by a preference for environment-oriented policy instruments and a lack of demand-oriented policy instruments. In order to address this issue, the study proposes solutions for adjusting the overall structure of policy instruments, adjusting the combination of policy instruments and optimising the shortcomings within policy instruments.

Keywords: Elderly services; Quantification; Adaptation

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1. Literature Review

Domestic scholars' thoughts and discussions on the issue of elderly service cover a number of theoretical disciplines, such as sociology, demography, public administration, economics, etc. The scope of research includes the necessity of elderly service, definition of concepts, introduction of modes, construction system and transformation of paths, as well as the practical exploration of the urban elderly service, which has accumulated a certain amount of theoretical research results. How to better solve the problem of the elderly has a bearing on whether China's economy and society can move forward steadily. In other words, in order to solve the actual problem of population aging in China, promote the healthy development of the cause of aging, and transform the pressure on the shoulders and resistance faced into the development momentum of the society, the government needs to scientifically lay out, reasonably structured, and stimulate the potential of the main body, to establish and improve the multi-pillar, full-coverage, fairer, and more sustainable old-age policy system. Therefore, the practical significance of the study of the policy text to provide clear suggestions and ideas for the reform of China's pension policy and to promote the steady development of China's pension cause is very profound.

2. Research Design

(1) Selection of policy texts

The policy texts selected for this study come from official policy databases such as the State Council Policy

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Corresponding Author

You,Hongping (1999-), Master, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Liaoning Normal University, Reseach Area: Contemporary Chinese Political Studies.

Document Database and Beida Faber, supplemented by the portals of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Finance and other relevant departments. In order to ensure the credibility of the selected texts and their relevance to the research content, the following principles were followed: (1) The main body of the text is the State Council, the departments of the State Council, the agencies directly under the State Council, and other state organs representing the central level. (2) The title of the policy reflects the term 'elderly care services', and the policy involves the objectives or measures of elderly care services. (3) The text of the policy must be in force. After filtering through the above principles and removing documents such as circulars, requests, approvals, minutes, etc., 95 policy texts, mainly opinions and notices, were collected, spanning the period of 2008-2024.

(2) Research framework

1) The classification of policy instruments

Policy tools are defined as the measures and means adopted by the government to achieve policy objectives. It can be observed that the various types of policy tools do not have the same mechanism of action with regard to elderly services. In this study, infrastructure, talent training, financial input, venue provision, technical support and social force elements are categorised as supply-type policy tools, which play a supportive and direct role in promoting the development of elderly services. Demand-type policy tools, on the other hand, can reduce external interference in the process of elderly service development, expand social demand for elderly services and play a pulling role in the development of elderly services. Demand-type policy tools in this study include developing markets, government purchasing and the development of elderly services. The demand-based policy tools in this study include market development, government purchase, institutional mechanism, communication and collaboration, project pilot and service outsourcing. The environment-based policy tools include laws and regulations, management supervision, norms and standards, financial support, target planning, evaluation and assessment, tax incentives and publicity and education. These can create a favourable environment for the development of senior care services and indirectly influence the development of senior care services.

2) Classification of policy objectives

The development of senior care services is inextricably linked to the participation of professional workers and social forces. The advancement of senior care services is inextricably linked with the involvement of professional workers and social forces. Professionals can facilitate improvements in product quality and service standards, while social forces can address shortcomings and deficiencies in the field of senior care services. Therefore, strengthening the construction of professional teams and mobilising the enthusiasm of all parties to promote community participation should be regarded as policy objectives for senior care services. Furthermore, while advocating for the accelerated expansion of senior care services, it is imperative to prioritize the equilibrium among urban and rural regions, as well as across diverse industries. This will ensure a more optimal distribution of senior care services. Furthermore, while encouraging the accelerated growth of elderly services, it is essential to maintain equilibrium between urban and rural areas, regions, and industries. This will ensure that elderly services can optimally fulfil their role as a catalyst for economic and social advancement. Additionally, it will facilitate the integrated and coordinated development of elderly services, which should be regarded as a key policy objective in this field.

3) Modelling the fit between policy instruments and policy objectives

The policy objective of strengthening the construction of professional teams focuses on increasing the number of practitioners and the degree of specialisation in the field of elderly services, which needs to be achieved by increasing the quantity of supply-type tools and combining them with environment-type tools to achieve quality improvement. This will mobilise all parties, promote social participation, encourage and attract more talents and social capital to enter the field of elderly services, and unite the strength of all parties to form a synergy to

promote the development of elderly services. In the process of development, we should always pay attention to the integrated and coordinated development of senior care services to stimulate economic growth, with the help of supply-type and environment-type tools, in terms of funds, infrastructure, taxes and fees, etc., the development of senior care services lagging behind in the region to be tilted, and through the demand-type tools such as the government's purchase, development of the market to stimulate senior care services to expand consumption, expanding domestic demand, so that the senior care services as a new point of economic growth. The above analyses have led to a model for matching the goals and tools of elderly services.

(3) Text coding

Policy tools are coded in the order of 'policy number - tool type - specific policy tool - specific content', for example, the code '1-C-s-(5)' For example, the code '1-C-s-(5)' represents that in the Opinions of the National Office for the Elderly and Other Departments on Comprehensively Promoting Elderly Services in the Home, the target planning tool in the environment-type policy tool is used, and the specific policy content is 'Formulate the development plan for elderly services in the home incorporate it into the overall plan for local economic and social development and the overall plan for community building. economic and social development overall planning and community building overall planning.' The specific policy content is 'formulate a plan for the development of home-based elderly care services and integrate it into the overall plan for local economic and social development and the overall plan for community building. Policy objectives are coded at three levels in the order of 'policy number - policy objective - objective content', with '1, 2, 3...' representing the policy number; 'I, II, III...' representing the policy number; and 'III, III, III, III' representing the policy content. 1, 2, 3...' represents the policy number; "I, II, III..." represents the policy objectives; and "(1), (2), (3)..." represents the contents of the objectives.

3. Analysis of Research Findings

(1) Analysis of policy instruments

Based on the above policy tools classification description table and coding rules, 1364 codes about policy tools were categorised, and the distribution ratio of policy tools was obtained. Among them, there are 479 supply-type tools, accounting for 35 per cent; 388 demand-type policy tools, accounting for 29 per cent; and 497 environment-type policy tools, accounting for 36 per cent. It can be seen that the frequency of the government's use of different types of elderly service policy tools varies, and the government prefers to choose environmental and supply-type policy tools. Compared to the other two types of policy tools, the government's application of demand-type policy tools is insufficient.

Further analysis of the specific tool subcategories under the three types of elderly service policy tools can be concluded that: among the supply-type policy tools, infrastructure, talent training and social forces are the policy tools that the government uses relatively frequently, and infrastructure is the one that accounts for the largest share of all the policy tool subcategories, which accounted for 10 per cent, 7.18 per cent and 5.94 per cent, respectively, and the rest of the tools accounted for the following, in descending order of importance technical support, financial input, and site provision. Through the specific proportion of supply-type policy tools, it can be seen that the government focuses on the construction of elderly service infrastructure and the cultivation of industry talents, which is in line with the current situation of China's elderly service infrastructure started late. In the environment-oriented policy tools accounted for a larger proportion of management supervision, financial support, norms and standards, accounting for 9.46%, 6.23%, 5.35%, respectively, and the remaining sub-categories accounted for most of the 4% up and down. It is worth noting that the proportion of laws and regulations is only 0.37%, which shows that the top-level design of national laws and regulations

on elderly services needs to be strengthened. Although demand-based policy tools account for the least among the three types of policy tools, communication and coordination and market development account for 8.14% and 7.26%, with institutional mechanisms accounting for 6.82%. The remaining ones, project piloting, government purchasing and outsourcing of services, accounted for 2.57 per cent, 2.42 per cent and 1.25 per cent, respectively.

(2) Analysis of policy objectives

There are a total of 528 codes for policy objectives in the 95 policy texts, and in general, the distribution of the objectives of the elderly service policy is not balanced. Through the number and proportion of codes for each policy objective, it is easy to see that the government attaches great importance to improving the mechanism of the elderly service system and the relevant system standards, and this policy objective takes up the highest proportion, accounting for 28.41 per cent. Enhancing the quality of supply and effectively meeting demand came next, accounting for 20.45 per cent. Improving infrastructure and strengthening supervision and management, and opening up the market in an orderly manner accounted for similar proportions, 13.45 per cent and 12.88 per cent respectively. Mobilising the enthusiasm of all parties, promoting social development and strengthening the construction of professional teams accounted for a relatively small proportion, 10.98% and 8.14% respectively, reflecting the government's lack of sufficient attention to the participation and development of the main body of elderly service provision. The policy objective with the smallest share is to coordinate development and stimulate economic growth, which accounts for only 5.68 per cent of the total.

(3) Tool-target two-dimensional cross-tabulation analysis

On the basis of separately analysing the policy tools and objectives of elderly services, cross-tabulation of the above objectives and tools data is carried out to analyse the degree of match between the two. The objective of sound system mechanism and perfect system standard, to which the government attaches most importance, should involve a higher number of policy tools and frequency than other objectives, but the coverage rate of relevant policy tools supporting this objective is 17.67%, which is not significantly higher or even lower than that of other policy objectives. Enhancing the quality of supply and effectively meeting demand should be achieved by supply-type and demand-type policy instruments as a matter of course, but supply-type policy instruments only account for 17.35 per cent. The supply-type policy tools account for a high proportion in strengthening the professional team, but the environment-type policy tools account for 22.22 per cent, and the achievement of the policy objectives lacks their auxiliary support. Integrated and coordinated development to stimulate economic growth depends on the three policy tools in a three-pronged approach, but through the analysis can be clearly seen that the three policy tools accounted for an uneven share, of which the demand-type policy tools accounted for only 8.47 per cent. The other three policy objectives and tools are more appropriate, but there is also a lack of laws, regulations, norms and standards.

4. Problems with Policies

Based on the quantitative study of 95 national elderly policy texts, it can be seen that China's elderly service-related policies are relatively comprehensive in coverage, involving three major types of policy tools, 19 small policy tools and 7 policy objectives. The complementary and comprehensive use of various policy tools has greatly promoted the further development and improvement of China's elderly services. However, through the analysis of the above data, it can also be seen that there are certain problems with the relevant policies issued and implemented in the field of elderly services in China: firstly, the government's reliance on environmental policy tools is relatively strong, showing a clear preference for environmental policy tools, which creates a good social environment for the development of elderly services. This preference may be affected by the transformation of 'big

government', China continues to promote the transformation of government functions, in the field of senior care services, the government has also changed from the traditional direct intervention to macro-control, and return the power to the community, the market, and enterprises. However, the excessive use of environment-based policy tools may be counterproductive, and may ignore the specificity and timeliness of the problem of elderly care services in different regions, which will limit the adaptability of policy tools, and their effectiveness will be greatly reduced. Second, the use of demand-based policy tools is weak, with demand-based tools accounting for the lowest proportion of the three policy tools. Among them, government purchase and service outsourcing are somewhat missing, which will directly affect the vitality of the development of elderly services and the further expansion of the market, and also make the pulling power of elderly services insufficient. The above two points also to a certain extent make the three types of policy tools in the use of the amount and composition of the structure of a slight imbalance, to promote the high quality and steady development of China's senior care services need to promote the driving force, pulling force and the influence of the formation of a synergy, the three tools should be coordinated with each other, complement each other, and together to promote the upgrading of senior care services. Finally, there is a certain fitness bias between the policy objectives and policy tools of senior care services. In terms of sound system and mechanism, perfecting system and standard; improving supply quality, effectively meeting demand; coordinating development, stimulating economic growth and strengthening professional team building, there is a certain gap between the actual policy tool combination situation and the tool combination requirements at the contingent level.

The reason for this is that the communication between the main bodies of the elderly service policy is not close enough, and the links and cooperation between various departments are scattered, with the phenomenon of local 'aggregation' in the cooperation network, and the functions and roles of other departments are not fully brought into play, which restricts the promotion and application of the demand-based policy tools. With the exception of the misalignment between policy objectives and policy instruments mentioned above, the remaining three policy objectives and policy instruments have a relatively high degree of alignment, but deficiencies in laws and regulations also need to be improved.

5. Suggestions for Improvement

In order to better improve the policies related to senior care services, we can focus on the following points to actively improve the future policy: First, actively adjust the overall structure of policy tools, from the perspective of senior care services as a whole, comprehensively consider the application of different policy tools for different policy objectives, and strive to avoid the negative effects of policy tools and achieve the maximum utility of the combination of tools. On the whole, the proportion of demand-based policy tools should be increased moderately, and the amount of government purchasing and service outsourcing should be increased, so as to stimulate the enthusiasm of the relevant parties for senior care services, attract more social organisations and social enterprises to participate in the work of senior care services, and jointly push forward the benign development of senior care services.

Secondly, the combination and frequency of policy tools should be adjusted according to the policy objectives. In view of the problem of mismatch between the goals and tools of the elderly service policy, for the policy goal of improving the quality of supply and effectively meeting the demand, the application of supply-type policy tools should be increased, relying on colleges and universities to cultivate elderly service professionals at different levels and in different fields, and to strengthen the training of non-professional elderly service practitioners to effectively improve the quality of the elderly service and increase the efficiency of the elderly service. For the goal of improving the system mechanism and system standards, the frequency of using the three policy tools should be moderately increased, especially the use of supply-based policy tools, to continuously improve the

top-level design of elderly services, and to promote the development of elderly services towards systematisation and standardisation. In terms of strengthening the construction of professional teams, we should not rely solely on supply-type tools to deliver talents to the elderly service team, but should also use outsourcing of services, government purchasing and other means to expand the source channels of elderly service talents. In addition, you can increase the publicity of the senior care service talent team in the community, through professional skills competitions and other means, to show the superb skills and spirit of the senior care service personnel, to attract more people to join the construction of China's senior care service.

Thirdly, optimising the internal short boards of policy tools, for supply-type policy tools, in addition to continuing to implement the ageing-appropriate renovation and infrastructure construction work in some areas, it should also increase the investment in venues, capital and technology. Although environmental policy tools account for the highest proportion, laws and regulations account for only 1 per cent of the total, and there is an urgent need to improve the laws and regulations on elderly services.

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