

Cooperative Production: Research on the Supply Mode of Urban Elderly Care Catering Service

-- Take the "Canteen for the Elderly" in Z city, G Province as an Example

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Abstract

The dining problem of the elderly population has become the core of the pension problem. How to realize the diversified supply of assisted meals for the elderly is the key to the catering project. The cooperative production typically reflects the "multi-subject" trend of urban assisted meals. Its purpose is to realize the diversified supply to meet the needs of the elderly through the coordination of the elderly. In the investigation of Z city of G Province, it was found that the city has the regional differentiation of catering resources and the ambiguous role positioning of all parties in the project operation. The analysis of the reasons is related to the low degree of coordination of the governance subjects. Therefore, the following solutions are proposed from the perspective of cooperative production: first, through the construction of "two work linkage and three social linkage", the advantages of the subjects should be realized; second, the big data platform to realize the accurate grasp of supply and demand, and promote the resource flow and sharing among the subjects under the information exchange and sharing.

Keywords

Pension catering service; Cooperative production; Canteen for the elderly.

1. The Presentation of The Question

In recent years, the aging trend of Chinas population is accelerating increasingly. According to the statistics of the National Bureau of Statistics, by 2022, the number of elderly people aged 60 and above in China reached 286 million, accounting for 19.8% of the total population, and the number of elderly people over 65 years old reached 214 million, accounting for 14.8% of the total population [1]. According to the seventh national census, the population aged 60 and above in Z city is 391,780, accounting for 8.87%, among which the population aged 65 and above is 264,160, accounting for 5.98% [2]. Along with the aging of the empty nesters, living alone, lost only child, disability and other problems make the aging situation of China's population more severe, and the dining problem of the elderly population has become the core of the pension problem.

In order to solve the problem of "dining" for the elderly, in 2020, Z Municipal Government began to encourage the city to independently explore the elderly dining hall mode on the basis of grassroots research and outside investigation, and initially built 96 dining places for the elderly. Since then, Z City has carried out the reform of pension dining service with the core, on the basis of the original dining place: from some towns and streets to the whole; from special to general, from the elderly with special difficulties to all the elderly people living in Z City. From the bottom to the quality service, from the elderly to the sustainable development of

the food; from relief to happiness, from the elderly in the "eating" to "eat well" and "eat safely" quality food.

By June 2024, Z City "Canteen for the Elderly" has built catering services for the elderly covering urban and rural areas, convenient and sustainable. It has formed a catering service supply system based on the smart pension information platform of Z City, large kitchen catering, convenient dining network and socialized operation mode. But in the actual research, still found some problems, embodied in meals around the operating sustainability, catering service around the differences between differentiation, the elderly meal demand cannot get effective docking, etc., how to solve the current urban endowment meal service, realize the balance between supply and demand, and then explore the effective path of urban endowment meal service, improve the quality of life of the elderly group, is a problem worth to discuss.

2. The Concept of Cooperative Production Is Proposed

"Co-production" stems from the criticism of public sector managers being solely responsible for the supply of public services. In the 1970s, Eleanor Ostrom proposed "co-production". Eleanor Ostrom believes that "cooperative production" is a process in which individuals will contribute some input in the production of goods or services. In order to realize the complementary needs of both sides, cooperative production should achieve win-win[3]; Cooperative production refers to the participation of public sector professionals and social citizens in the process of entrusting and providing public services[4].

Citizens, as users of public services, are actually stakeholders, not passive consumers, and the cooperative production of public services focuses on the cooperative process and output of service, rather than only the final result of service[5], with more emphasis on the wide range of service providers, diversification of service processes and cooperation with users[6].

Extended to the elderly service, due to the decline of physical function of the elderly, they do not become the producer of service alone in the process of public service production. The realization of the elderly service needs to rely on the corresponding organization to become agents, which is the cooperative production between multiple subjects. Therefore, in the specific process of public service production, how to realize the effective cooperative production between the government, social organizations and enterprises has become the key to solve the problem of food assistance.

3. Origin and Implementation of the "Canteen for the Elderly" in 3 Z City

Since 2020, based on the problem of food difficulties for the elderly, the government has incorporated the catering service for the elderly into the urban basic pension system, and mentioned it in the government work report many times. The government departments of towns and streets in Z City have successively carried out food assistance services for the elderly, promoted the construction of urban community elderly care service model, and jointly built a food assistance service system covering urban and rural areas, convenient nearby and sustainable development. Based on the local cultural characteristics, Z city actively constructed the construction of "canteen for the elderly" and began the practice and exploration of helping meals for the elderly.

3.1. Background of the project implementation

Realistic level. According to the seventh national population census, 9 townships (streets) of the elderly population aged 60 and above exceed 10%, and the elderly population in 7 townships (streets) is more than 7%[7]. One third of the towns and streets in the city are in the aging process. The huge pension demand brought by the aging population urges Z city to carry out pension catering services.

Policy level. In response to a series of problems brought about by an aging population, the provincial government and Z city launched a series of policies and regulations to promote the development of social endowment service system, Z city before promoting the construction of "elderly dining hall", has issued home community endowment service management method and pension service funding method, hope that through the community and social capital, the development of social endowment service system.

3.2. The Main body of the project implementation

The "Dining Hall for the Elderly" project of Z City is constructed in two ways. One is to provide catering services for the elderly by relying on the regional comprehensive elderly care center set up by the government and the home elderly care center in the community. On the basis of the first mode, some restaurants in the administrative region are widely absorbed, and the government finance is based on the corresponding financial subsidies. At the same time, a team composed of "government + professional social workers + social workers + social organizations + catering enterprises" has been built to jointly promote the construction of "dining hall for the elderly". Government personnel ensure the implementation of various guarantee policies, investigation of site location and the implementation of food delivery routes; social workers are responsible for the formulation and implementation of canteen system, meal satisfaction tracking, volunteer service coordination, and communication with multiple parties; resident workers are responsible for the registration of meals, separate meals, site cleaning; and social organizations (elderly associations, volunteer associations, etc.) participate in the voluntary service for the elderly. Outside the government, community, the government through link social capital in Z city building enterprise alliance power city elderly help meal service, in addition to donate related construction materials and provide the corresponding preferential meals, some enterprises also provide "elderly canteen" food, daily necessities such as procurement and health knowledge, intelligent science and technology promotion and consulting services.

Table 1. Subject of project implementation

Participate in the main body	Role function	job content
government	controller	Implementation of policies, site selection survey and the implementation of food delivery routes
Professional social worker	Execution tor, server, and resource link	Responsible for the formulation and implementation of the canteen system, tracking of meal satisfaction, coordination of volunteer service, and communication with various parties
Residence maintenance member	Dining hall staff, service provider	Register the number of meals, separate meals, venue cleaning, etc
social organization	Active participants, and volunteers	Participate in the voluntary service of helping meals for the elderly
social enterprise	Supporters, and collaborators	Donate related construction materials and provide corresponding meal discounts

3.3. Project implementation content

The implementation of the "elderly canteen" catering project includes the definition of the service object and the cost of the canteen

Service objects: "Dining Hall for the Elderly" is oriented to the elderly with local household registration of Z City or permanent residence in Z City. It can entrust their relatives, friends or themselves to bring their personal ID cards, household registration book and relevant certificates to the community home care service station for registration. After the community verified the object category and reported to the street office, there are mainly the following three categories:

Table 2. Project implementation contents

Funding category	first kind	second kind	The third category
Funding conditions	The elderly in extreme poverty supported by the government; 2) Elderly or disabled elderly people in families on subsistence allowance, families on the edge of subsistence allowance, and families with expenditure difficulties; 3) Lonely and elderly people among the model workers at or above the municipal level; 4) The elderly among the disabled military personnel at or above Grade III; 5) Lonely elderly people among entitled groups who enjoy regular state pension and subsidies; 6) Disabled elderly people with difficult empty nests; 7) The disabled elderly people who have obtained the accidental disability or death of the only child; 8) Elderly people with other difficulties. The per capita monthly income of families living together should be less than 2 times of the minimum living security standard in our city	1) Other elderly people in families with subsistence allowance, marginal families with subsistence allowance and families with expenditure difficulties; 2) Other elderly people who have obtained the disability or death of the only child; 3) Disabled elderly people among entitled groups who live alone, have empty nests, or live only with disabled children; 4) Disabled elderly people over 80 years old who only live with their disabled children; 5) Elderly or disabled elderly people who live alone; 6) Other elderly people with marginal difficulties.	The people aged 60 years old or above with household registration and permanent residence in the city (residence for more than half a year).

Cost definition: "canteen for the elderly" is mainly divided into funding type and self-funded type. The subsidy funds come from municipal governments, regional governments, individuals in the community and social charity fundraising [welfare lottery, charity activities and regional enterprise fundraising]. Due to the different financial situation of each region, the financial subsidy situation in each town and street is also different. Take the western district of Z City as an example:

Table 3. Meal expenses

Fee type	Specific subsidies	Dining group category
Funding type	Enjoy the government full subsidy, the specific subsidy amount to the current year food delivery standard for the upper limit.	Meet the first category of elderly people in home care services in Z City
	Enjoy the government half price subsidy, the specific subsidy amount to the year food standard half for the upper limit	Meet the second category of elderly people with home care services in Z City
Self-funded type	Each person receives RMB 2 yuan per meal	Meet the third category of elderly people with home care services in Z City

Service orientation and preferential construction benefits: "canteen for the elderly" refers to the elderly care service facilities that adhere to the public welfare orientation and are funded by the government or the society to provide catering services for the elderly over 60 years old. "Dining for the elderly" is divided into two types: service points and dining points. The "canteen for the elderly" service point refers to the places for the elderly through the form of on-site catering and in-room food service, including the special areas for the elderly set up in social catering places in accordance with the regulations. Dining assistance refers to the dining area for the elderly or the dining table set up by village public service facilities such as party and mass service centers and home care service stations to provide food assistance services for the elderly in the form of compliant distribution. The government encourages social capital to build and operate "canteen for the elderly" and provide corresponding financial preferences: for real estate and land acquired by itself or through rent or free use and used to provide meals for the elderly, the property tax and urban land use tax shall be implemented in accordance with the regulations. The income obtained from the catering services for the elderly is exempted or reduced from VAT according to the regulations. During the operation of the "canteen for the elderly", the residential life price of water, electricity and gas shall be implemented according to the regulations. Those who rent the property owned by the municipal state-owned enterprise to build the "elderly canteen" will be given preferential rent. Service type: "Dining for the Elderly" is currently mainly for the permanent residents of Z City, with additional financial subsidies for special categories of elderly groups. At present, the types of "elderly canteen" in Z city are as follows:

4. Achievements and problems of the "Elderly canteen" project in 4 Z City

4.1. Project Effectiveness

The service influence is gradually expanding, effectively solving the problem of dining difficulties for the elderly. By August 2024, Z city has achieved full coverage of "canteen for the elderly" in all towns and streets, and 327 catering service centers for the elderly in the city are operated by social forces. In addition, the city also has 69 catering enterprises of various kinds to participate in the catering and 25 central kitchens to participate in the catering. By June 2024, in the first half of the year, the city has provided a total of 562,000 people, some of the average daily service of 1,150 people.

Table 4. Types of assisted services

type of service	service content	Execution
Convenient ordering	1. With the help of telephone hotline, online group chat, information platform, etc., to provide the convenience of food ordering and recipe inquiry for the elderly. 2. Arrange special personnel to follow up the ordering situation, and make meal preparation arrangements according to the ordering situation. 3. Arrange special personnel to contact the elderly who have ordered meals but have not eaten on time to confirm the meal arrangement and the safety of the meal object.	The project has been popularized throughout the city, and the "canteen for the elderly" has cooperated with the community staff to guide the elderly to register on the information platform. In addition, the community investigates the ordering needs of the elderly through sampling and consults the corresponding health institutions, and finally adjusts the menu through the trial meal day or trial run. Some street towns even use smart restaurants, where the elderly can choose their own dishes.
Door-to-door delivery	For some elderly people living alone, disabled, mobility difficulties to provide door-to-door food delivery service	The "canteen for the Elderly" project in Z City provides catering services with catering enterprises through external bidding. It provides convenient catering services for the elderly in the community by transporting the meals to the community catering centers. Some communities even cooperate with the delivery platform for delivery.
Refeiture	The elderly in the marginal families of subsistence allowance will be given a subsidy of 5 yuan per meal in the "elderly canteen" If the above objects have the demand for food delivery, each person will be given 3 yuan per meal, and the funds will be included in the annual budget of the Civil Affairs Bureau. Each town (street), village (community) can expand the scope of subsidy object or raise the subsidy standard.	Z city issued the corresponding dining subsidy regulations, and the dining discount consists of the municipal government and the town government. On this basis, linking social capital can promote the profit of social enterprises in the region and further reduce the dining burden.

Effectively integrate community resources to create community pension mutual assistance. Through the "village residence + grid + social worker", the information of the elderly in the community is obtained, and the eligible elderly are included in the list of extreme poverty in time. Some towns and streets also purchase food, clean and medical services based on the ability assessment of the elderly. At the same time, the development of community volunteer resources, streets and towns through the "neighborhood mutual assistance", "early old service the old" volunteers to establish community volunteer food delivery form, cooperate with the

delivery platform and the community property company to carry out the corresponding food delivery supplement, improve the food delivery system.

Based on the assisted meal service system, promote the improvement of community home care services. For the elderly, the canteen has formed a "four-level pension mechanism": the first step is to build a resource base. "Dining Hall for the Elderly" links charity funds and caring enterprises to provide regional charity resources for the project; The second step is to build mutual assistance. With the party and the masses in the community as the center, community activists are mobilized as project service personnel to establish a volunteer service pattern of "neighborhood mutual assistance" and "helping the elderly for the beginning", and social workers are led to provide meal assistance and meal delivery services at fixed meal assistance points. In addition, with the regional comprehensive elderly care center as the core, targeted training for community volunteers to improve the service quality. The third step is to strengthen information collection and case management. Mainly provide corresponding service arrangement and tracking services for the elderly, and optimize the service; relying on the "help" mechanism, establish and improve the list of lonely, living alone, empty nest, left-behind elderly in the district, launch "village + grid + social workers" and other forces, and strengthen the active elderly, timely into the list, to ensure their basic living. The fourth step is to combine the assisted food service with the cultural publicity. According to local characteristics, all towns and streets carry out leisure, social and recreational activities at the meals, covering a variety of elderly services such as interest training, skill learning and life knowledge. Some towns and streets are equipped with qualified rehabilitation teachers to provide medical services for the elderly in the region. To sum up, the "canteen for the Elderly" relies on the elderly care meal service and integrates the home care resources in the service area, forming a "four-level pension mechanism" in urban communities.

4.2. Project problems

4.2.1. Regional differentiation of catering assistance resources

As for the current "elderly canteen" project in Z City, although the full coverage of the dining assistance system has been achieved in all towns and streets, there are great differences in the dining assistance resources between towns and streets. Most towns and streets in Z city realize the cooperation between communities and catering enterprises through the government purchase of catering services. The supply of single service does not match the diversified demand for meal assistance. On the one hand, although the community collects the meal needs of the elderly in the area and makes the corresponding recipes, the sampling survey cannot cover the meal needs of all residents. In the composition of the municipal government, the town government, the street government and the corresponding charitable fund, and the bottom line of the basic subsidy is not stated in the government documents. Therefore, the differentiation of meal assistance subsidies between towns and streets arises, making some elderly people will question the standard of meal assistance services in the areas they live in through the meal assistance situation in other areas, and the lack of standardization and standardized operation of meal assistance services.

4.2.2. The role positioning of all parties in the project operation is fuzzy

The construction of "dining hall for the elderly" in Z city is the product of the governments top-down policy, and social enterprises and charity funds play a leading role in the early stage of construction. "Restaurant for the Elderly" was formerly known as some caring enterprises in the community joint area to provide catering services for the elderly for a specific period of time. However, in the current construction of "canteen for the Elderly", the community and caring enterprises have become the tools of government implementation, which are managed and supervised by the higher government. Under the requirement of the "dining hall for the elderly" to become a government proposal and gradually implement the community, the

community staff on the other hand, and also assist the operation of the community institutions, such as providing the party center as a special dining site, to collect the dining needs of the elderly in the area, the corresponding cultural propaganda activities. In addition, as the implementer of the "canteen for the elderly", the social work station in the region will inevitably not be affected by the government in the daily operation of the project, and will lose the role of community mobilization and advocacy and become a tool for the government to implement the project.

5. Analysis of the causes of the 5 Z City "Elderly Dining Hall" project

5.1. Large social demand but low social participation

By June 2024, Z city has 397 catering, covering 23 towns and streets in the city, realizing the basic full coverage of the catering service system. The smooth operation of the "canteen for the elderly" cannot be separated from the positive interaction between the government and all parties, and is the effective integration of the resources of the government, the community and the society. Although the "canteen for the Elderly" has a corresponding dining evaluation and tracking system, the single service supply in the region makes catering enterprises without obvious competitive pressure on the improvement and improvement of food quality, which affects the quality of community catering service for the elderly. In addition, the community cadres have to invest the corresponding energy under administrative pressure, which further increases the grassroots affairs and weakens the enthusiasm of the community neighborhood committee. Under this dual pressure, social workers and social work organizations as the "elderly canteen" professionals have to shift more energy to the solution of catering service problems, shifting the focus from "people" to "things" and weakening the participation of social workers.

5.2. Insufficient number of volunteers and loose management

With the landing of the "canteen for the Elderly" in Z City, the scope and population of its services are also expanding. Due to the lack of professional social workers, the operation of the "canteen for the Elderly" requires a large number of volunteers, which focuses on food delivery services for the elderly. Compared with the huge demand for the elderly, there are a small number of volunteers. Most of the volunteers are young students with corresponding jobs or holidays. Although some communities have volunteer mobilization activities of "helping each other" and "helping the elderly", the quantity and the quality of volunteer service have not been fully guaranteed. Volunteers are less involved in food service training and often regard themselves as "delivery workers". In addition, due to the large composition and large age span, it is difficult for the community to coordinate the time of all parties, difficult to unify collective actions, and construct the relationship between the community and the elderly.

5.3. Lack of adequacy of advance planning

Although each meal point is set up according to the 15-minute service circle, comprehensively considering the status of the elderly population, dining service demand, service resources, service radius and other factors, in the specific implementation process of "elderly canteen", the demand and scope of door-to-door food delivery are still relatively large. However, the lack of meal delivery manpower has forced the volunteers and social workers to travel between on-site meal operation and on-to-door meal delivery. In addition, due to the large number of links, from the catering enterprises to the quality of the service, such as the delay of meal time and meal quality. Although some areas consider the corresponding problems, and introduce the delivery platform for full-time delivery, the resulting charging problems affect the compliance of the elderly for the service.

To sum up, although Z city has made some achievements in helping the meals for the aged, there are also corresponding problems that need to be solved by the cooperation and linkage between multiple subjects.

6. Cooperative Production: The Idea to Solve The Problem of Helping Meals

In essence, urban pension catering is a kind of pension service. As the basic welfare of the elderly, the spillover attribute of urban pension service determines that urban pension catering is a quasi-public product with externalities. In the multi-center theory, the supply of public goods is a symbiosis of multiple mechanisms rather than a single mechanism, which requires the supply mode of the government, the market and voluntary organizations to make up for the low efficiency and insufficient public demand response brought by a single subject. In addition, the theory divides the provision of public goods into two links: supply and production[8]. Therefore, this paper introduces the idea of joint production, in order to solve the problem of helping meals.

The power and responsibility of the government makes it necessary to play the role of guide and promoter in the pension meal, give play to the strengths of the main body for collaborative governance, and then form the legal relationship between the government, community, volunteers and other cooperation[9]. Under this diversified mechanism, the government needs to guide all parties to establish a consultation mechanism, so that each stakeholder can conduct equal dialogue and consultation among all subjects on the basis of laws and regulations on the basis of equality, so as to integrate the interests of all parties to achieve the optimal service.

To specifically implement the urban elderly care food assistance service, this paper puts forward the following suggestions:

6.1. Construction of "linkage between two industries and linkage between three societies" to realize the coordination between subjects

"Linkage of the three societies" refers to the joint action[10] of community neighborhood committees, social organizations and social workers in community service, construction and governance. In the specific catering service for the elderly, the community, as a regional platform, its internal community neighborhood committee has unique advantages in resource integration and mobilization, and integrates resources by linking all parties. As the carrier of the catering project, social organizations organizational influence and professional advantages can provide a wider range of social resources for the community. In the process of assistance, with the help of the assistance of the community neighborhood committee, the organization is successfully embedded in the community to further exert the influence of the organization. The social work is the daily executor of the project, not only the resource link and communication coordinator of all parties, but also the instructor of volunteers. The professional knowledge of social workers should be used to provide corresponding professional training for volunteers. During the training process, the link between the two sides should be promoted, the communication cost between social workers and volunteers should be reduced, the faults in the operation process should be reduced, and the win-win cooperation between all parties in the food assistance project should be promoted.

6.2. Use the big data platform to promote the flow and sharing of resources between the subjects

At present, the "canteen for the Elderly" project in all towns and streets of Z City mainly relies on the governments purchase of catering services. The promotion and implementation of the project cannot be separated from the strong support of the government. However, the single supply platform cannot fully meet the diversified catering needs of the elderly, and requires the

extensive participation of social forces. The government should constantly improve the service network, and encourage and support social forces to become the main body of catering and catering assistance services on the premise of protecting the rights and interests of the elderly. We will introduce corresponding fiscal policies, link social capital and tap public welfare resources, fully mobilize the enthusiasm of social organizations, and form a new pattern of cooperative production between the government, communities and social enterprises. At the same time, the sustainable development of meals for the elderly needs to establish a social project with the participation of the whole people, and practice the diversified financing mechanism of "individuals give a little, enterprises make a little, the government compensates a little, the collective adds a little, and the society donates a little", so as to realize the sustainable development of "canteen for the elderly".

Food assistance for the elderly not only needs the coordination of multi-subjects to link more resources, but also needs to promote the precise matching of supply and demand, and improve the service efficiency and quality. From the perspective of the specific implementation process of the project, the mismatch between supply and demand leads to the insufficient realization of the demand for assisted meals, which leads to the lack of assisted catering services for the elderly. In order to improve the accurate matching of supply and demand, the big data platform can be used to record the health status, taste and dining habits of the elderly, to build information portraits and accurately locate the needs. In addition, the introduction of online food ordering platform relying on its extensive takeout delivery network, will help food delivery door-to-door, simplify the community food delivery process, reduce the burden of the grassroots.

7. Conclusion

To sum up, the urban pension catering project solves the practical problem of "eating difficulty" for the elderly; on the other hand, the "elderly dining hall" is also a public space for the elderly to communicate and entertain, meeting the spiritual needs of the elderly. Cooperative production reflects the diversified trend of urban pension catering governance, so as to realize the resource link and cooperative governance between multi-subjects. In the perspective of cooperative production, improvements can be made to improve the service system. First, through the linkage of two workers and three societies, the city uses the big data platform to realize the precise grasp of supply and demand, and promote the resource flow and sharing under the information exchange and sharing. Although the urban catering for the elderly is in full swing, it is still in the development stage. There are still many problems in the specific operation and operation, which need the joint efforts of the government, society and the community.

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