

Research on the Impact of Intergenerational Rearing on the Quality of the Elderly and its Coping Mechanism

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Abstract: As a widespread social phenomenon, intergenerational rearing has a profound impact on the quality of life of the elderly in China. This study comprehensively analyzes the multi-dimensional effects of intergenerational rearing on the quality of elderly care, and explores the promotion strategies. The study found that intergenerational rearing has a positive impact on the elderly in terms of enhancing intergenerational emotional connection, promoting health behavior and increasing social participation. However, this phenomenon is also accompanied by negative consequences such as increased physical load, increased psychological pressure and limited economic independence in the elderly. In order to improve the pension quality of the elderly, the family level and the community level should integrate resources and expand related services; the government should increase financial subsidies to further improve the old-age security system. This study not only provides theoretical support for a deep understanding of the impact of intergenerational parenting on the quality of the elderly, but also provides practical strategies and guidance for effectively responding to this challenge.

Keyword: Intergenerational Support; Pension Quality; Intergenerational Support

1. Introduction

With the aggravation of population aging and the adjustment of fertility policy, it is of great practical significance to explore the relationship between intergenerational rearing and the quality of elderly care. In China, the phenomenon of intergenerational care is particularly significant. According to research data released by the China Scientific Research

Institute on Aging in 2014, 66.47 percent of the elderly in China participate in intergenerational care, while the proportion of children aged 0 to 3 cared for by grandparents is between 60 percent and 70 percent. According to a 2022 survey by Wang Zhenyao, director of the China Public Welfare Research Institute at Beijing Normal University in 2022, more than 94 percent of China's elderly people raise their grandchildren to varying degrees. The widespread existence of the phenomenon of intergenerational rearing not only reflects the profound influence of the family concept in Chinese traditional culture, but also is closely related to the reality of the current social and economic development. On the one hand, the traditional concept of family in China is relatively heavy. Young couples generally live with their parents, and the family structure of three generations living in the same house is more common. In the context of market economy development, parents need to work, dual-worker families are common, children are taken care of and nannies, so it is a common choice for the grandparents. Meanwhile, nurseries are underdeveloped and the nursery proportion is small, which effectively complements the deficiencies of the childcare system^[1]. On the other side, with the aggravation of the aging of the population and the adjustment of the birth policy, the intergenerational parenting has alleviated the parenting pressure of young parents to a certain extent. At the same time, this phenomenon has many and complicated effects on the quality of life of the elderly in their later years. This effect includes both positive and negative aspects, which needs us to conduct in-depth research and exploration

2. Literature Review

Domestic studies on the impact of intergenerational rearing on pension quality mainly focus on physical and mental health,

social participation and intergenerational support. In the academic field, there are different opinions on the impact of intergenerational parenting on the health status of the elderly. Han Baoqing and other researchers pointed out that over time, the probability of poor health among the elderly decreases first and then increases.^[2] Wang Wei and other scholars believe that intergenerational parenting can effectively reduce the loneliness of the elderly and strengthen the connection between generations, but this positive effect will weaken with the increase of age and the burden of parenting.^[3] The research of Shen Linlin et al. revealed that the intensity of intergenerational parenting is negatively correlated with the depressive symptoms of the elderly, and also significantly negatively correlated with life satisfaction.^[4] They argue that intergenerational parenting may increase the psychological burden of the elderly.^[5] In addition, when there are differences between grandparents and children in educational concepts, it may also lead to intergenerational conflicts, which may affect the mental health of grandparents.^[6] As the core mode of family intergenerational interaction, intergenerational parenting is not a simple equivalent exchange behavior, but a process containing the characteristics of mutual assistance and reciprocity.^[7] By participating in intergenerational parenting, the elderly expect to receive feedback and support from their children in financial assistance, emotional comfort and living arrangements.^[8] However, based on the "ethics of responsibility", grandparents are often willing to take the responsibility of taking care of their grandchildren rather than seeking material return

3. Theoretical Framework

Intergenerational support theory, as a theoretical framework to explore the mutual support and resource exchange between family members, especially parents and offspring, has rich connotations and multi-dimensional dimensions. Intergenerational support is a two-way interaction between different generations within the family in the economic, life care and spiritual aspects, including the parental feedback to the offspring and the offspring to the parent. In terms of classification, it covers care support (such as

household care, elderly care for grandchildren), spiritual support (emotional communication and comfort) and economic support (material circulation such as money). Its theoretical basis was first proposed by Becker, and the intergenerational altruism is based on its family theory, taking family as a whole, and children will help older parents ensure the quality of life and improve their health. Since then, relevant research has been continuously enriched. Intergenerational support has a significant impact on the elderly, which can promote them to develop healthy behaviors, enhance thinking and memory, prevent diseases, strengthen social connections and help adapt to social changes. Exchange theory reveals that intergenerational relations are based on the principle of reciprocity, and that members have selfish thoughts and return expectations, including multiple forms of exchange. The theory of intergenerational unity emphasizes that the core of parent-child relationship lies in unity and cohesion, including multi-dimensional unity types. Intergenerational relationship, as the foundation of family pension, covers life interaction, economic mutual assistance and spiritual needs, including care — support model and the intergenerational exchange theory are very representative

4. The Impact of Intergenerational Rearing on the Quality of the Elderly

4.1 Positive Impact

4.1.1. Spiritual and emotional level — enhance the intergenerational emotional connection

By taking care of their grandchildren, the communication between the elderly and their children is often more frequent, and the close relationship of interdependence and support is gradually established^[9], which brings them the feeling of being needed and respected, and adds new vitality and emotional comfort to their old age. They discuss the growth and education of their grandchildren and share their parenting experiences, interactions that can help repair or strengthen the parent-child relationship. At the same time, the painstaking efforts and care of the elderly in the growth process of the grandchildren will also make the grandchildren have a deep love for the elderly, promote the stability of the emotional

bond between multiple generations within the family, and make the elderly in a more core and respected position in the family emotional network.

4.1.2. Health behavior promotes—regular work and rest and cognitive ability regulation

To take care of their grandchildren, older people need to follow a relatively fixed schedule, such as getting up early to prepare breakfast and take their grandchildren to and from school. Regular daily life mode helps to promote the elderly to form a healthy work and rest pattern, and has a positive effect on maintaining a good physical condition. In addition, the interaction with the grandchildren also has a positive impact on the mental health status and cognitive function of the elderly. When the elderly focus on the growth needs of their grandchildren, their own stressors will be relatively dispersed, reducing excessive attention to their own aging and life chores, and being able to keep their thinking active in the interaction with their grandchildren, helping to prevent diseases such as cognitive decline and senile dementia, and maintaining brain acuity.

4.1.3. Social participation—Social integration and self-value realization

The elderly may be more involved in parent-child activities, parent meetings and other social occasions organized by the community or schools because of the activities of their grandchildren, which not only enriches the daily life of the elderly, but helps them to better integrate into the social environment^[10] and reduces the possibility of disconnection with society. In addition, take care of the grandchildren and witness their growth and progress, will make the elderly have a strong sense of accomplishment and self-worth, the contribution to the family and social continuity make the elderly feel himself is still capable and capable, valuable individuals, in improving the aspect of his later life satisfaction and happiness plays a vital role.

4.2 Negative Effect

4.2.1. Increased physical burden

On the one hand, taking care of grandchildren, especially young children, requires a lot of physical energy, and these daily care behaviors will make the elderly who are gradually declining their physical function suffer a large load. On the other hand, intergenerational

parenting activities often greatly occupy the time and energy of the elderly, making it difficult for them to take into account their personal health management affairs^[11], which may make some potential health risks can not be timely identified and dealt with.

4.2.2. Psychological pressure and emotional distress

In the process of intergenerational rearing, there may be contradictions between the elderly and their children due to the differences in educational concepts, etc. There is a great conflict between the traditional educational concept of the elderly and the modern scientific education concept of the children^[12]. When the two sides cannot reach a consensus on the education of their grandchildren, the elderly may face criticism or dissatisfaction from their children, which will lead to their emotional reactions of anxiety, confusion and self-doubt, which will adversely affect their mental health. On the other hand, the psychological burden brought by the safety responsibility will also have an effect on the psychological state of the elderly.

4.2.3. Affect the pension planning and economic autonomy

In intergenerational rearing, the elderly may actively or passively bear part of the grandchildrens living expenses, education expenses, etc. For some elderly people who are not already rich, these additional economic expenditures will increase their economic burden and affect their own quality of life and pension reserves. In addition, excessive economic reliance on children to supplement the cost gap caused by intergenerational rearing will also reduce the autonomy and voice of the elderly in family economic decision-making and make them in a relatively passive position in old-age life.

5. Measures to Improve the Quality of Intergenerational Retirement

5.1 Family Aspect

Clearly define the roles of family members, Strengthen the main responsibility of parents in the process of child support, at the same time, Grandparents should provide the necessary assistance as supporting roles, Avoid excessive "intervention"; Strengthen the support system within the family, Correctly understand the role of the family in the

pension, Promote the effective revival of the culture of filial piety, Young parents should not only pay attention to the physical and mental health of their children, Attention should also be paid to the life care, physical and mental health and social participation of the grandparents^[13]; Provide financial support and planning assistance, Children should take the initiative to bear the main economic expenses of their grandchildren, Including living expenses, education expenses, etc., Reduce the financial burden of the elderly, It also reduces economic concerns.

5.2 Social Aspect

5.2.1. Community resource integration and service expansion

The community should establish a sound service system for the elderly, such as setting up health consultation centers for the elderly, regularly providing free physical examination, health lectures and rehabilitation guidance for the elderly involved in the intergenerational upbringing, so as to timely find and deal with the health problems neglected by the elderly because of taking care of their grandchildren and reduce the physical burden.

Organize a variety of community activities, such as parent-child sports meeting and cultural activities for the elderly, to encourage the elderly and grandchildren to participate together. These activities can not only enhance the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren, but also provide a social platform for the elderly, expand their social circles, and relieve the psychological pressure and social limitations brought about by the intergenerational support.

The society has set up community childcare service stations or temporary care centers to provide temporary care services for the grandchildren with special needs or physical health, so that the elderly have time to rest and deal with their own affairs, so as to avoid overwork and psychological burden caused by taking care of the grandchildren.

5.2.2. Education and public opinion guidance
Social media and educational institutions should strengthen the publicity and education of knowledge related to intergenerational rearing, popularize scientific concepts and methods of intergenerational rearing through TV programs, network platforms, public service advertisements and other forms, so as

to improve the public awareness and attention to the problems faced by middle-aged and elderly people faced by intergenerational rearing.

Advocate the whole society to establish a good fashion of respecting and caring for the elderly, give full recognition and praise to the contributions made by the elderly in the intergenerational upbringing, and enhance the sense of self-affirmation and the sense of social belonging.

5.3 Government Level

The government should introduce relevant policies to give certain economic subsidies or tax incentives to the families participating in the intergenerational rearing^[14]. For example, a special subsidy for intergenerational rearing should be set up to give a certain amount of subsidies to the elderly according to the family economic situation and the number of grandchildren raised, which should be used to supplement the increased economic expenditure due to raising their grandchildren and improve the quality of life and economic security of the elderly.

We will improve the old-age security system and increase investment in the construction of old-age service facilities, such as increasing nursing homes and activity centers for the elderly, to provide more diversified pension options for the elderly. At the same time, we should strengthen the support for the medical security of the elderly, expand the scope of medical insurance reimbursement, increase the reimbursement rate, and reduce the medical risks caused by the elderly ignoring their own health by taking care of their grandchildren, so as to provide solid policy support and guarantee for the elderly in the process of old-age care and intergenerational parenting.

6. Summary

This study makes a comprehensive analysis of the effects of intergenerational rearing on the pension quality of the elderly, and reveals its dual effects in physical health, mental health, and social participation. Studies show that intergenerational rearing can not only enhance the emotional connection between family members, promote the healthy behavior of the elderly, but also improve their social participation, but it may also increase the physical burden and psychological pressure of

the elderly, and affect their pension planning and economic autonomy. Regarding these effects, this study proposes a multi-dimensional coping strategies aiming to optimize the pension environment of the elderly through the joint efforts of family, community and government. At the family level, roles and responsibilities should be defined between family members to reduce the burden of older elderly and provide necessary financial and emotional support. At the community level, the key role of community service should be emphasized. At the government level, it is necessary to formulate relevant policies, provide economic assistance, and constantly improve the old-age care service system to protect the legitimate rights and interests of the elderly. In the context of intergenerational support, improving the pension quality of the elderly needs to gather the common strength and support of all sectors of society, in order to achieve a higher level of pension life or the elderly, and simultaneously promote the harmonious progress of family and society.

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